

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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January, 2020



Comments & Conservation Notes

Back in 2017, when changes were first announced in how the Department of the Interior and the US Fish & Wildlife Service would administer the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, it was feared that it would be all bad news for birds. That has proven to be the case. In a New York Times article from December 24th, 2019, Lisa Friedman wrote of how the Trump administration stepped in to a case in Virginia.

“As the state of Virginia prepared for a major bridge and tunnel expansion in the tidewaters of the Chesapeake Bay last year, engineers understood that the nesting grounds of 25,000 gulls, Black Skimmers, Royal Terns and other seabirds were about to be plowed under.”

“To compensate, they considered developing an artificial island as a haven. Then in June 2018, the Trump administration stepped in. While the federal government “appreciates” the state’s efforts, new rules in Washington had eliminated criminal penalties for “incidental” migratory bird deaths that came in the course of normal business, administration officials advised. Such conservation measures were now ‘purely voluntary.’ The state ended its island planning.” Too bad birds. Things are tough all over.

This was just one of many incidents that should have triggered protections under the Act. Now, as we read of declines of 40 to 70 % in bird species across the avian spectrum, the law that should protect them is being interpreted in such a way as to make it null and void. The President has spoken of how the oil industry has been subject to “totalitarian tactics” under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. So under the new rules something like the Deep Water Horizon spill won’t cost the offender a dime. This is all part of the business friendly atmosphere in the Trump administration that seeks to eliminate any regulations complained about by those who made large donations to the campaigns of both the President and his congressional cohorts. How do they sleep ?

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The Environmental Council of Volusia & Flagler Counties, of which our chapter is a member, is the driving force behind a move for a ballot initiative to have the ECHO Program and Volusia Forever reauthorized by the county’s voters. Both of these popular programs (which were voted in overwhelmingly) are set to expire in 2020. Our chapter supports this initiative and in the near future we will be asking for all members to contact the County Council requesting their support in putting these two issues on the ballot in November.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Tuesday, January 21st, Program Meeting- Due to the Martin Luther King holiday on the 3rd Monday, our January meeting is always on the following Tuesday. Join us for an update on the Flagler Ditch Line Restoration project and other happenings at Gamble Rogers State Park when Paul Haydt is our speaker. We meet at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Ave, Holly Hill, FL 32117. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. We hope to see you there.

Field Trips

Saturday, January 4th, Merritt Island NWR- Join Peggy Yokubonus for this trip to one of the best winter birding spots in the country. We’ll meet to carpool at the Target in Port Orange, on Dunlawton Ave. east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Peggy, 386-316-4085.

Tuesday, January 7th thru Friday, January 10th, St Marks NWR- Join Joan Tague for the first of this season’s overnight trips. We’ll rendezvous at the Visitor’s Center at noon on Tuesday. We know of 16 people going now. If you’d like to go time is very short. Contact Joan, (386) 871-6049 to let her know your plans. You’ll want to make your reservations at the [Shell Island Fish Camp](#). Their number is (850) 925-6226. This will be our 3rd year in a row traveling to St Marks and it’s always a wonderful trip.

Field Trips With Others

Saturday, January 11th, Merritt Island NWR- Join our friends from Southeast Volusia Audubon Society for their trip to this excellent location. Meet at 7:30 am in the Florida Shores Plaza parking lot in Edgewater, (at the corner of Ridgewood Ave and Indian River Blvd), South of the new Dunkin Donuts building. Questions? Call Gail Domroski, (386) 690-0562.

Tuesday, January 14th, Clark Bay Conservation Area- Volusia County Land Management sponsors this 2 mile guided hike, lead by Master Naturalist and author Roger Fulton. Good footwear, long pants and long sleeves are recommended. No open-toed shoes. Adults only and no dogs. Bring water and bug spray if you are so inclined. From I-95 take Exit 261 and travel west on Rte. 92 toward Deland for approximately 13.5 miles and turn right onto Kepler Road. Follow it .4 miles and turn right onto Old Deland Road. Follow it for about 1.0 miles and turn left into the Clark Bay Conservation Area parking lot GPS reading: N 29° 04.545', W 081° 14.980'.

Remember to check our [website](#) for calendar updates.

Report From Tom Rennick Park Sea Watch

Harry Robinson and his team (Kim Ramos, Eli Shaperow, Sam Krah and Luddy Lambertson) conduct a sea watch several times a week. Here's part of his report from November.

Another month with one new species (different individuals were seen on two different dates!). It was the second best November with 119 species, there were 124 species in 2017. So far this year I have noted 215 species with a grand total of 261 species. I carried out 30 surveys over 137 hours. There were 59 species on the 25th a very high count with 3,873 birds on the 9th.

There was a Gadwall on the 9th with 11 on the 13th, then two seen on the 21st. American Wigeon peaked at 18 on the 9th. There were two Mallard on the 4th (when will I get an American Black Duck?) with a Mottled Duck on the 10th. The last Blue-winged Teal was on the 24th. There were four Northern Pintail on the 29th. Green-winged Teal peaked at 35 on the 13th and 15 on the 29th. A flock of seven Canvasbacks flew to the south on the 29th with eight Redheads likewise on the 21st. Ring-necked Ducks peaked at 305 on the 6th a new high count with 180 on the 13th. Greater Scaup were seen from the 9th with 60 on the 24th. Only low numbers of Lesser Scaup were seen this year with 660 on the 6th and 340 on the 13th. Much to my surprise a female Harlequin Duck flew to the south on the 24th it was leading two Red-breasted Mergansers (normally the out of place bird trails in last place). A total of 21 Surf Scoters were seen with ten on the 14th and six on the 29th. Black Scoters only peaked at 220 on the 6th and 145 on the 13th. There were three Buffleheads on the 8th with two on the 12th and the 14th; there were also five on the 29th. There were two Hooded Mergansers on the 22nd with 36 on the 29th a new high count (30 of these flew to the north in a single flock). Red-breasted Mergansers peaked at 15 on the 13th and 82 on the 24th. Very surprisingly a flock of ten Ruddy Ducks flew to the south on the 21st. As you can see November is duck month.....

There were two Northern Harriers on the 8th with single Sharp-shinned Hawks on the 10th, 18th, 23rd and 25th. There was a young Broad-winged Hawk on the 11th with a light morph Short-tailed Hawk on the 19th. There were two American Kestrels on the 23rd normally only singles seen. During the month eight Merlins noted with a single Peregrine Falcon on the 26th.

There were 50 Morning Doves on the 12th one of the higher counts. Common Ground-Doves peaked at four on the 22nd and the 23rd. There was a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on the 8th and the 11th with single Downy Woodpeckers on the 11th and 19th. Eastern Phoebe peaked at three on the 22nd and the 26th. There was a Florida Scrub-Jay on the 19th the second this fall but only the third sighting ever. There was an American Crow on the 5th. Now to the new species Cave Swallow there was an immature on the 18th with an adult on the 30th. The last Barn Swallow was seen on the 4th. There were three House Wrens on the 29th a new high count. There was a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on the 23rd with a Ruby-crowned Kinglet on the 27th. The first American Robins (two) were seen on the 18th with 20 on the 20th. There was an American Pipit on the 29th. Single Common Yellowthroats were seen on the 15th and the 24th. There was an Eastern Towhee on the 8th. Brown-headed Cowbirds peaked at 215 on the 19th, 645 on the 20th and 850 on the 23rd. House Finches peaked at eight on the 15th and the 21st. Finally there was an American Goldfinch on the 9th with 15 on the 28th.

Just what will December bring?

Harry Robinson

Things To Do In January

There are three birding festivals vying for your attention in January. First is the [Everglades Birding Festival](#), January 16th to the 20th. At the same time, closer to home, is the [North Shore Birding Festival](#), sponsored by Orange Audubon Society and taking place around Lake Apopka. Then there's the biggest one, the [Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival](#) from January 22nd to the 27th down in Titusville. All of these offer great birding opportunities plus chances to learn from some of the best birders and photographers around.

Pelican Island Audubon Society is sponsoring its 3rd annual "Transforming Landscapes" workshop on January 25th. This all day event costs 25.00 and includes a box lunch. It's held down in Vero Beach and offers a native plant sale and learning sessions with experts that will help you turn your yard into a mecca for wildlife.

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We Need You!

Once again we are partnering with the Ormond Beach Environmental Center for the annual Great Backyard Bird Count. This is a one day, 5 hour event for the community focusing on birds of all shapes and sizes. Guests participate in games, view exhibits, walk the park and have fun learning. We will have the workbook challenge again this year where participants can meet the requirements to win a rubber duck. The event is scheduled on Saturday, February 15, 2020. There will also be a work session or two to get the event ready. Joan Tague is the coordinator for the event and she is looking for a co-chair to assist with the planning. Contact Joan at members@halifaxriveras.org.

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From The Quotable Birder

“The flamingoes are the most delicately colored of all African birds, pink and red like a flying twig of an oleander bush.”

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Isak Dinesen, *Out Of Africa*

by Ray Scory

The Golden Hour

A soft steamy night slowly edged away from a quietly breaking day as the Golden Hour approaches. A time just after sunrise, when the land is cloaked in a soft, golden glow. A mystical allure pervades over the land announcing the coming of the day. It is a quiet time - peaceful, serene, everlasting. A instant to be alone. Alert to the surroundings yet reflective of the moment. Feeling good.

A time when many photographers hasten to make serenely beautiful images aided by the first twenty minutes of the day. It is magical how this golden moment connects to the desire for serenity and creativity. Birders take advantage of this moment, also. Awaiting the first sounds of awakening or the rush of birds.



At the break of day, a speeding scoop of Black Skimmers usher in a morning sunrise, as a resting sailboat anchors peacefully in the harbor. The speeding skimmers juxtapose knowingly with the quiet sailboat during the coming of the Golden Hour.

I have been there at both times, both for photography and birding and sometimes for both. However, my purpose for experiencing the Golden Hour is singular, not to clutter the moment with too many distractions. I am there either to make a fine photograph, observe the birds or just be there to feel the wonder of the changing time.

I recently experienced two Great Horned Owls carrying-on in my back yard late at night into the Golden Hour. Awakened late at night I listened to the mournful sounds of a Great Horned owl close by, later to be visited by a female Great Horned Owl and the chatter, squeaks, barking and hooting began. A conversation of sounds so different than the lone owl's beaconing call.

Most owls, too, have mastered this special hour of earthly transition, using age old skills of nocturnal activity to daytime rest. Every October for the past twenty years a Great Horned Owl has called high from a tall pine tree in my backyard. Not a more soulful, haunting sound has ever been emitted from these backyard pine trees. A sound that can carry for miles yet commands complete concentration and quiet when it calls out through a bedroom window. How wonderful it is to lie awake peaceful and still and let the sounds of the Great Horned Owl randomly move through your mind and body. A transfer of tranquil freedom releases the thought process to another place

and a wash of peace and happiness settle - as the Great Horned Owl calls. A second owl came to my yard this night and two owls communicated. A deeper sound from the male and higher pitched calls from the female. As daylight approached they became quiet and remained hidden in the pine tree in my yard and the Golden Hour faded away.

I like this time on the clock, when night changes to day and leaves a little space in between. It is enchanting, yet it is real - but certainly different.

The Golden Hour is a good way to start a special day, especially with a New Year.



Photographers positioned at the shoreline of the Indian River to make photo images using the unique qualities of the Golden Hour. Note the pin point of the Sun just sitting on the distant horizon line. From this moment on the charm of the golden hour will quickly fade into the brilliance of daylight.

Photos by Ray Scory

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Here's some eye candy to start your new year off right

Audubon's [Photography Awards](#) for 2019 showcase the efforts of all age groups. About a third of the way down the page is a shot of an American Dipper. This bird plunges into icy cold, raging rapids to feed on aquatic insects, like the larval stages of the caddis fly. It seems impossible that this tiny bird could survive the churning, seething buffeting it's subjected to again and again. It's found its niche in the ecological patchwork of life and continues to hang on. *Editor*

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Got Merlin ?

No, we're not talking about a Harry Potter character or the guy from the King Arthur saga. [Merlin](#) is an app for your phone or tablet that helps you to identify a bird. It's a free download from Apple's App Store or from Google Play and it's almost fool proof at identifying a bird. Let's say you look out in your backyard and see a bird on the ground that you're sure you've never seen before. Or maybe you've seen it repeatedly but never been able to find in your book. Once you've installed Merlin on your phone, open the app and it will ask you a series of easy to answer questions: how big is the bird, is it in a tree or on the ground, are you at the beach? Then, based on your answers and your GPS location, the wondrous algorithm that was developed by the folks at Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology goes to work and shows you a series of photos. One of them will almost certainly be the mystery bird.

David Hartgrove

Hope For Florida's Wood Storks

Florida's wading bird nesting season - historically from December to July - is commencing, with Wood Storks - as well as Roseate Spoonbills, egrets, ibis, and herons - starting to nest and raise their young.

Wood Storks depend heavily on just the right water levels and water movements in Florida to exist. Historically, with Florida's rainy summers, rising water levels would flood wetlands, which allowed fish, frogs, crawfish, and other potential prey species to proliferate. Then, during the dry winter season, waters would slowly recede, concentrating prey in isolated water locations, providing ideal hunting conditions for the Wood Storks.

But human-altered habitat, with canals and water-control structures reengineering the way water flows through South Florida, made it more difficult for wading birds, especially Wood Storks, to find prey at this season. To successfully fledge young, Wood Storks need a regular supply of abundant and concentrated fish throughout the nesting period. These birds have a relatively long reproductive period (approximately four months), and it is critical they start nesting in time to ensure fledging time and independence before the start of the rainy season when fish availability declines.

Over the years, Wood Storks have started nesting later in the season - sometimes not nesting at all - since altered water levels fail to provide enough time to raise young before the summer rains start up again.

Last year, however, ideal water and weather conditions brought on the strongest nesting season for these birds in more than 80 years. Heavy rains in 2017 flooded wetlands, seriously increasing fish and other prey populations. Later, dry weather caused water to recede, setting up conditions for wading birds to pick off prey limited to small pockets of water. Birds flocked to nesting areas they had previously abandoned in the southern Everglades. At the same time, tree islands in the central Everglades were surrounded by sufficient water to hold predators away from nests. Threatened Wood Storks built nearly 6,000 nests, which is more than twice the species' 10-year average and the third-highest count since the late 1960s.

It remains to be seen whether this year's situation will be close to being as productive as last year's boom. Researchers are watching.

In the long run, a lot will depend on habitat restoration, not simply waiting for the "right" rain cycle. Recently, the House of Representatives passed a bill that invests \$200 million for Everglades restoration. It will be up to the Senate to pass a bill that makes the same historic investment.

The Birding Community E-Bulletin is produced by Wayne R. Petersen, Director, Massachusetts Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program and Paul J. Baicich, Great Birding Projects

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Birds of North America Online

This phenomenal resource is available via subscription to anyone. Now it's about to be improved further by granting to its members access to [Birds of the World](#). [BNA Online](#) subscribers will automatically have access via their existing account. If you aren't already an account holder you can sign up here. It's an investment in your continuing education and an invaluable resource.



For inquiring minds, from [Funny Times](#)

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THE PELICAN

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February, 2020



Comments & Conservation Notes

This month we have a report from the recent Central Florida Regional Conservation Committee meeting.

The January 12 RCC meeting was held via conference call. The RCC is composed of representatives from Audubon Chapters in Central Florida: Orange, Ridge, West Volusia, Southeast Volusia, Highlands, Halifax River, Kissimmee Valley, Lake Region and Oklawaha Valley. The RCC meets three times per year to share information and provide updates on our regional conservation priorities for 2020 which are 1) promote Lake Apopka restoration, visitor access and a new Audubon Nature Center, and 2) Monitor and act on local and state government land use decisions impacting wildlife habitat in our geographic area.

At the January 12 meeting, the new Conservation Leadership Initiative (CLI) Coordinator, Kristen Sims, was introduced. Kristen will coordinate CLI graduates throughout the state connecting them with each other and with their local Audubon chapter activities. Kristen is based at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland. The president of the new UCF Audubon chapter, Lauren Puleo, was also introduced.

Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy for the FL Audubon Central Florida Policy Office, gave updates on legislative issues.

A decision was made on December 12 on the Osceola Parkway extension through a portion of Split Oak Forest, a tract of wilderness conservation lands east of Orlando in Osceola County. This was a compromise solution to the original proposal. It will add ten new acres of mitigation land to every one acre affected by the project. The RCC recommends chapters continue to pressure local officials to provide adequate funding for this.

There is concern about the request by CEMEX to expand their mining in the Green Swamp Wilderness area. 322,000 acres of the Green Swamp region was designated as an Area of Critical State Concern in 1974. It is located west of Highway 27 and east of Interstate 75 in Polk, Lake, Sumter, Hernando and Pasco Counties. The headwaters of the Peace River, Withlacoochee River, Oklawaha River, and Hillsborough River are located here. Its 560,000 acres of wetlands, flatlands and low ridges are bounded by prominent sandy ridge lines. Rainwater drains across the surface to create headwaters of the four major rivers: Rainwater also trickles down through the soil to replenish the Floridan aquifer system, the primary source of drinking water for most Floridians. The RCC chapters in that region were urged to contact the Lake County

Calendar & Events

Monday, February 17th, Program Meeting- Join us for an informative evening when our own Melissa Lammers and Dr. Don Spence give us a presentation on "Plants For Birds." If you've wondered what kind of plants you should have in your yard to attract wildlife, and especially birds, this is one you won't want to miss. We meet at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Ave, Holly Hill, FL 32117. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. We hope to see you there.

Field Trips

Friday, February 14th, Lake Apopka- Plan a sweet start to your Valentine's Day by joining David Hartgrove for a trip to one of the state's birding hot spots. This is a mostly driving trip with short walks to get better views of the birds, ducks and maybe a mammal or two. We'll meet to carpool at Target in Port Orange, behind Panera. **This is a change from the meeting spot on the Field Trip list due to Speed Week.** We'll meet at 7:00 am, Bring lunch. Questions? Call David, 386-235-1249.

Friday, February 21st, Dunlawton Bridge- We'll meet at 3:00 pm beneath the west side of the bridge for a casual walk around the area and to check the nearby rookery and the sandbar that gets exposed at low tide. Questions? Call David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249.

Field Trips With Others

Wednesday, February 12th, Lake Woodruff NWR- Join our friends from West Volusia Audubon Society for a caravan drive around the impoundments at Lake Woodruff NWR. This location is normally closed to driving, so this is a special event. For information on where to meet and any other questions, call Eli Schaperow, 407-314-7965.

Saturday, February 15th, Viera Wetlands- Join our friends from Southeast Volusia Audubon Society for this driving tour of one of the state's birding hot spots. Great Blue Herons nest here and their youngsters should be in nests clamoring for food this time of year. So lots of good photo ops. Meet them at 7:30 am at Florida Shores Plaza parking lot in Edgewater, (at the corner of Ridgewood Ave and Indian River Blvd) near Dunkin Donuts. Questions? Call Gail Domroski, 386-428-0447.

Continued below on page 2

Commissioners to oppose the CEMEX request for exemption. The Lake County Commission cannot approve this project on their own. It will also need to be approved by the Department of Economic Opportunity Division of Community Planning.

Another issue of concern discussed was legislation related to biosolid disposal. There is a company which wants to dump biosolids from treatment facilities on land in the Kissimmee basin, which would increase nitrogen levels affecting water resources. There is proposed legislation to tighten regulations and eliminate an exemption that currently allows this dumping. There is new technology that was started and had success in the City of Sanford some years ago to convert the biosolids to energy. That was abandoned during the Governor Scott era. RCC members were encouraged to advocate at the local level to encourage innovation to deal with biosolids from treatment facilities rather than dumping them on land.

Phyllis Hall, Seminole Audubon Society

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Audubon Goes To The Science and Engineering Fair

What an exciting day at the fair. Many fine youth with new ideas, exploring and experimenting using the research method and coming to practical conclusions. This was a great opportunity for them to explain their project to a number of different judges. There were about 150 projects present. Those who continue with their interest in science will make a positive impact for America.

Eli Schaperow and I were the only two judges this year. It is unknown why the third judge, from Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, didn't make it. Fortunately this was not a problem because after going through the project program, we found only 14 projects we thought would fall into our judging category. Last year there were twice as many projects to consider. Most of the students we listened to were in the 7th and 8th grades. All of them were full of enthusiasm for their projects. Some had more knowledge and in depth projects than others but all were involved. A wonderful experience and a chance at mental development for all.

Only three awards were given from Audubon this year. There was only one project in the senior division that we felt related to the environment strongly.

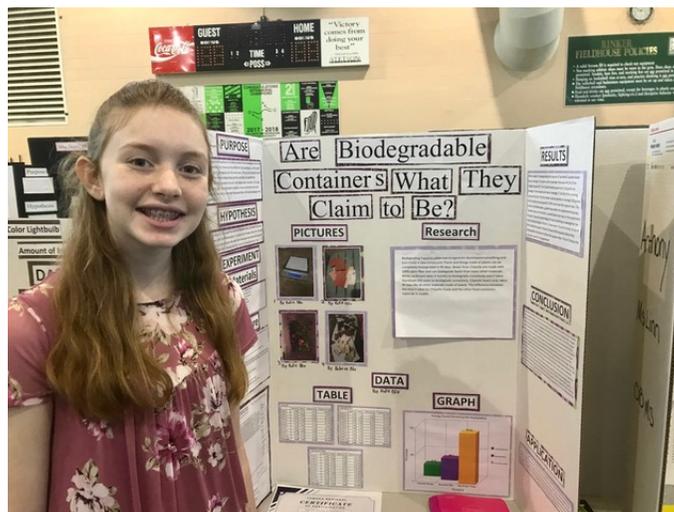
Pranov Swaminathan was the senior division first place winner. For only \$50 he developed a motorcycle muffler to remove CO2 from the exhaust. It is functional and he uses it on his bike. He said the material needs to be replaced every 1000 plus miles. He intends to continue working on this project and hopefully patent it.

Katie Blix was the first place winner in the junior division. She had a number of different paper and plant products to test how fast they would degrade in soil. Her sample of styrofoam of course was not bothered by this test. She expressed keen interest in pursuing a career in environmental science later in life.

Roseanna Tagg was the second place junior division winner. She tested the amount of oil necessary to decrease oxygen levels in water. She found a strong correlation to the degradation of oxygen (O2) in water and thereby to all life in the water. Even very small amounts strongly impacted to the O2 problem.

Eli and I were very impressed with the level of commitment we saw in these fine young boys and girls. We extend our congratulations to all of the participants.

Steve Underwood



2 From top to bottom are Pranov Swaminathan, Katie Blix and Roseanna Tagg with their winning entries.

Photos by Steve Underwood

Here's another in our continuing series, "Everyday Birding."

by Ray Scory

Two Days Together - Two Decades Apart

I keep a bird list journal - a book of multiple pages to be filled each season with names of birds that enter my yard and use my feeding station, consisting of multiple hanging feeders and a bird bath. I also record the birds that fly by or high in the sky and birds that I hear nearby. I have been doing this for 45 years, 25 in Connecticut and 20 here in Florida. This endeavor has become more than a bird list. It is a book of avian memories and experiences. A cherished book that I read as an endless novel, recounting pleasant stories that warm my soul.

I think back to September 2nd every year in Connecticut when at dusk swirling, diving, speeding masses of Common Nighthawks migrated over my house for at least 3 hours and I would sit on my outdoor patio in the waning light of day to watch. Only one year in 25 did they not fly over on September 2nd. They came on the 3rd. I remember the flock of blackbirds that would visit my yard every September to stay a few days. One morning I quickly glanced out our open bay window into the backyard and hurriedly passed. "Wait!" A yellow spot in the mass of black. I jolted to a stop, spun around, just missed the refrigerator and stumbled back to the window. A Yellow-headed Blackbird, usually found only west of the Mississippi River, in my yard! The flock shortly flew away and the Yellow-headed Blackbird never returned. I can now only tell the story. No photograph or expert witness do I have - just an everlasting memory.

My Florida journal holds many similar stories that surprise and captivate me. A favorite is the visit of two Sandhill cranes. They came up from the edge of the pond and nonchalantly walked around my house and stepped to the front door patiently waiting as would two intent solicitors. Frantically, I grabbed my camera and charged around and inside the house, positioning myself for story-telling photographs. One visit and never again, just like the Carolina Chickadee, Eastern Towhee, Common Nighthawk and the Wilson's Snipe showcased at my house only once. While I have conducted



Female Red-bellied Woodpecker- An early morning sunrise ushers in The Golden Hour, cloaking the pine tree and woodpecker in its cloak of golden yellow charm.

various bird counts and many Great Backyard Bird Counts from my backyard, I will eventually consider my latest Florida backyard bird count to be one of my most memorable. Not because of the sheer number of birds counted (30) or the most unusual observed, but because it was so different in many ways, all packaged together in a two day time frame.

Two days beheld the change from one decade to the next. December 31st to January 1st. One finishing 2019, the other beginning 2020. Two days side by side two decades involved. Doesn't happen often. Just every ten years. What better time to conduct a memorable backyard bird count. One for enjoyment, another to establish a historical mark in the course of time. I stayed relaxed and absorbed everything I saw. At the feeder the Northern Cardinals were the first to appear in the gray of early morning with The Tufted Titmouse soon to follow. I noticed the birds who used the feeder used the bird bath, too. The Blue jay did not stay long and the Tufted Titmouse departed quicker taking one black oil sunflower seed to a distant branch to feast on. Mourning doves would stay the longest especially on an open tray feeder.

For all the days I have waited for the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker to make its Winter appearance, I had to be in the yard waiting at the close of the day to observe the bird both days. Patience works. I watched the sunrise and sunset and saw the Golden Hour work its magic on our pine trees where a Red-bellied Woodpecker drummed. I watched the Mallards and Mottled Ducks come to the pond at different times and noticed where the flock of White Ibis fed. My special friend the Spotted sandpiper showed up and is always welcome, as is the "odd couple" a Tricolored heron and Snowy egret team that for years have search the edges of the pond.

A total of 30 species for the two days (25 on 12/31, 26 on 1/20) graced the confines of my house and sky above. I felt the breeze and looked at the sky and was unaware how fast the two days went by.

Among the birds seen were: Great Egret, Tricolored Heron, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Blue Jay, Mallard, Mottled Duck, Fish Crow, Great Horned Owl, Wood Stork, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Fish Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Palm Warbler, Northern Cardinal and Painted Bunting.



American Robins- Part of a larger flock of American Robins that collect at this pond's edge.

Winter Birding Tours Offer Everyone

A Chance To View Migrants

The Marine Discovery Center's Winter Birding Tours give avid and novice birders the opportunity to travel by boat to Disappearing Island during the winter months. This is one of the most important winter shorebird and migrant seabird sites on the state's Atlantic coast.

Guests on these tours disembark the 40-passenger Discovery Boat at Disappearing Island to explore the shoreline adjacent to Ponce de Leon Inlet. A variety of migratory bird species tend to gather on this beach and in surrounding areas, giving guests a chance to see birds they may only see once a year in Central Florida from December through April.

The next tour will be held on Thursday, Feb. 13, leaving MDC's dock on the North Causeway in New Smyrna Beach. All tours depart at 9:30 a.m., and return around 12:30 p.m. The cost is as follows: Adults, 40.00; seniors and students, 37.00; children 12 and under, 22.00.

The remaining dates for MDC's Winter Birding Tours will be on Thursday, March 19, and on Thursday, April 9. Guests on these tours are encouraged to dress accordingly for Florida winter weather and to wear footwear that may get wet. After leaving the boat, guests walk the shoreline in search of migratory and native shorebirds.

Tour participants are encouraged to bring binoculars, spotting scopes, camera gear, water, snacks and sunglasses for these tours. An emergency head (toilet) is on the boat.

A minimum of eight individuals is required for each tour with a maximum of 40 passengers allowed. Some of the birds that may be seen include: Arctic Tern, Common Tern, Piping Plover, Semi-palmated Plover, Wilson's Plover, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Greater Black-backed, Lesser-Black-backed and Herring Gulls and many others.

Contact the Marine Discovery Center at 386-428-4828 or go online at this [link](#) to book reservations before 5 p.m. on the day prior to each tour.

Lisa Mickey, [MDC](#)

* * * *



Male Cinnamon Teal at MINWR, photo by David Hartgrove

Update on Apopka, the Swallow-tailed Kite

Hello Swallow-tailed Kite supporters. Here's an update on the tagged Swallow-tailed Kite "Apopka" that we've been monitoring now since 2017 with your help. He's wintering once again in Rondonia, Brazil. Here's a map of his current location and entire southbound migration in 2019. We'll be watching for his safe return to Florida this month. Gina Kent, [ARCI](#)



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THE PELICAN

is published monthly by Halifax River Audubon, a chapter of the National Audubon Society and a member of Audubon Florida serving eastern Volusia County.

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Meets monthly September through May

President: David Hartgrove

Vice President: Vacant

Past President: Melissa Lammers

Treasurer: Ellen Tate

Recording Sec.: Pam Pennella

Membership Sec.: Joan Tague

Corresponding Sec: Steve Underwood

Historian: Holly Zwart-Duryea

At-Large: Barbara Northrup, Steve Underwood and Peggy Yokubonus

Committee Members

Conservation: David Hartgrove

Education: Holly Zwart-Duryea

Field Trips: Peggy Yokubonus

David Hartgrove

Newsletter Editor: David Hartgrove

Welcome: Pam Pinella

Webmaster: Joan Tague

* * * *

We wish to thank our sponsors, whose contributions play a vital part of allowing us to continue our work: Florida Power & Light, Colonial Colony and the Spruce Creek Garden and Nature Club.

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

Volume 66-Number 3. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
March, 2020



Comments & Conservation Notes

There's so much nostalgia for "the good ole' days" that we often forget all of the bad things from back then. Some started way back before any of us were around, like the Swamp Act of 1850. Unfortunately the same line of thinking (if it can be called that) has reared its ugly head again. Back then the Swamp Act was passed by Congress to facilitate the draining of the Everglades and other tracts of "useless" wetlands. The Clean Water Act and the Wetlands Protection Act of the early 1970's reversed most the damage from the Swamp Act. Now, once again, we're seeing a resurgence of this view of wetlands and again it's based on ignorance and greed.

One of the many terrible ideas for state government we can thank our ex governor, Rick Scott, for is his idea to have the state of Florida assume regulatory authority over Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Though this is national legislation there is a provision in it that allows states to take back this authority from the Army Corps of Engineers. While the Corps has a less than stellar record on wetlands protection their scientists were bound by the law and most seemed to take their mandate seriously, until they were over ruled by higher government authorities. In 2018 the state Legislature passed a bill which Scott was quick to sign that provided for Florida to assume jurisdiction over the permitting of "wetlands destruction." That's not what it's called. It'll be couched in innocent and wholly misleading language that will sound like it's protection. It's really the dropping of the green flag in a race to again assist in the rape and pillage of our state's resources.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has now published two legal notices announcing their intent to go through with this idiotic scheme. Governor DeSantis has voiced his approval, in spite of his avowed transformation into an advocate for our state's water resources. There's a loop hole that could be available to us. The Environmental Protection Agency has the power to veto this action by the state. We can write to EPA Administrator, Andrew Wheeler, to ask that he do just that. However, since he was placed in that position by President Trump and he seems bent on overseeing the destruction of the Agency it appears that would be an exercise in futility. Decades of enlightened water policy are about to be trashed on the altar of quick profits for the big money contributors to our legislators.

Our state and the planet face daunting challenges as the climate changes and sea levels rise. Going back to doing things like they did in "the good ole' days" is a recipe for disaster. But hey, it's good for the development community's bottom line and that's a good thing, right?

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, March 16th, Program Meeting- Paul Rebmann, President of the Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, will be our speaker and tell us about the wild flowers of Volusia County. His photos will amaze you, his commentary will enlighten you. It will be a real treat. We meet at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Ave, Holly Hill, FL 32117. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. We hope to see you there.

Field Trips

Friday, March 6th, Lake Woodruff NWR- This will be a bit different, from 3:00 to 6:00 pm We'll be doing a late afternoon hike with a possibility of meeting for dinner somewhere afterward. We will walk the man-made dikes that form the pools during the cooler evening hours, looking for water birds, otters and others. We'll meet at 3:00 pm at Int'l Square - East of I-95 on Int'l Speedway Blvd behind Krystal. Questions, call Joan Tague, 386-871-6049.

Friday, March 13th, Sweetwater Wetlands- Join Joan Tague for this trip to one of the state's newest and best birding locations. Due to the distance to Gainesville, we're meeting at 6:30 am at Ormond Town Square 1498 W Granada Boulevard Ormond Beach behind Chick-Fil-A. Bring lunch. This one has a lot of walking. Questions, call Joan Tague, 386-871-6049.

Wednesday, March 18th, Ocala National Forest- Join Joan Tague for this trip to look for Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bachman's Sparrow and early spring migrants. We'll meet at 7:30 am to carpool from Ormond Town Square 1498 W Granada Boulevard Ormond Beach behind Chick-Fil-A. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Our Next Out of Town Trip

Tuesday, April 21st thru Friday, April 24th, Fort DeSoto- Join us for this, our second out of town trip of the year. Fort DeSoto is one of the best places in the state to witness the wonder of Spring migration. On last year's trip we had 15 warbler species in an hour just after a storm. We have a block of rooms reserved under the Halifax River Audubon name at the [Holiday Inn, St Pete West](#), 727-322-0770. If you haven't done so already call to make your reservation now. We'll meet at the big flag (those of us who've been there know this spot) at 1:00 pm on Tuesday, April 21st. Questions, call David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249.

HRA Does The GBBC At OBEDC



Education Chair, Holly Zwart-Duryea, shows some new birders their checklists and explains the rules.



Chapter President, David Hartgrove, does an interview with Larry Whitler for the podcast.

* * * *



Swallow-tailed Kite

Photo by Joyce Stefanic

They're Back!

Swallow-tailed Kites have returned from their wintering grounds in South America. Here's a [link](#) to a fascinating story about them and the people working to save them.

Our chapter's tent and table was set up at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center on Saturday, February 15th, for the Great Backyard Bird Count. Joan Tague again took charge of preparations for this family friendly event and it could not have been better organized. Thanks to all of the chapter's volunteers for their help. It made a greater event for everyone.

And we made it into national media, sort of. A couple on bikes approached Becky and Ellen Tate, who were out on a trail site with their scopes set up. The couple were Robin MacBlane and Larry Whitler, who have a national podcast for kids called "[Robin and The Giant](#)", of which [Storybook Railroad](#) is a part. Click on this [link](#) to hear the podcast of this episode featuring interviews with several members.

Twenty plus families took part in the festivities and the kids had fun picking out their "duckies**", having collected all of their stickers at the stations and games. It was a fun learning experience for all and we have even bigger plans for next year.

David Hartgrove, Photos by Luis Villalon

** The "duckies" are in a class all their own. Three years ago when Joan was planning for the first GBBC she found these multicolored, "multi-personalities" rubber duckies. There are Holstein duckies, giraffe duckies, extra popular with the kids, "World of War Craft" duckies, biker duckies; the selection seems endless and the kids get to pick their own prize duckie.

by Ray Scory

My Wood Stork Saga

Wood Storks are fun. More so, they are becoming more fascinating. I don't remember seeing Wood Storks in New England. However, here in Florida, over time, I began to watch them more closely. Maybe to find out why they are playing with my mind and that is a good thing.

More specifically, I am impressed by their stoic demeanor. Like most waterbirds here in Florida, patience is their most visible and obvious behavior. How do they stand in one spot so long with out moving, without even moving their eyes? I wish I had a piece of the patience of a Wood Stork. Their absolute rigid, vertical posture complemented by a long, gray, slightly curve beak running the length of its chest presents the impression of a wise, confident, able bird. "Preacher" is one of its collective names. Standing in its cloak of white feathers highlighted by a dark featherless head and black legs we get a look of solemn understanding. No wonder many call this bird, "Preacher" and a flock is called a muster of Wood Storks.

Of all the birds that I have watched over a life time, and that is a long time, a few birds and my experiences with them remain vivid. While I may not remember the all names of places and people, the impact of these special experiences are everlasting.

Especially one, the Wood Stork who waits patiently in front of a sun porch across the pond from my home.

For many years our neighbor has fed Wood Storks everyday and I have seen up to six routinely marching up to the porch at supper time. For the past eight months, one still visits, forlornly waiting for a meal. It is not to happen. The house is vacant - up for sale. The women have moved. It is sad to watch. The Wood Stork looks sad. Is it only a condition of its posture or our quickness to attribute human traits to wild birds or animals? Or is a power as yet undefined?

One evening the lone Wood Stork flew across the pond to my screen porch door and looked in at me. Sad and lonely, I would say. I felt the pain. I wanted to hug it. To comfort it. To say, " please don't be so sad, everything will be OK." Crazy, huh? It's only a bird. But a wonderful experience. At this one time visit I photographed the bird up close and was able to read the band - black with white #102 on the left leg and a silver band on the right leg. This bird was banded at the St Augustine Alligator Farm as a fledgling three years ago.

While I started on a formidable email/telephone journey to record my banded Wood Stork, I shall leave out the tedious details and alert you to some important information. Foremost, record the color, number and placement of bands on the bird's legs or wings. The large number band is the color band (B&W or Color), the silver band contains the serial number and is unreadable unless hand held. The [Patuxent Wildlife Center Bird Banding Laboratory](#) is where you report your sighting of a banded bird. Its questionnaire is very thorough so be ready with details like GPS location, weather, etc.

However, if this gets messy, contact a very nice lady, Chelsea Steinbrecher-Hoffmann, General Biologist, at (301)497-5795 or [email](#) her. She gave me permission to publish her address information. Tell her you know the Florida birder who emailed her the nice photographs of the Wood Storks.

This was a wonderful birding experience - from the Wood Stork waiting at the sun porch window to the thank you from Chelsea for the Wood Stork photos.



Wood Stork on my patio with bands visible. Please note the color band with large number on the left leg.



A muster of Wood Storks photographed at Spruce Creek Park in Port Orange. Notice how they hold their bills open when feeding. Wood Storks are tactile feeders and though they can see quite well use very sensitive receptors along that big bill to detect prey.

Text and photos by Ray Scory

Plants For Birds Project Up and Running

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society has partnered with the Marine Discovery Center to design a Plants for Birds project there that will offer area residents a view of what they can do to enhance their yards and turn their neighborhoods into meccas for wildlife. SEVAS volunteers, Joyce Riddel and Ed Carlson, took on heading up the effort and contacted Danny Young, owner of [Young Bear Environmental](#) and a long time Volusia resident, to help. Funding for the project was obtained through grants from Audubon Florida and Florida Power & Light Co.

Since 1970 we've seen a huge decline in the numbers of birds we see here. Not only are our nesting birds disappearing but the migrants we see twice a year have seen even bigger declines. The primary reasons are habitat loss and the use of pesticides. Residential turf grass requires huge amounts of water and applications of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and the other compounds that are helping turn our waterways into algae filled dead zones.

In a quote from an article that appeared in the Daytona Beach News-Journal, Joyce Riddel said, "Birds are losing their food and their nesting grounds. The use of non-native grasses and plants in our landscapes that are treated with chemicals, creating a uniform tidy 'same look' space, thwart the attraction of insects and pollinators that would be found in native habitats, no bugs, no birds." A phrase we heard at our recent meeting when our own Melissa Lammers gave a presentation on this subject.



Photo by Cindy Casey

Pictured above, left to right: Bill Cox, SEVAS Co-President; Jacqui Sulek, Audubon Florida Chapters Representative; Ed Carlson; Joyce Riddel; Marsha Cox, SEVAS Co-President; Katherine Rein and Danny Young of Young Bear Env. and sign holder, Charlie Peacock.

This is a great project that will provide an example to visitors of how they can turn their yards into inviting habitat for birds and contribute to being a part of the solution to a bigger problem. This month they will be looking for volunteers to help plant the garden. If you have a pair of gardening gloves and like to get outside in the cool air of March, they would be happy to have you join them. Check out the [SEVAS website](#) for information or call Joyce Riddel at 386-314-6543. You can also [email](#) her.

David Hartgrove

In Memoriam

It is with deep sadness that we write of the passing of Marion Monaghan. Marion was a long time board member and co-chair of our Education Committee. A retired teacher she worked to promote Audubon Adventures and was a regular on most of our field trips for years. She will be missed.

* * * *

Photo Contest Non Winners

Each year there are thousands of entries in Audubon's annual photo contest. Not all can be winners but the ones that aren't are often so stunning and show such interesting behaviors that they merit a showing too. Check [these](#) out.

* * * *

Winter Birding Tours Continue

The Marine Discovery Center has two more of its popular [Winter Bird Tours](#) aboard their pontoon boat scheduled for March 19th and April 9th. To reserve a spot, click the link and scroll down to Winter Bird Tour.

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The Pelican

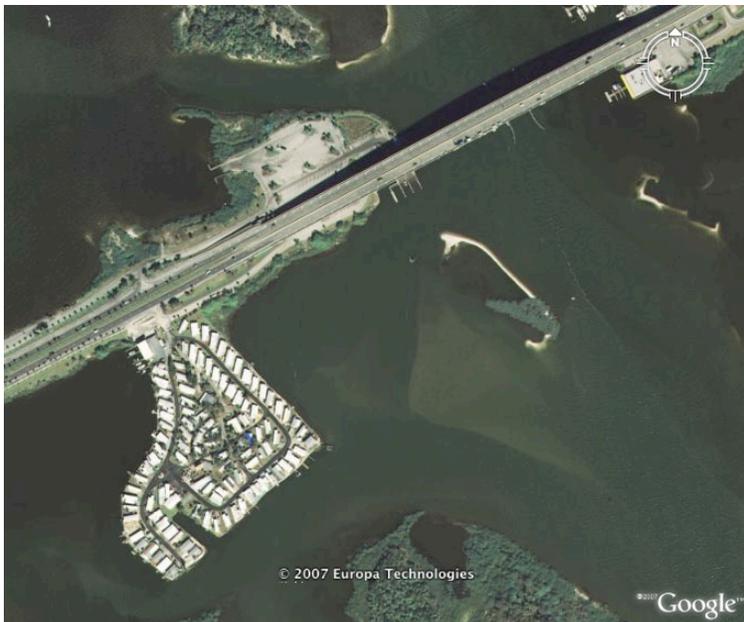
For wildlife & people since 1923

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April, 2020



Comments & Conservation Notes

If you're not familiar with the name, "Pelican Key Marina", you soon will be. It's just a dream now, the dream of two firefighters



from Seminole County who purchased the area in the center of the photo above. The State Constitution says that all submerged land in the state belongs to the state, "except." The submerged land between Rookery Island (the comma shaped island across from the boat ramps) and Seabird Island Mobile Home Park is one of those exceptions.

This isn't the first time someone has proposed a marina in this location. In 2008 two guys from Titusville proposed an identical marina plan. In fact the current plan was this old plan at first. The new developers, much to their credit, organized a meeting with the residents of Seabird Island, to which Audubon was invited. Fierce opposition from both Seabird Island homeowners and Audubon helped sink the plans back in 2008. The new developers wanted to avoid that outcome if possible. They listened to the concerns raised by both the homeowners and our chapter. They came back with a very much scaled down plan size wise and included a series of amenities that will make the marina much more eco friendly.

At our March 2nd board meeting we voted to oppose this marina project. Once it's built it's there forever and it will devastate the area for use by birds and our members. Stay tuned. More on this issue later. *David Hartgrove*

Calendar & Events

RED ALERT!

Okay, that was a bit melodramatic but it was also meant to offer a bit of comic relief. As you all know by now our board voted to cancel all activities until at least May 1st due to concerns about the Corona virus and the Covid-19 lung infection it carries. Since so many of us are "in our golden years", and therefore more susceptible to the ravages of the disease, we're following the recommendations of the Centers For Disease Control in the cancellation of events. All of the other events that we would have participated in: Lagoonyacy at the Marine Discovery Center, a bird walk for Ponce Inlet, Turtle Day at the Marine Science Center, etc. have all been cancelled or rescheduled.

Fort DeSoto, the destination for our planned overnight trip this month is closed completely, except for one boat ramp. So, even if we can't go together, you're still free to go to places like Merritt Island NWR, Lake Woodruff NWR, Ormond Central Park, Sugar Mill Gardens, in Port Orange or any of a number of other spots to see Spring migrants as they pass through our area on their way north to their nesting grounds. Maybe it's time to start that backyard checklist you've been promising yourself you're going to do. Let Ray Scory's article on page 2 about the Great Backyard Bird Count be your guide or make it up as you go along. It's your list after all.

* * * *



House Wren, photo by Peter May

by Ray Scory

Embrace the moment - only four days - in February. A Friday to a Monday and you only need to participate for fifteen minutes for each day to register and make it official. Needless to say you can spend all 96 hours (should you not weary), or assign as many hours per day as your schedule allows. You have complete time freedom here. The bonus, you get experience, surprise, beauty, discovery, secrets, peace, a sense of helping and awe. This miracle drug is the "Great Backyard Bird Count" and is readily available without a prescription.

I take advantage of the four days offered. The current rules allow for any location of your choosing. Normally, I play to the letter of the project. However, this year I did deviate from my past policy and counted for about three hours around the Dunlawton Bridge. Keeping within the rules of the project, I submitted a separate species list for each of the four days at my home and one list for three hours at the Dunlawton Bridge.

In 1998 the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon launched the first online international birdwatching project. Its purpose was to, in a four day period on the second week of February, invite all birdwatchers around the world to count and report details of birds observed in an area where they live. This is my twenty-third consecutive year participating.

This last year's "GBBC" 2020 was as exciting as my first one in 1998. That is when a birding friend and I walked out before daybreak to a power line crossing a "Rails to Trail" greenway. Here we observed about 12 to 15 American woodcocks rapidly yet expertly flying low over this open space scattered with low bushes, high grasses and mid-sized trees as if trying to avoid the very insect prey they were attacking. This greenway extends from my former Cheshire, Connecticut home to the campus of Yale University. The Greenway meanders through open fields, light splattered wetlands, babbling brooks, deciduous forests and quiet ponds. Needless to say, a great place to bird.

Apparently, I wasn't the only one enjoying the project. This year, worldwide, 268,674 participants submitted 249,444 checklists and recorded a total of 40,277,369 individual birds from a total count of 6942 species. Most frequently reported - Northern Cardinal showed up on 70,168 checklists. Worldwide, the most numerous species counted - Snow goose, 7,194,952. Florida had 302 species reported on 8291 checklists from 506 participants. Volusia County had 163 species reported on 249 checklists from 506 participants.

This represents the highest number of participants ever in the GBBC and the highest number of species and total birds counted. For more data, both in detail and quantity, please go to the [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) website and click on the "Explore Data" link in the top menu. My personal count for 4 days was a total of 46 species (37 species were observed at my home and 9 species at the Dunlawton Bridge).

This is a totally enjoyable adventure and the data submitted is valuable. If you haven't already, log in for next year. It is a different kind of birdwatching experience. After 23 years, I still wake up before daybreak, look out my window and prepare to accept a new challenge. I might see a first-time bird in the yard to add to this year's count of 46 total species. Everlasting memories and new ones to be added.

Ray Scory

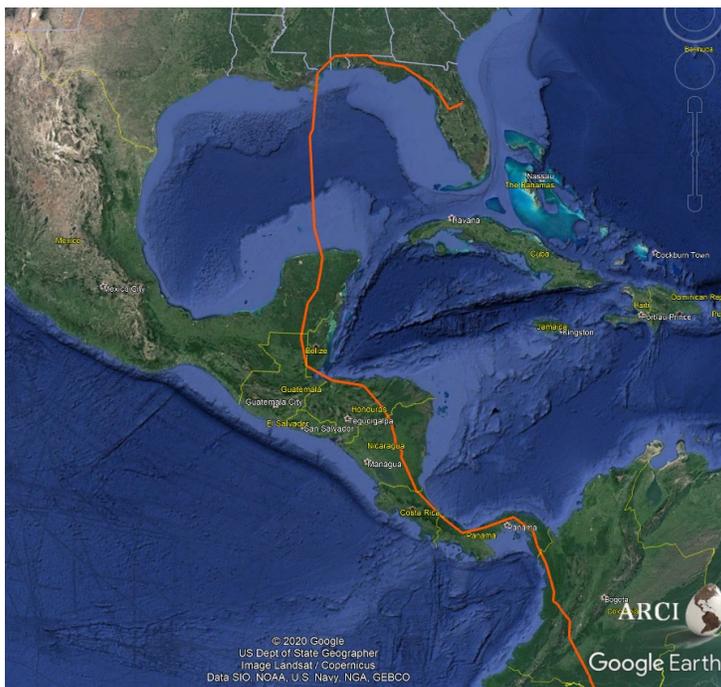
In our February Pelican we published a report on Apopka, a rehabilitated Swallow-tailed Kite, first tagged with a satellite tracking device in 2017. Here's an update.

Apopka Returns!

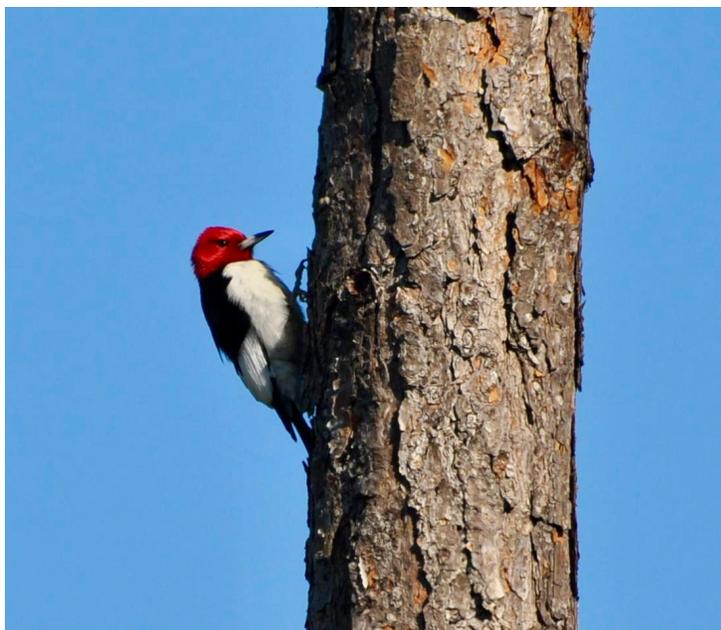
I would like to be the bearer of some good news! Apopka made it back to Altamonte Springs, FL!! He flew due north to Mississippi and took 4 days to get "home". Let's see if he nests this year.

Gina Kent, Research Ecologist and Coordinator

[Avian Research and Conservation Institute](#)



* * * *



Red-headed Woodpecker at Lake Woodruff NWR

photo by David Hartgrove



Great Backyard Bird Count 2020



©RayScory

The birds featured in this montage were all photographed during the four days of the Great Backyard Bird Count, 2020. Birds coming to, floating by or flying above my house. They represent a great number of birds that visit and live in our county of Volusia, Florida.
Photo by Ray Scory

Swallow-tailed Kites aren't the only birds the good folks at the Avian Conservation and Research Institute work with. Here's an edited article from their blog, from November, 2019, Ed.

A Farewell to Two Satellite-tracked Reddish Egrets: Ding #2 and Darling

ARCI

We bid farewell last week to the strikingly handsome male Reddish Egret, Ding#2. He has been an icon of the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge's Wildlife Drive for years, the last five of which while carrying one of ARCI's tracking devices and contributing over 8,000 precise locations as he fed, rested, roosted, nested, and graced us with his presence on Sanibel. Perhaps you saw or photographed him or his mate, Ding#1, at one of the three big impoundments on the Drive. Ding#2 was one of five adult Reddish Egrets we tagged in Lee County in 2014 and 2015 with financial support from the Ding Darling Wildlife Society (the Friends of the Refuge), Sanibel-Captiva Audubon Society, and a few generous Sanibel residents; and the logistical support of the J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge.

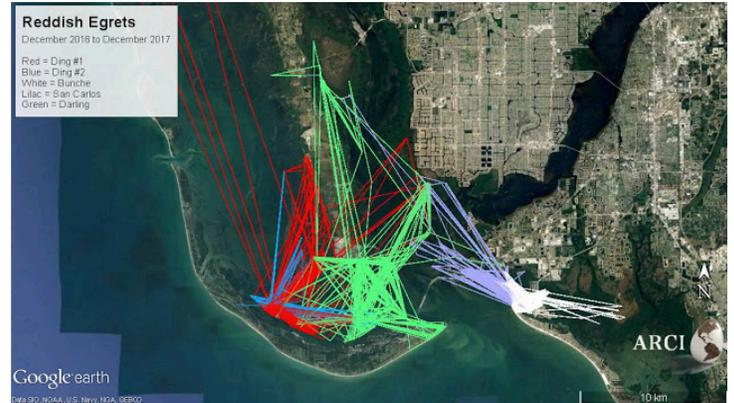


Ding #2, he could often be seen foraging at one of the impoundments off the Wildlife Drive at the J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Jim Bennight

Ding#2's data represent a priceless conservation legacy, making his debilitation and death, almost certainly the result of yet another severe invasion of red tide, all the sadder. Although the complex interplay of all the contributing factors – biological, geochemical, meteorological, etc. – are difficult to unravel, most professionals who should know believe the increasingly destructive impacts of red tide, a natural phenomenon, are somehow related to human disruption of natural climate conditions. Like billions (hundreds of thousands... millions?) of our planet's affected species, Sanibel's tagged Reddish Egrets may be just a few more minuscule bits of the accelerating collateral damage the Earth is incurring as a result of the destruction human greed and corruption are imposing on our one and only home. Another satellite tracked male, "Darling", was soon dead too, with almost the same symptoms.

Even if Ding#2 and Darling had survived to be released back into their chosen homes, what would they have faced? We know from colleagues at the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation who track red tide levels that the 2019 outbreak exceeds the severity of 2018 conditions specifically in the areas where Sanibel's Reddish Egrets feed the most. Red tide's impacts vary with the volume of polluted fresh water

arriving from Lake Okeechobee via the Caloosahatchie River – an abundant food source for the dinoflagellates that coalesce into the algal blooms we know as red tide. Compounding this factor, warmer Gulf water temperatures resulting from climate change are pushing more red tide blooms on shore and prolonging the duration of each invasion. For Sanibel's animal residents that are strongly faithful to established, year-round home ranges, such as Reddish Egrets, there simply is no escape.



One year of satellite data from five tracked Reddish Egrets.

What may be next for Reddish Egrets on Sanibel Island? Will the lost birds be replaced? Please consider that Reddish Egrets are already dangerously close to extirpation in Florida after barely showing some short-lived signs of increase following the plume-hunting destruction of 100 years ago, only to reverse course in the 1990s and begin their present downward slide.

Consider also the movement data our imperiled friends produced while still healthy over the last five years, plus what we acquired from tracking a larger number in the Florida Keys. Reddish Egrets in Florida rarely move from their established home ranges, and when they do, it is temporary (not really a seasonal migration). Furthermore, the few places that remain occupied by Reddish Egrets, and which are also close enough to supply re-colonizing birds for Sanibel, are themselves being subjected to red tide. A timely case in point: We just received word that an unmarked Reddish Egret was found today (November 21st) appearing ill and impaired on a Marco Island beach. Unfortunately, it evaded capture, so we may never know its fate.

What should we all do? Vote for leaders, regardless of party and at every level of government, who support a healthy environment and sustainable planet. Pure and simple. This is the most important action we can take to produce sufficient change soon enough and at an adequate scale to begin reversing the certain, deadly course we are now on.

If you need assurances, just look to the birds. They could not possibly be sending us a stronger, clearer, more life-or-death message.

* * * *

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

Sea Watch at Tom Renick Park, with Harry Robinson

"For the record a Right Whale swam to the south on the 18th." This cryptic sentence ends Harry's report from February, 2020. Several days a week, every week, rain or shine, Harry is on post at Tom Renick Park, in Ormond By The Sea, counting birds seen offshore and overhead. It's kind of an extended "Big Sit." For the past five years he's also done counts at the Port Orange Bridge. He's often joined by Kim Ramos, Sam Krah, Eli Schaperow and others.

In February he saw 106 species from the park. This is the highest species count yet for the month of February. Included were single Red-throated Loons on the 5th, 20th and 26th, 438 Northern Gannets on the 10th and a sub-adult Great Cormorant flew north along the shore on the 28th. The second one this year. A bird rarely seen south of New York. Wood Storks were present all month with a peak count of 33 on the 13th.

There was a single Blue-winged Teal on the 19th with four Canvasbacks flying to the south on the 6th. Greater Scaup peaked at 50 on the 1st and ten on the 6th whilst Lesser Scaup peaked at 145 on the 1st. There were single Surf Scoter on the 7th, 10th and 17th with three on the 22nd. There were four White-winged Scoter on the 9th. However Black Scoters were rare only 37 seen all month. A Long-tailed Duck flew to the north on the 7th whilst four Buffleheads flew to the south on the same day go figure! Finally for this group a male Common Goldeneye flew to the north on the 22nd.

Moving on to raptors, there was a Northern Harrier on the 27th with single Sharp-shinned Hawks on the 4th and 24th (the Coopers Hawks are already displaying). There were single Red-tailed Hawks on the 2nd, 22nd and 28th. A male American Kestrel has been present all month. There were single Merlins on the 22nd and 29th and single Peregrine Falcons were seen on the 8th, 9th and 29th.

An American Golden-Plover flew to the north on the 19th it was still in winter plumage. There was a Semipalmated Plover on the 14th with a Lesser Yellowlegs on the 4th. Red Knot peaked at 135 on the 1st and 60 on the 7th. A flock of 12 Dunlin flew to the south on the 27th. Single Pomarine Jaegers were seen on the 6th and 11th. During the month 22 Parasitic Jaegers were counted with five on the 14th. This has been an exceptional year for Bonaparte's Gulls there were 28 on the 4th, 24 on the 16th and 70 on the 22nd. There was a "white" first winter Iceland Gull on the 10th. During the month seven Lesser Black-backed Gulls were seen. Royal Terns kept moving to the north with high counts of 533 on the 9th and 506 on the 16th. Forster's Tern also moved to the north with 176 on the 1st, 467 on the 2nd, 122 on the 6th and 151 on the 23rd. Black Skimmers were seen most days with 43 on the 1st, 43 on the 9th, 59 on the 22nd and 112 on the 24th.

There was a White-winged Dove on the 13th. There was a Downy Woodpecker on the 14th with single Pileated Woodpeckers on the 8th, 18th, 19th and 24th. This species is always a surprise as there are no areas of woodland large or small. There were single Eastern Phoebe all month with three on the 18th. There was another Florida Scrub-Jay on the 1st. American Crows were present all month. There was a Purple Martin on the 6th with two on the 29th. There was a single Northern Rough-winged Swallow on the 25th. The House Wren was still resident through the month. There was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet on the 11th and two Eastern Bluebirds were seen on the 5th a high count. Only low numbers of American Robins were seen this year with a high count of 445 on the 4th.

There was a Gray Catbird on the 27th and a Brown Thrasher was seen on the 18th and 26th. Cedar Waxwings have been common, there were 670 on the 4th, 300 on the 18th, 495 on the 25th, 620 on the 27th and a very high 1,380 flying to the south on the 28th (the high count is actually that of 1,460 on January 12, 2018). There was a Louisiana Waterthrush on the 27th (with the Gray Catbird) after the passage of a front. There was a Savannah Sparrow present to at least the 12th. Brown-headed Cowbirds peaked at 90 on the 3rd, 260 on the 25th and 165 on the 27th. House Finches were seen regularly with five on the 11th and four on the 19th. It was a good month for American Goldfinch with 29 on the 14th, 45 on the 23rd and 45 again on the 27th. He's hoping for a new species there soon.

Harry Robinson & Editor

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We wish to thank our sponsors, whose contributions play a vital part of allowing us to continue our work: Florida Power & Light, Colonial Colony and the Spruce Creek Garden and Nature Club.

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

Volume 66-Number 5. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
May, 2020



Comments & Conservation Notes

As we all shelter in place, wash our hands, wear our masks to the store and hope for an eventual return to “normal”, many aspects of life go on. One of them being the Regional Conservation Committee meetings. RCC’s are made up of geographically connected Audubon chapters around the state that meet quarterly to discuss conservation issues with a regional impact. Our chapter is associated with two RCC’s, Central Florida and Indian River Lagoon. On Sunday, April 26th, the Central Florida RCC, headed by chapter Past President, Paula Wehr, held a teleconference meeting via Zoom. Paula organized this call in meeting at 10:30 that morning. Vice President, Melissa Lammers and I called in and joined chapter leaders from West Volusia, Southeast Volusia, Seminole, Orange, Oklawaha Valley, Highlands and others to speak with Audubon Florida Senior Policy Advocate, Charles Lee, about issues effecting the Central Florida area.

First on the agenda was an expected vote by the Seminole County Commission on a proposed land swap to settle a law suit filed by a developer. At issue is 238 acres of prime conservation land adjacent to the Econlochatchee River. The developer wants to swap 669 acres of mostly old farm land for this pristine riverside land that in Seminole County’s master plan is to stay in conservation. By the time you read this a decision will have been made.

Next up was a request for calls and letters to the governor to veto Senate Bill 410. Among other things this bill would allow cities that annex property to over ride county comprehensive plans and allow development where none is permitted under the county plan. We’re cautiously optimistic of a veto.

Then we moved on to the state budget. Due to all of the closures for the Coronavirus the state will see huge tax shortfalls and there are sure to be draconian cut backs in some services. Florida Forever is funded from documentary tax stamp revenue. So we’re hopeful that the 100 million currently in the budget for Florida Forever will survive budget talks later.

Senate Bill 712, the “Clean Waterways Act” has been attacked by some environmental groups as insufficient and a weak bill. Audubon Florida says we support the bill because it’s a move in the right direction. It establishes good oversight of septic tanks for the first time in years, allows the Department of Agriculture to inspect every 2 years for compliance with regulations on biosolids spreading on agricultural lands and other regulatory tweaks that make a solid start on dealing with Florida’s massive water pollution problems.

The only thing we brought to the table was the issue of the

Continued on the following page

Calendar & Events

REST OF THE SEASON CANCELLED

SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER

We regret the necessity of doing so but common sense and good judgement dictate that we cancel the remaining meeting and our field trips. That doesn’t mean you can’t go out to places that are still open, or may reopen soon, and enjoy the wonders of our sunny climate while looking for birds, dragon flies, butterflies or the wide variety of plant life here. The April board meeting was cancelled but we will meet online via Zoom in May and perhaps beyond.



Mississippi Kite

Photo by Alice Horst

Alice Horst, from Marion County, went out recently and found this Mississippi Kite constructing its nest. From “The Birder’s Handbook” we learn that they build their nest from 4 feet to 135 feet up in trees, that both parents incubate the 1 to 3 eggs for 31 days and that the chicks fledge from the nest 34 days after hatching. Their diet consists mostly of large insects caught in flight. They’ve also been known to nest near wasp or hornet nests. Ornithologists speculate that this is done because the wasps attack and kill botflies, which feed on nestlings. These birds lack the prominent, long forked tail of their Swallow-tailed Kite cousins. However they’re graceful, acrobatic fliers and a joy to watch.

planned Pelican Key Marina that I wrote of last month. In looking at both the Army Corps of Engineers and FDEP websites I see no evidence that actual permits have been applied for as yet. Stay tuned for more on this later.

David Hartgrove

* * * *

Time for another in our continuing series, "Everyday Birding"

by Ray Scory

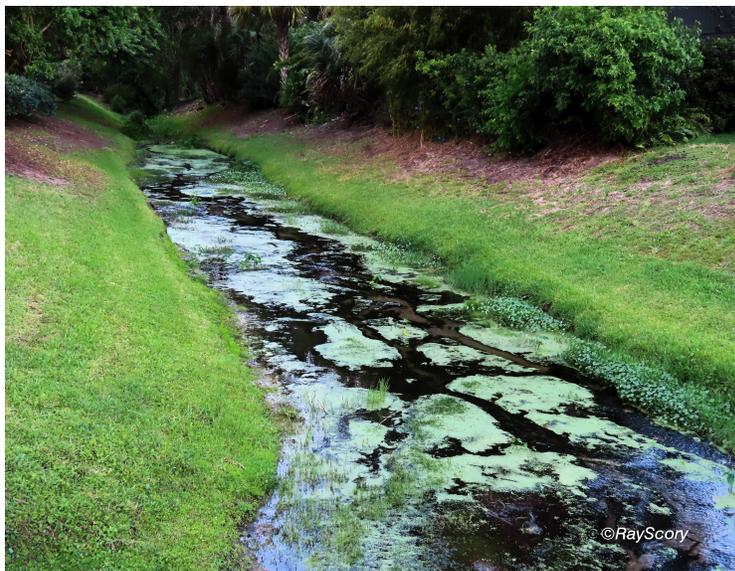
Verdant Creek

Jane and I have been walking along Country Lane for the past few months. It is approximately a forty minute walk depending how long we stop at the creek that cuts through our neighborhood and under the road that we walk along. The creek is a rivulet of water serpentine down through the neighborhood, under the bridge and out the other side of the road to continue its merry way. Consequently the creek is a delightful potpourri of plants, grasses, small trees, flowers and wildlife that reflect the fauna and flora that abide in our town.

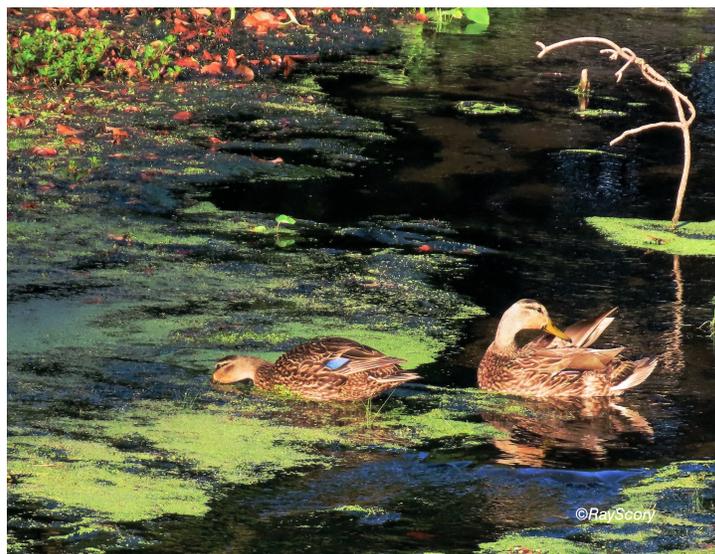
I have walked past this creek many times the past twenty years, at times for a thirty-five minute walk or a one and half hour journey along this sidewalk trail. Some wonderful birding along the way, For many years a flock of White-eyed Parakeets glided by and discovering the Great Horned Owl perched high in a pine tree was always a treat. Behind the community clubhouse is a medium sized fresh water pond. A favorite place for residential Mallards and migratory ducks. Always during winter Lesser Scaup make an appearance and once I observed a Redhead mixed in with the floating flock. One time I photographed a Prairie Warbler in the parking lot of the community clubhouse. "A Prairie Warbler, in a parking lot!" I witnessed a Cooper's Hawk attack a Black-throated Blue Warbler as its mate screamed in angry terror and listened to the repetitious song of a Brown Thrasher on a branch no more than six feet from me.

By this creek Jane and I stand and look, pointing out nuances of nature we keep discovering in the creek. We say hello to people as they walk by. It seems to me, at this particular time of early morning, I see more people walking than ever before. Jane mentioned that more people are taking walks closer to home and therefore they are taking closer looks at things. And we are taking closer looks at the creek and the meandering stream of water. The art of it, the life of it, the memories of it. The joy of it.

Can a stream hold a dream? Can it be a roaring, a cascading river, or a babbling brook, or just a trickle of running water in a shallow creek? Is it a place to stop and look and just let your mind follow the flow of the shining water? Isn't it a place to look for things that are there that we miss when we frantically walk by or dismiss as, "there is nothing to see here, its only a sidewalk over a creek?" Isn't it refreshing to see, and hear and feel the strength of the creek. To see small fingerling fish darting by, a three leaf water plant pushing through the surface of the soft flowing water and "Yes" the singing of the birds - Northern Cardinals, Northern Mockingbirds, the melodic tunes of Carolina Wrens and then, two Mottled Ducks feasting on tiny aquatic plants. Occasionally a raccoon appears or a Florida Black Racer snake. Blue, green or yellow dragonflies make appearances. So much to see, to enjoy the contrasts of colors with the shades of green. A place to relax at your own pace, to reminisce, to look ahead or to let the creek do what it does best- to steadily move along with your dreams as you relax and watch and absorb the charming mystique of the creek.



The Verdant Creek. Manmade or natural is not the question. That it is here now is important. "Green with growing plants" is the definition of the word verdant. First used in 1581, but hardly used today. I like my impression created by the word.



Two Mottled Ducks have plenty to eat here with floating and underwater plants abundant. It is enjoyable to watch the ducks eat and gradually swim quietly up stream - together. Jane and I stop here every day just to watch.

Article and Photos by Ray Scory

* * * *

From the Quotable Birder

"Sometimes I feel a strange exhilaration up here which seems to come from something beyond the mere stimulus of flying. It's a feeling of belonging to the sky, of owning and being owned- if only for a moment- by the air I breathe. It is akin to the well known claim of the swallow: each bird staking out his personal bug strewn slice of heaven, his inviolate property of the blue."

Guy Murchie Jr., *Song of the Sky*

Here's an article Chuck Tague wrote on his blog 25 years ago. Chuck passed away several years ago and we miss his smile and patient voice daily. Editor.

Veeries

It was a long, grueling and frustrating day for the Advanced Birding Class from the Rachel Carson Institute at Chatham University. Our adventure began shortly after eight in the morning at Ohiopyle State Park. I was the instructor, and even for me the initial shock of the situation was staggering. Just a week before we had marveled at countless pockets of brilliant songbirds, flocks of migrants concentrated in frenzied clusters as they gleaned caterpillars, aphids and flies from emerging leaves. Now individuals and pairs were widely scattered across the mountain forests, totally enveloped by the lush foliage that had exploded almost over night.

If it wasn't for their songs we never would have known birds were there. We scanned the treetops for movement. Someone spotted a shaking twig. With our heads tilted too far back, our necks twisted, our binoculars beyond vertical and our elbows pointing almost skyward, we desperately searched the canopy. After a quick pause in a poorly lit opening a small figure vanished. Someone politely muttered "damn". It was probably me. The beauty and diversity of bird sounds on the bright spring morning was enchanting. The tones and rhythms were a delight, but the prospect of identifying the singers frightened us all. Within minutes I'd challenged the class to memorize and ignore the constant singsong of the Red-eyed Vireo, recognize an undefinable quality in the variable songs of the Baltimore Oriole, compare the songs of two male American Redstarts that had nothing in common and distinguish between the short, emphatic "che-bek" of the Least Flycatcher and the short but only slightly less emphatic "Pit-Ze" of the Acadian Flycatcher, two sounds that I'm sure almost no one heard.

This was just the beginning. Each turn in the trail and each change of habitat brought different sounds and new challenges. Buzzes, rattles, whistles and trills filled the fields, echoed through the trees and competed for our attention. Although each was an important signal that communicated the singers' species, sex, territory, and willingness to mate, they were just noise to most of the listeners. I continually amused and confused the class with nonsensical lines that verbally represented the phrasing and rhythms of the songs.

"The Chestnut-sided Warbler whistles 'Pleased, pleased, pleased to meet-cha.' The Black-and-white Warbler whines 'Weese, weese, weese.' The redstart sings 'weesaw - weesaw - wheet-e-o,' but not always, and the Indigo Bunting invariably delivers a series of couplets from the tip of the highest tree. His song is 'fire, fire - where, where - here, here - put it out!'"

Songs that were easily recognized an hour before had to be relearned. By one o'clock even I couldn't tell a Cerulean Warbler from a Northern Parula. At two a Northern Cardinal sang "What -cheer, what-cheer - birdie, birdie, birdie". This familiar backyard sound stumped the entire group for several minutes. We'd been at this too long.

Between lunch and dinner we took it easy, mostly watching a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks trying to keep up with the appetite of their four awkward but insatiable youngsters. It had been a tough day, but the frustration of distinguishing between the whiny buzzes, slurred whistles and subtle variations in pitch and intonation had its rewards. With each sound the class learned, with each behavior they observed

Continued on the following page



Veery *Photo by Chuck Tague*



Chestnut-sided Warbler *Photo by Chuck Tague*



Veery *Photo by Chuck Tague*

As Chuck says, "its buffy breast is faintly spotted and below it is pure white."

Here's a link to a sound file of a [Veery song and call](#).

and with each glimpse into the secret world of these nomadic jewels, the class gained insight and respect for the birds that return with remarkable timing, to breed in our forests.

I'd promised the best was yet to come. After dinner we planned a short hike to the bog on Laurel Summit to listen to the exquisite song of the Hermit Thrush at sundown. I never expected the finale to be upstaged by its prelude.

Although the sky was still very blue, the evening shadows darkened the floor along the trail to the bog. Beneath the tall oaks were scattered White Pines and Eastern Hemlocks. Rhododendron thickets covered the moist floor. Other birds may have been singing, but the only sound we heard were the Veeries.

The Veeries' rich, flute-like harmonies of spiraling descending phrases echoed through the woods. The trees intensified the strange sounds, the shadows made them more mysterious and the songs encompassed us all, making us one with the forest.

Veeries, like the Hermit Thrush and the American Robin are thrushes. Males of the thrush family are more than songbirds. They are master vocalists. Nightingales, Song Thrushes, European Blackbirds and Eurasian Robins are all renowned for their songs, but the thrushes of the North American woods sing as beautifully as any bird in the world, and the Veeries have probably the most distinctive song of all.

I couldn't tell how many Veeries sang. Some were close, others far off. Like a ventriloquist's voice, the sounds came from no where in particular or from all directions at once. At times, a Veery seemed to sing in every tree. Their haunting, ethereal voices followed us through the forest, each hollow series of phrases tumbling through the trees, cascading down the scale. Veer-u - veer-u - veer-u - veer-u, each voice in perfect harmony with itself.

Bird literature is full of fanciful descriptions of the Veery's voice. One from the nineteenth century compares it too a hymn or a prayer, a pure religious expression among the hemlocks. To another old time listener it conjured up images of jangling bells, tambourines and dancing gypsies. Others saw fairies whirling through the ferns.

The Veery is as attractive as it is musical. It's more slender and dainty than the other spotted wood thrushes. Its back is a beautiful tawny color, its buffy breast is faintly spotted and below it is pure white. Although we had seen many Veeries during our adventures, that evening they were invisible voices along the trail. We had to be content to listen to their voices.

I'd heard the Veery sing hundreds of times but it's in the deep woods at sundown that the magic of the Veery's voice is most evident.

After a short wait at the bog, the Hermit Thrushes finally sang. Their clear notes were almost symphonic. Loud, musical, joyous, their sounds filled the twilight, but the mysterious sounds of the Veery still echoed through my mind.

Chuck Tague

* * * *

From the Pretty Good Joke Book

The old man thought his wife was going deaf, so he came up behind her and said, "Can you hear me sweetheart?" No reply. He came closer and said it again. No reply. He spoke right into her ear and said, "Can you hear me now, Honey?"

His wife said, "For the third time, yes."

Fun While Staying At Home

Some of our members have been cruising the Internet looking for interesting things to watch. Steve Underwood, our Corresponding Secretary, found these two:

[Bird Brain, just how smart are crows?](#)

[Starling Murmurations](#)

Here's one from Ken Wenzel:

[Birds Doing Mozart](#)

Here are a few more:

[Birds in Africa](#)

[Birds of Costa Rica](#)

And finally some [bird humor](#) set to a fantastic western swing sound track.

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For wildlife & people since 1923

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June, 2020



Comments and Conservation Notes

The Volusia County Council will be hearing information from their staff study on an addition to the November ballot. Will voters, as they have done overwhelmingly in the past, vote again for the Volusia Forever and ECHO funding programs to be re-authorized? Looking at the new developments about to break ground and those to be approved in the very near future, it's clear we're going to need all the green space and wetlands we can purchase for use as parks and water recharge areas.

On Tuesday, June 2nd, the Volusia County Council will vote on two items. One, is a resolution calling for referendum election regarding continuation of the Volusia Forever millage levy and authority for the issuance of bonds. This is vital. The other is a resolution calling for referendum election regarding the continuation of the ECHO millage levy and authority for the issuance of bonds. ECHO, which is an acronym representing "environmental/ecological, cultural, historical/heritage, and outdoor recreational facilities" funds a lot of things around the county that we wouldn't otherwise have. We very much need this one too.

Time is very short. You're only getting one day's notice. But if you read this in time, please call or email the Council to express your support for these two vital programs to continue. Here's the contact information.

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Calendar & Events

The shutdown due to the Coronavirus is still in place, with some gradual opening of the restrictions. And being now in our annual summer hiatus, there's not much to include in this section. Our board will be holding virtual meetings via Zoom until we get the word from the Ormond Beach Regional Library that we can have access to the meeting room.

In the meantime you can join a friend perhaps and check out the birding at [Sugar Mill Gardens](#), in Port Orange or the trails in [Ormond Beach Central Park](#). Nesting season is roaring right now and many smaller birds are fledging their young. So the birds are more out in the open and doing things that attract your attention.

The photo below shows that sometimes you don't even have to leave your yard. Susan Pulling, on the other side of the state, in Dunedin, has had this nest box up for several years. This is the first time she's seen 3 chicks.



Eastern Screech Owl chicks photo by Susan Pulling

Anyone who ever took a walk in the woods with Chuck Tague was in for a treat. Here's an entry from Chuck's blog from June, 2012.

A Bird, a Bug and the Flowers They Love

Like most birders of my generation I discovered the hummingbird sphinx moths by thumbing through my new copy Peterson's Guide to the Birds. I thought the idea that someone might mistake an insect for a bird was far-fetched but the illustration of the moth between the Ruby-throated and the Rufous Hummingbirds stuck with me.

One day at Laurel Hill State Park I looked for the bright-red Cardinal Flowers and the equally brilliant florets of Bee Balm. If I stood patiently a Ruby-throated Hummingbird would thrill me at each patch. With head-spinning speed the tiny bundle of feathers and energy would dart in, hover effortlessly before a flower, insert its beak into the floret's long red tube as if it were putting on a perfectly fitted mask, retract suddenly then flit to the next nectar source. I marveled at how precisely the bird and the flower fit together.

With the image of the perfectly matched bird and flower fresh in my mind I climbed to a high, dry meadow. Scattered clumps of wildflowers glistened with the last of the morning dew. I remember golden Black-eyed Susans, Butterflyweed as orange as traffic cones and short, squat lilac globes of Pasture Thistle. The meadow buzzed from honeybees, bumblebees, wasps and flies. Suddenly another larger, bulkier shape shot into view. It abruptly halted and hovered as close as it could to the thistle bristle without actually touching it. Its wings were a blur, but I could see a long, slender projection from its head probe for nectar. It turned slightly and I caught a flash of pale orange.

The sphinx moth I saw that day, a Hummingbird Clearwing, taught me an invaluable lesson. Besides a little humility I learned that this moth was as fascinating as the bird it so closely resembles.

A few years later, when I was the Education Coordinator at the Pittsburgh Aviary, the lessons of the meadow served me well. Two or three people a day would call my office, curious about a strange visitor to their garden or hummingbird feeder. Most were polite and appreciative but occasionally a skeptic would refuse to believe the critter hovering over a hanging geranium was a day-flying moth. Some would argue relentlessly. My favorite call was a gruff, impatient voice that demanded "How many legs does a hummingbird have?" I could have saved myself some unnecessary aggravation if I said six and hung up.

Bee Balm produces much more nectar than flowers that attract butterflies because hummingbirds have such high metabolic needs. As I watched, a Hummingbird Clearwing darted to the Bee Balm. I moved closer. For several minutes the hummingbird look-alike moved from red floret to red floret until it sampled or rejected every one. The clearwing moved off and I moved back to the mixed patch of flowers. There was a clearwing there as well. However, this one only fed on the Purple Bergamot and avoided the red Bee Balm. Several more clearwings arrived. They too only chose the bergamot. They hovered before the florets with ease; their head and proboscis fit as perfect as the hummingbird's beak fit the Bee Balm.

A Ruby-throat flew into the glade. It sampled the Bee Balm but quickly moved to the orange jewelweed. The hummers were in migration mode and there were no Hummingbird Clearwings. When the flowers fade it's a sign that summer is winding down.

Chuck Tague

Here's a link to Chuck's [original story](#).

Editor

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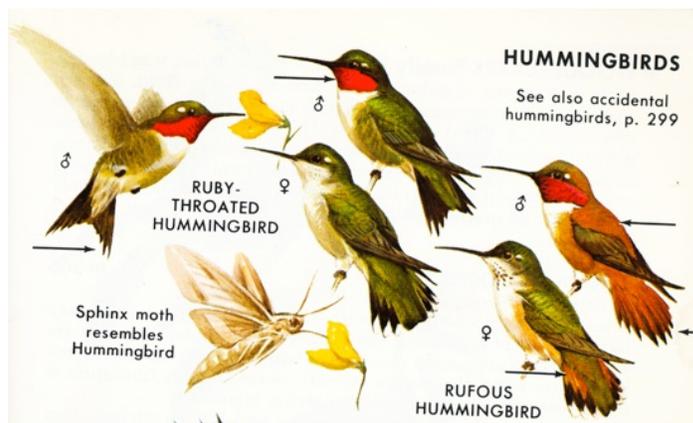
Ruby-throated Hummingbird hovering.

Photo by Chuck Tague



Hummingbird Clearwing moth feeding on Bergamot

Photo by Chuck Tague



The page from Peterson's that is referenced in the story.

* * * *

From the Quotable Birder

No sadder sound salutes you than the clear wild laughter of the loon.

Celia Thaxter, "Seaward," Poems

by Ray Scory

Nothing but a Bird

"There's nothing up there," shouted the bicyclist whizzing by me. I didn't jump when I heard his shout. I was locked into the song of a bird high in the thick canopy of a dark pine tree. I was mesmerized by the quality of the singing. Not jarring, ear crunching hurt but, melodic, exciting - so different, so soothing. Away I go, away from where I was. In a place so different, too. I was there looking for the bird with such a beautiful song. Standing on the edge of my cement sidewalk walking trail I looked high into the tree. Happy to be in this place to hear the song.

Now is the time to stop, look, see and if you are adventurous, to observe. Time before it all passes by.

Jane returned from shopping this morning and put the groceries on the kitchen table, the one with the backyard window. We put the groceries in their rightful places and sat down at the table and looked out the window at our backyard showing a few trees, water, two bird feeding stations, a green lawn and a few palmetto bushes. When the birds came, we watched. The Blue Jay, flashy colors and quick energy plus, difficult to photograph. Doesn't stay in one place long. Carolina Wrens, always moving, always inquisitive. acrobatic. One particular Carolina Wren liked to pick a chunk of suet and fly off. Never saw this behavior before. A Brown Thrasher muscled onto the feeder. But that's OK by me. I like their harmonious brown and black colorations and body shape - long, trim but strong. We watched a Northern Cardinal looking up at a Gray Squirrel bathing in our bird bath. Once the squirrel departed, the cardinal hopped up to the bird bath and began bathing. He knew, waiting pays off and he got his bath. And this morning patience and observation paid off. After 20 years, a Downy Woodpecker appeared in our backyard. First out of the corner of my eye a streak of flight from the bird feeder to the pine tree, then back to the feeder near the window then to the small lemon tree. On and on it flitted from spot to spot. Enough time to get my camera and make a photograph of the Downy Woodpecker, a welcomed, first time visitor. WOW!

My friend, Paul, and I walked the Appalachian Trail one week in October for over ten years. At times, the weather was cold and the rains came. The trail seems long and I fell in a stream on the rainiest, coldest day but these times were few. Most of all the experience was refreshing, new and adventurous. Our only concern was the care of our feet and where we could find water. No other concerns or problems. Eat, sleep, walk, look at stunning New England Autumn scenery as colorful as a Van Gogh painting. Sounds of birds, wind and rain. Time to enjoy the serenity of it all.

During an early morning walk to our favorite Verdant Creek, we watched a male and female Wood Duck casually navigated down the winding stream. A first time sighting at our "Verdant Creek." Sitting at the breakfast table shortly after, We observed two juvenile Northern Cardinal gleaming miniature food stuff from the edge of our lawn. The adult pair were not paying attention to them. The juveniles were feeding on their own, another one step forward. "All kinds of Nature going on" Jane said.

To listen to a bird singing in a tree. To look at a Rain Lily flower growing out from under a front yard rain spout.

Continued in the next column

Why not? It doesn't take much time and things slow down. Good Therapy.

"You can see a lot by observing" supposedly attributed to Yogi Berra.

Ray Scory



This female Downy Woodpecker, the first in the yard in 20 years, stayed long enough for a photo.

Photo by Ray Scory



This Rain Lily grew, unexpectedly, from under the down spout along the sidewalk in front of my house.

Photo by Ray Scory



We Say Goodbye To A Dear Friend

Marion Monaghan served on our board as an At Large member and as Education Committee Chair and Co-Chair. She was an avid birder, seldom missing one of our field trips and birding in several South American countries after her retirement from teaching. She was with us on our most recent trip to Merritt Island last January where she was thrilled to watch American White Pelicans feeding. She lost her battle with cancer on February 20th. Our thoughts are with her family and friends.

* * * *



Common Nighthawk, Photo by Alice Horst

This is a species that is seeing huge declines in population." These birds feed almost exclusively on flying insects. As insect populations decline too is it any wonder we're seeing fewer of them ?
Editor

* * * *

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David Hartgrove

Newsletter Editor: David Hartgrove

Welcome: Pam Pinella

Webmaster: Joan Tague

* * * *



Least Terns on oyster shell island in Canaveral Nat'l Seashore
 Photo by Jean Olbert, FWC

Bird Sitters Needed

Look closely in the photo above and you'll see the Least Tern chick who's about 24 hours old. This photo was taken in the Indian River, south of Edgewater. If you have a boat or kayak and would be interested in volunteering several hours of your time to protect these little fellows, contact FDEP representative Irene Arpayoglou irene.Arpayoglou@dep.state.fl.us, or David Hartgrove, birdman9@earthlink.net.
Editor

We wish to thank our sponsors, whose contributions play a vital part of allowing us to continue our work: Florida Power & Light, Colonial Colony and the Spruce Creek Garden and Nature Club.

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

Volume 66-Number 7. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
July, 2020



Comments & Conservation Notes

The Volusia County Council has voted to include two very important questions on the November ballot. They will reauthorize Volusia Forever and Volusia ECHO. Our chapter will be working hard to insure passage of both of these initiatives. As I wrote last month, "Looking at the new developments about to break ground and those to be approved in the very near future, it's clear we're going to need all the green space and wetlands we can purchase for use as parks and fresh water recharge areas."

The Trump Administration continues its assault on environment while handing a big gift to corporate polluters. They gutted both the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. Now they're doing away with many of the protections for birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. They've published a new rule that says if birds die due to the actions of corporations, they don't have to pay any fines. Had this rule been in effect in 2010, BP wouldn't have had to pay a dime for the damage done to the Gulf from the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. There's a [website](#) where you can make comments on the proposed Environmental Impact Statement for this new rule. Please, click on that link to register your opinion before July 20th.

A friend recently sent me a link to a story in [The Atlantic](#) about birds and how and why they do what they do. It references two new books, one by David Sibley, "*What It's Like to Be a Bird: From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing—What Birds Are Doing, and Why.*" And another by Jennifer Ackerman, "*The Bird Way: A New Look at How Birds Talk, Work, Play, Parent, and Think.*" Though I haven't had time to read either book yet I certainly plan to after reading this fascinating article.

On June 9th the US Fish & Wildlife Service proposed designation of 1.5 million acres as critical habitat for the Florida bonneted bat in response to a legal agreement with the Center for Biological Diversity, Tropical Audubon Society and the Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association. The bat is found only in South Florida where its population declined steeply as its forest and wetland habitats were developed and/or denigrated by pesticides for decades. As a result, it was listed as an endangered species in 2013. "Designation of this critical habitat is an indispensable step toward protection of this unique South Florida species," says Paola Ferreira, executive director of Tropical Audubon Society.

Finally, Audubon, conservation and local birding lost a very good friend with the recent passing of Don Picard. Don served as President of the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society for over 20 years. He will be missed by all who knew him.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Here we are in the heat of summer and the middle of our annual hiatus from meetings and field trips. We're hoping to be able to hold regular meetings at Sica Hall by the time September rolls around. However, as I write this, on June 27th, the state has just announced another one day record for new Corona virus cases. So we'll take this slowly and see what happens. One alternative the board is looking at is streaming virtual meetings via Zoom or some other platform. The board has held its last 2 meetings this way and though there were a few awkward steps the first time we're getting to be old pros now.

Our field trip committee met earlier this month and we're looking at a new way of communicating with everyone. West Volusia and Southeast Volusia Audubon Societies have been using "Meet Up" to publicize their meetings and field trips for several years. We decided to affiliate with them and share the cost of this new way of communicating. Click on this [link](#) and when the page opens you'll see a red button marked "Join the Group." Click that and you'll be offered a variety of ways to link up. The easiest is probably the one at the bottom, using your email address. You'll also be asked to supply a 10 character password. Once you've done that you'll be sent an email with another link. Look in your email, click that link and that's all there is to it.

At this point we haven't posted the field trips there yet, nor any meeting information. Our thinking is that even if we're unable to hold regular meetings at Sica Hall for a while, we should be able to offer field trips since they're outside and social distancing will be easier. So far we're looking at trips to the Port Orange Bridge, Lighthouse Point Park, in Ponce Inlet, Lake Apopka, Biolab Road, at MINWR and a few others. Information will be forthcoming on when we've finalized a field trip schedule and posted it to Meet Up. And as usual we'll post the field trip list to our [website](#).

We're all navigating uncertain times. Things we've taken for granted in the past won't necessarily work in the foreseeable future. Hopefully there will be a breakthrough on the vaccine front. We'll all be able to get a shot or drink a tiny, tasty cup of liquid like the old polio vaccine and we can get back to what passes for normal. Please, stay safe, wash your hands, wear a mask when you're out in public in enclosed spaces and maintain your distance until that day when a vaccine is available. You're all too important to us and each other to take unnecessary risks.

David Hartgrove

It Takes A Village

Toward the end of April, one day around dinner time, my neighbor, Ed, called me, "Since you're Audubon, a baby bird is on my lawn. It fell out of a nest. What do I do?" [That "Audubon Plants for Birds" sign in my front yard is very helpful, apparently]. I asked Ed if he could put the baby bird back in its nest. Many people are still unaware that this is what we should do when we find a hatchling, a baby bird with no or few feathers-- out of its nest. If we find a fledgling---a feathered juvenile, place it in a bush where it's less likely to be taken by a predator. The parents will hear it calling and feed it. Ed said he had no idea where the nest was or even what kind of bird it was, so I said I'd go take a look.

I'm quite fond of Fish Crows (*Corvus ossifragus*). They are intelligent, social and resilient. And I know that they nest in the tall palms in my neighborhood, including in Ed's yard and mine. As soon as I saw the baby bird, it was obvious that it was a newly-hatched Fish Crow that had fallen from a tall palm directly above. I picked it up and checked for any external injuries. It was fine and in fact, quite strong. I asked Ed and his daughter, Laurie, if they had an eye-dropper ("yes") and could they take the bird inside and keep it warm ("yes" again). I gave them a can of cat food for them to water down and feed the baby (Fish Crows are omnivorous and almost all bird babies need protein) and began making calls. After consulting with Halifax River Audubon's, Joan Tague, and raptor rehabber, Gina Holt of [Wild About Birds, Inc.](#) I knew that if the baby made it through the night, I'd need to take it to the Mary Keller [Seabird Rehabilitation Sanctuary](#) at the Marine Science Center.

The baby lived through the night, thanks to Laurie's great care, so the next day, I took it to the Sanctuary. At the Marine Science Center, they told me that if the bird did well, it was quite possible that FPL would use one of its bucket trucks to put the baby back in the nest. Who knew?

Later that day, I talked to David Hartgrove, President and Conservation Chair of Halifax River Audubon, and retired FPL lineman, and told him what had happened. He immediately called the Marine Science Center and said that when the time came, he'd coordinate with FPL. About five days later, it was time.

I'd scouted the location of the nest. David picked the baby crow up from rehab and brought it to my house, across from Ed's. Shortly after, FPL's bucket truck showed up with two great bird-helpers, Yuriy Sawchin, who had lots of experience putting birds back in nests, and Marcos Romero who was doing it for the first time. We verified the location of the nest and David handed the baby crow to Marcos and up they went! Marcos returned the baby bird to the nest and we called it a day.

This rescue story is brought to you by Ed and Laurie, Halifax River Audubon, FPL and the Mary Keller Seabird Rehabilitation Sanctuary at the Marine Science Center and me. It takes us all to make a difference.

Melissa Lammers

* * * *

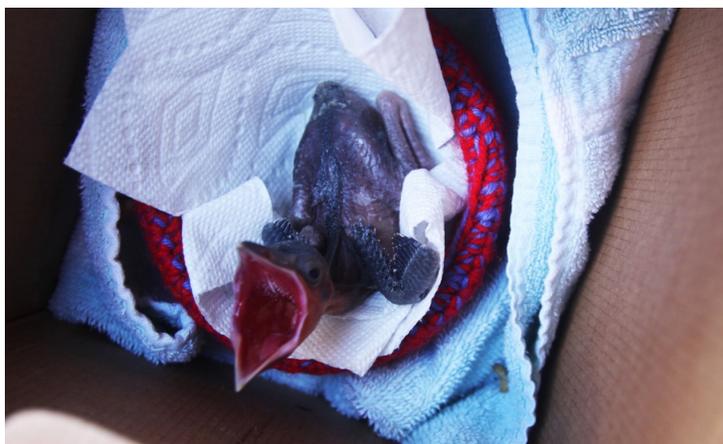
From the Quotable Birder

"If men had wings and bore black feathers, few of them would be clever enough to be crows."

Rev. Henry Ward Beecher



Caring individuals, Ed and Laurie Ferguson.



A young Fish Crow, just a few feathers but a very big mouth.



Marcos prepares to take the box with the bird from David.

Photos by Luis Villalon

More photos below.

The Black Lives Matter movement was founded on July 13th, 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the killing of Trayvon Martin in nearby Sanford. Since then there have been multiple incidents that have sparked continuing protests. One involved a black man birding in Central Park. Much has been written about the protests and the reasons for them. None more eloquent than the piece below.

Editor

On Birding and Race and Life- a personal story

As the first "Black Birder's Week" draws to a close amid nationwide protests against racism, I am reminded of something that happened to me a few years ago. I am seeing it from a different perspective.

One hot Miami day, I was pulling into my parking space at home, car windows rolled up, radio playing, when I heard birds screaming and screeching from outside my sealed capsule. The sounds were so frantic and urgent that I backed up a little and looked up through the moonroof of my car at the tree above to see if I could find the source of the commotion. A hawk was tearing into the breast of a grackle, holding it in his talons, preventing any struggle, while other grackles tried fruitlessly to save their comrade. There were people on the sidewalk walking past that tree, but none of them looked up. They seemed not to hear the screaming, even though they were not behind safety glass and steel. The grackles and their collective pain were invisible to them, their language beyond the range of the peoples' ability to hear. I marveled that they could be so unaware of the mayhem just above their heads.

Shortly thereafter, on June 17th, 2015, a young man named Dylann Roof was welcomed at a Bible study session in Charleston, South Carolina, at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, called "Mother Emanuel" by many. When the faithful began praying, Dylann Roof stood up and opened fire, killing nine congregants because of the color of their skin. He was as much a predator as the hawk above my head a month or so before, but while the hawk must kill to eat in accordance with the laws of God and nature, Dylann Roof's actions were unnatural, unholy and evil.

Like many Americans, I was horrified and filled with sorrow. It was a sorrow I felt I could not contain and it grew to rage because this wasn't new. It was another vile incident of white on black unprovoked violence, and again, on Holy ground. I didn't know what to do. The feelings swirled in my head and heart. I called an African American classmate, who also lived in South Florida. He agreed to meet me for lunch. We talked about what is now called the Charleston Church Massacre and about race relations during our lifetime, about school integration, about intersections in our lives. I felt a little better for the talking but nine people were still dead because of racial hatred. Our conversation didn't change that. My letting one black man know that I gave a damn didn't change that.

Now, as the nation rises up in the vortex of the death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, at the hands of the Minneapolis Police, I am reminded of the hawk and the grackle. I am reminded of lunch with my friend after the Church Massacre. My ears were tuned to the language of suffering of the grackles and they were also tuned to the suffering of black people in America, but my response was lacking. It was right to leave the hawk to devour the black bird. It is wrong to allow white hatred to devour the black man. However well-meaning, when I asked my friend to lunch, what was I seeking? Was I looking for comfort?

continued below



Marcos swings the bucket toward the nest tree.

Photo by Luis Villalon



Back in its nest, thanks to the efforts of many.

Photo by Marcos Romero

For some answer that he might have? He did not need to hear from me that I was horrified. That I was sorrowful. That I was angry. He should have expected those things from me and from every other decent human being in America. What he needed from me was for me to speak out to other white people to ensure their decency was awakened, their righteous anger activated, to help propel us to the kind of sustained effort it will take to stamp out racist hate in our society and racist policies from our institutions.

All over America, people have been marching for eleven days now. This is the most sustained and diverse protest of my lifetime. It seems the peoples' ears finally hear the screaming. The flock circles against the hawk. All of us, but most especially white people, myself most definitely included, must ensure the sustained momentum to achieve the precious goal we clearly have before us as never before, to deliver on the promise of America as laid out in The Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal..." The World is watching us.

Melissa Lammers

* * * *

A Friday Well Spent



American Oystercatcher Chick *Photo by Jean Olbert, FWC*

One Friday recently I was fortunate to be invited to help band two American Oystercatcher chicks at a site just south of the Port Orange Bridge. Based on overall size and bill length we think this is a female. Look closely and you'll see her new red bands with the white letters, "W37." Her brother wears "W38." The bands will help track the birds's movements in the future.

Continued in the next column

American Oystercatchers are listed as "Threatened" in Florida. Nesting on bare rock or shell substrate, their nests frequently fall prey to avian or mammalian predators. Their nests can also be destroyed by people walking into the nesting area and not seeing the well camouflaged eggs until it's too late. These birds join another adult bird seen near the bridge. A female that sports a blue band with white letters, "DP." She was banded at Cape Romaine NWR, off the coast of South Carolina in 2014. That knowledge helps biologists monitor this species as they look at an uncertain future.

David Hartgrove

* * * *

A Short and Fascinating Film On Kingfishers

Local film maker, George Sibley, (that's George's film and voice you see when starting the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse Tour) recently sent a link to a [British made film](#) on Common Kingfishers. They're native to Europe and points east and south. Our Belted Kingfishers here also nest underground. Enjoy!

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August, 2020



Comments & Conservation Notes

The Great American Outdoors Act passed Congress with strong bi-partisan support, 310 to 107. It passed the Senate too with strong support, 73 to 25. Now it heads to the President for his expected signature. For half a century the environmental community has been lobbying for permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The bill does this. It also includes funding to address the billions needed for maintenance in national parks, wildlife refuges and other federal conservation properties. I'll refrain from pointing out the Congress members from Florida who voted against the bill.

From the [Birding Community E-Bulletin](#) we learn that there are encouraging developments from the U.S. House, in this case legislation that still awaits Senate passage. A legislative amendment based on U.S. Representative Mike Quigley's (IL-05) Bird-Safe Buildings Act passed the House of Representatives as part of H.R. 2, the Moving Forward Act. This Bird-Safe Buildings Act would require that future public buildings constructed, acquired, or significantly altered by the General Services Administration (GSA) incorporate bird-safe building materials and design features to reduce bird collisions.

The Florida Department of Transportation has been seeking comments from the public on M-CORES, which is another of those acronyms government is so enamored of. It stands for Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance. It's really a massive road building program that taxpayers get to fund. It will mean opening large tracts of land owned by wealthy developers so they can begin bulldozing more of our state for their profit. The Florida Wildlife Federation asked to see the comments sent in. 72 were for the plan. 1,352 were against. And still they say it's popular with the public. When your masters in the Legislature give you a mission you can't let little things like truth and public opinion stand in the way.

Dr. J Cho, a biology professor at Bethune-Cookman University and who gave a presentation at one of our meeting several years ago has been working on a project in South Daytona. She and some of her students worked with Danny Young (another presenter at our meetings) on a storm water treatment facility just south of Reed Canal Road, east of the rail road tracks. The wetland was designed by Danny and his company, [Young Bear Environmental Consultants](#). Through a series of weirs water from Reed Canal, which receives water from Nova Road Canal and other storm water discharges, is directed into the wetland. There nutrients are taken up by specially selected plants and suspended metals and other things not conducive to a healthy water body are removed before the water continues on to the river. Here's a link to the [You Tube](#) video.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

HRA will be ZOOMing with Michael Brothers

It's all the rage and if you have not tried it yet, ZOOM is the way many organizations are functioning during the pandemic.

What is ZOOM? It is a web-based application that enables multiple users to hold meetings, classes, webinars and lectures. You may have seen people using it on TV for interviews and group activities. HRA has ZOOMed the last several board meetings. Meeting from the comfort of home has been convenient. We have incorporated graphics and charts into the meetings. We are able to keep a record of the proceedings by recording it and reviewing it before committing it to the minutes.

I have just completed 2 special subject courses in the Florida Master Naturalist Program over ZOOM - Wildlife Monitoring and Environmental Interpretation. It was a great experience. Students still had assignments and projects to complete involving outdoor experiences, but these were on our time. We shared our experiences with the class over ZOOM. We used photography, PowerPoint, videos and story telling to illustrate our work. It was fun.

So - our first meeting of the year will be over ZOOM. If you have experience with the platform, great. If you have never used it before, however, we want to give you an opportunity to try it out. We will have a "Get Acquainted" ZOOM session. You can try it out from the comfort of your home. Registration in advance is required. When we receive your reservation, we will send you information for the link for the meeting and a password. We will also include instructions for setting up your computer for a ZOOM session. A basic ZOOM account is free. For more information check here: <https://zoom.us>

ZOOM Try Out Session - Wednesday, September 9, 2020
6pm to 7pm.

Virtual Halifax River Audubon Meeting - Monday,
September 21, 2020 at 6:30pm

Register for these events at members@halifaxriveras.org - and include your name and which session(s) you will "virtually attend". You will receive an email with all of the information required to join in and a contact number for me to help you if you need support.

Michael's topic will be "Terns of Florida." Please plan to join us. More information on this in next month's Pelican.

Joan Tague

An event earlier this year in New York's Central Park gave an example of one reason why we see so few black birders. The article below is from a black birder. Ed.

The Woods Are My Safe Haven—But That's Not True for Everyone

One of my favorite aspects of birding is the ability to disconnect with civilization. I love roaming in places where the only ambient noise I hear are the leaves crunching beneath my boots, birds defending their territory through song, and insects rattling off their harsh mating calls. Never do I feel more in tune with my surroundings than when I'm surrounded by nature.

For the majority of readers, what I just described is music to their ears. For others, what I just described might trigger feelings of anxiety and horror. This was the case during a recent episode of one of my favorite shows, FX's *Atlanta*, a dramedy that touches on serious social issues, only to turn around and make you fall down laughing. It gives audiences a glimpse of what life is like for young black adults in today's climate. Episode eight of the recently wrapped second season, *Woods*, is the perfect example.

Allow me to briefly set the scene. Midway through the episode, one of the show's main characters, Alfred Miles, better known as the rapper Paper Boi, gets mugged on a Georgia highway. The altercation results in him fleeing into the woods. After he escapes his pursuers, he finds himself lost and overwhelmed by his wild surroundings. The rest of the episode is spent in this setting, with the woods playing a few metaphorical roles.

First, they represent the state of mental complacency that Paper Boi has found himself in as of late; if he can only find the willpower to escape the sea of trees, he'll finally be able to break through his inner turmoil and take charge of what comes next. But there's also a more overt sense of danger in the darkness and savagery. As Paper Boi runs for his life, the trees erupt in a cacophony of bird sounds: Common Loon, Carolina Chickadee, Blue Jay, Chuck-will's-widow, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Great Horned Owl. Through it all, I find myself on the edge of my seat, smiling as I identify these birds. I'm two seconds away from grabbing my binoculars when I notice that the main character doesn't seem to be enjoying his experience. He even jumps as the sound of a bird taking flight near him. At that point, I realize we're on two very different wavelengths when it comes to the woods.

There are tons of reasons why our perceptions might differ: Naming one would only feed the stereotypes that make black nature lovers so easy to dismiss. Saying that we aren't culturally attuned and interested is plain wrong. It's also counterproductive to solving the larger issue.

Ultimately, a fraught relationship with nature may boil down to the fact that people fear what they don't understand. There are reasons for that as well. America has a love affair with the great outdoors; we celebrate its majesty and encourage others to go out and experience it. And yet, the targets of this encouragement seem to be calculated. Whether it's on ads for outdoor gear and apparel or in mainstream media, you typically don't see depictions of black people enjoying the outdoors.

What's more, as African Americans, we're careful to avoid putting ourselves in precarious situations, including in geographies where we feel out of place. In 2009, the National Park Service estimated that only seven percent of the visitors to their parks were black. I've been leading bird walks for four years now, and I can count the number of black attendees on two hands.

Continued in the next column

There's no easy fix here, but there has been some change. That primarily is thanks to leaders in the African American community, who are trying to ensure that the nature experience is a good experience. Outdoor Afro, for example, has chapters in 28 states, and is using them to shift the way people perceive the woods. I was fortunate enough to go birding with the Atlanta chapter in February. We visited a large wetland area south of the city, where we were treated to the sights and sounds of hundreds of thousands of Red-winged Blackbirds coming home to their roosting spots for the night. As the flocks settled, we watched the sunset and talked about the how culture ties into the outdoors. I even taught the children how to "pish" birds out of hiding (responsibly, of course).

In a 2011 article for *Outdoor Afro*, my friend and mentor J. Drew Lanham talks about birding while black. "I've always been the odd one out," he writes. "A 'rare' bird in the flock." When that situation is reversed, though, it makes all the difference in the world. Words can't describe how much joy it brings me to know that within my community, I'm not alone in my love for birds and nature.

No matter what's going on in life, the woods will always be my safe haven. Unlike Paper Boi, I get lost in them on purpose. Now it's my mission to ensure that others who look like me can do the same.

Jason Ward

Jason is a birder, science nerd, and social activist from the Bronx. He currently lives in Georgia, where he leads bird walks and has done science surveys with the [Atlanta Audubon Society](#).

* * * *



Adult Least Tern Photo by Chuck Tague

Just one of the tern species we'll learn about from Michael Brothers when we have our ZOOM meeting September 21st. Michael recently retired as the Director of the Marina Science Center and has spent decades birding here in Florida and around the world.

Urban Naturalist

I walked today to the Verdant Creek and I stopped and looked. It was devoid of wildlife. Most times, I see red bellied turtles or waterbirds. Sometimes a dragonfly and always small tropical fingerlings. Today, nothing. And then, a Northern Cardinal flew overhead clicking its metallic call and I knew that the creek wasn't completely empty of wildlife.

Am I becoming an urban naturalist? Maybe. Jane and I have walked this specific trail for about seven months and I continue to walk it as Jane recuperates from an auto accident. We use this creek as our half way destination point. We stop at the creek to observe the subtleties of Nature that are always going on, always changing.

Since moving to Florida, I have always considered myself as a backyard/urban birder. Yes, I totally enjoy birding various habitats and Florida offers an abundance of outdoor opportunities to "go birding." However, birding down the street or in my backyard holds a strong measure of fascination.

I define an urban birder as one who walks a ribbon of cement sidewalk that trails through endless miles of green lawns trimmed three inches high. Always alert to the cooling spray of a lawn sprinkler, or alert to a monster truck jutting out into the path of serenity. A whack on the knee can quickly obliterate thoughts of blissful birding.

An urban birder may carry a camera or a small pair of binoculars. Yes, even a cell phone to make images along the way. Most urban birders began as urban walkers measuring the steps, counting the time and getting in exercise. Eventually Nature butts in and the walker begins to hear bird songs and may even stop to listen more closely. He then begins to see things surrounding the singing bird and these things begin to look more obvious, more shapely, more beautiful. Even a broken branch begins to take on an individual presence and begins to fit together with other things and a harmonious whole begins to appear. Within this new whole details begin to stand out and become more interesting and add charm to the whole and that is when observations take hold. And now what we saw as we walked by become more relevant and valuable.

A red bellied turtle lumbers along in the gutter of my street going my way. Fifty feet down the road another red belly turtle in the same gutter creeps toward me. I continued to the creek and then back. Now both turtles are gone. I like to think that they met up as they planned and went off to the nearby retention pond to continue their special life.

What becomes of the urban birder when looking becomes seeing and seeing becomes observing? When the scenery surrounding the bird becomes as visible as the bird? When the bird and the landscape become one and all is harmonious. Then the urban birder begins to become an urban naturalist and both fit together beautifully and the wonder of living things become important. Two Gray Squirrels frantically spiraling up a leaning pine tree - bark flying, racing, stopping, peaking around the tree at each other, eyes flashing, tails waving, exhilarating! Cracks in the cement growing plants. A Parula Warbler bursting out a buzzy trill with its ending up note "Zzip". Wild flowers growing on a green grassy lawn. A soft breeze stirring and a red bellied turtle in the creek. The wonder of it all.

I dedicate this column to my wife, Jane. We shall lovingly walk this trail together again.

Ray's wife, Jane, was critically injured in a serious automobile accident on May 19th. She continues to recuperate and hopes to be home soon. Editor



I photographed this stunning bouquet of spiderwort flowers in the middle of a manicured lawn on my way to the Verdant Creek. The flower (probably *Tradescantia ohiensis*) is a native Florida plant.



Pileated Woodpeckers, two females. One observes as the other excavates its unique design on this smartly shaped pine tree branch. The branch was first noticed, Then the Pileated Woodpeckers came.

Photos by Ray Scory

Interlopers



Eurasian Collared-Dove and White-winged Dove

Photo by Jim McGinity

The first Eurasian Collared-Dove seen in Florida was found in Florida City, south of Homestead, in 1973. A species originally from Asia Minor, they began a westward expansion around 1900 and by WW II they were in England. A pet shop owner in the Bahamas ordered some Ringed Turtle-Doves (now known as African Collared-Doves) from a supplier in England and was sent Eurasian Collared-Doves instead. He claimed that some kids broke into his shop and released the doves. Soon they were found here. Now they're nesting in Seattle, WA.

White-winged Doves are originally a species from Mexico and Central America. Sometime in the 1950's they began a northward range expansion and by the early 1980's they were a popular game bird in south Texas. I saw my first one here in Florida while participating in the Ponce Inlet CBC in the early 1990's. Neither species seems to have had a negative impact on our native Mourning Doves nor the Common Ground-Dove.

Jim McGinity, our photographer, is also a licensed bird bander and has a [website](#). He'll be the speaker at our October virtual meeting.

David Hartgrove

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Another Opportunity For These Indoor Days

Ray Brown (not the world famous jazz bassist) has a smooth voice. He should, he's been in radio as a DJ and producer for over 30 years in the New England area. He's often heard on NPR with Scott Simon on Saturday mornings talking about birds.

His show and podcast is called "[Ray Brown's Talkin' Birds.](#)" His [latest show](#) is number 790. So he's been at it a while. The show is mainly about birds but also ventures into conservation issues since it's impossible to separate the two issues. If you listen to this latest episode you'll hear a bird quiz (hint, these birds sometimes nest here on rooftops), a mention of the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, a short feature on what was called the Gray Jay. At one time known as the Canada Jay that name is now back and it's unofficially the national bird of Canada. You'll also hear about a new gadget called the "[Birdsy Cam.](#)" Still in testing mode this device uses artificial intelligence to film birds at your feeder and then identify them. The show isn't broadcast here in Florida yet but you can listen as a podcast. Enjoy!

Editor

Finally, We Extend A Warm Welcome to Our

New and Returning Members

It's been quite a while since we could do this thanks to some issues with National. Welcome to: Robert Arnold, David Baker, Wanda Bankston, Gloria Barretto, Beth Bartholomew, Allie Bernstein, Rob Bird, Bishop Blackwell, Jonathan Booraem, Greg Bottom, June & William Campbell, Carol Carlon, Anne Catinna, Lucy Christman, Jesse Clark, Nelda Davis, Karl Duerr, Eric Dzubian, Kate Eglof, Elaine Ehrenberg, Gidget Fitzpatrick, Joe & Nancy Galdo, Marilyn Garcia, Barbara Gehlbach, Charles Gilpatrick, Joseph Hamilton, Jacquelyn Hanson, Robert Hanson, Harry Hildebrandt, Carol Hjorth, Dana Jacobsen, Alan Jorczak, Terri Jordan, Jill Kelly, William Kisbany, Gary Lafond, Diane Lapham, Elise Leroux, Anne Lynn, Norma MacDonald, Paul McKinnon, Thomas Mahoney, Richard Marella, Patricia Monaghan, Tom Moran, Debra Moulis, Ellen Nielsen, Ron & Mary Carol Ochipa, Mary Parks, Louise Patterson, Elza Phillips, Joseph Prusak, Rachel Ramsey, Sang Roberson, Janis Robinson, John Sheirich, Ken Sipes, Ellen Tate, Leslie Thackston, Steve Underwood, Norma Washburn, James Wright, Jeanne Young and Bernard Yvon. We hope to be able to again see all of you at a meeting or on one of our field trips.

* * * * *

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is published monthly by Halifax River Audubon, a chapter of the National Audubon Society and a member of Audubon Florida serving eastern Volusia County.

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Past President: Melissa Lammers

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Newsletter Editor: David Hartgrove

Welcome: Pam Pennella

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We wish to thank our sponsors, whose contributions play a vital part of allowing us to continue our work: Florida Power & Light, Colonial Colony and the Spruce Creek Garden and Nature Club.

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

Volume 66-Number 9. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
September, 2020



Comments & Conservation Notes

A guest editorial for this month's edition from a long time friend of Audubon. Editor.

Volusia Forever and Volusia ECHO

There will be two important local ballot questions on the General Election ballot in November that all Audubon members in Volusia should be aware of and support. Voters will be asked whether to extend Volusia Forever and Volusia ECHO that are both voter approved programs set to expire next year. These award winning programs have protected important wildlife and special areas as well as funded important environmental education centers. Volusia Forever and ECHO have been endorsed by the Audubon Central Florida Regional Conservation Committee and this chapter.

Over the last twenty years, Volusia Forever has permanently protected over 38,000 acres, including much of the Volusia Conservation Corridor, Spruce Creek Preserve, and protection of areas adjacent to rivers, lakes, springs, and preserves. Continuing the program will allow completion of the Conservation Corridor and spring shed protection, and protection of other important natural areas.

Volusia ECHO projects have helped construct museums, cultural and arts facilities, preserved historic sites, and provided opportunities for outdoor recreation throughout the county. Of special importance to Audubon is the construction on environmental learning facilities. Places such as Lyonia Environmental Learning Center, Marine Discovery Center, Marine Science Center, and Stetson's Rinker Environmental Learning Center could not have been built without ECHO funding. Attendance records show that ECHO funded facilities host over 600,000 visitors each year and many more enjoy the 70 miles of trails throughout the county.

The ballot questions will allow for reauthorization of the programs for another 20 years. Since this is a continuation of an existing program, there will be no increase in taxes.

In 1986 Volusia County became the first county in America where voters approved a bond issue to acquire conservation lands. In 2000, Volusia became the first county to adopt twin programs to not only save conservation lands but also develop parks, trails, and other outdoor recreation facilities. These programs have been a tremendous success and have brought national attention and acclaim, but more importantly they protect our quality of life. In each of these earlier campaigns, Audubon members and chapters strongly supported the approval of the programs.

Continued on the following page.

A New Season and a New World

Through the years September has marked the start of the birding season at Halifax River Audubon. The weather moderates, the migrants are heading south, whether passing through or coming in to hang around for the winter. We look forward to the return of human migrants too, our companions on many adventures. We reconnect with everyone and get back into the swing of birding.

Now it is 2020. The year that just keeps on giving, the latest installment featuring a double hurricane event. We have been restricting our movements for 6 months. Now some of us are anxious to get together for some bird watching. We have ventured out individually through the summer. The question, though, is can we find a way to do this as a responsible group?

The HRA Board has considered this over the summer and has instituted new field trip procedures. The usual list of suggested birding gear will now include masks, hand sanitizer and gloves. Sharing spotting scopes and carpooling with anyone other than your "Covid buddies" (people you're already comfortable birding with during the pandemic) is discouraged. Outings will consist of more walking with opportunities to spread out and social distance.

There is a lot of new information on the web site. Please check our policies and the schedule for the Fall by clicking the following links. We are also now on MeetUp for outings and programs. If you sign in on our chapter page, you will automatically receive information about upcoming events.

[Halifax River Audubon on MeetUp](#)

Click the link above to sign up for Meet Up. This application makes scheduling field trips easy for us and you. It also extends our reach into the community as we try to attract new members.

[Field Trips in Challenging Times](#)

Click this link for information on our field trips and the preparations we need you to make in order to join us.

[Halifax River Calendar Of Events](#)

Click this link to see our calendar of events through December. We look forward to your participation with us as we navigate through the uncharted waters of this challenging year.

Joan Tague

Why do we need to extend these programs? First of all we need to acquire additional lands to protect our drinking water supplies as well as protect important water resources like springs, rivers, lakes, and lagoons. But we have also learned during this pandemic that we need more places to safely go outdoors. This includes art museums, cultural facilities, historic preservation, trails, and other outdoor recreation facilities. Taken as a whole, these are the things that make Volusia County special.

For more information on Volusia Forever and Volusia ECHO go to: <https://www.echovolusiaforever.org>

Clay Henderson, President Emeritus

Florida Audubon Society

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Please Help Spread The Word

Here's a link to the [ECHO Volusia Forever](http://www.echovolusiaforever.org) website. On it you'll see an "F" in the upper right hand corner next to the "Donate" button. Clicking on the "F" will take you to their [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/echovolusiaforever) page. Please "share" the site with your Facebook friends. We really appreciate your efforts. Thanks!

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Michael Brothers, our speaker this month, holds an Audubon's Shearwater he's about to release after a period in rehab.

Photo by Melissa Ranley

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A Possible Solution To Bird Deaths At Wind Turbines

From long time member and documentary film maker, George Sibley, comes this story about what sounds like a promising solution to a serious problem. As this article in [Ars Technica](http://www.ars-technica.com) points out these are just the results of one study. Hopefully the results can be repeated at other locations. It would solve a huge problem.

Editor

Zooming Into The Future

Our chapter meetings this year will be held over Zoom for the duration of the COVID 19 emergency. If you're unfamiliar with Zoom it's a computer platform that allows groups of people to interact and both see and hear each other in real time.

In anticipation of that, we are holding a "Town Meeting" on September 9th at 6:00 pm to give you chance to try Zoom. This will be a lively discussion about our Meetings and Field Trips for this year in the current climate. We want to hear your ideas as we present our schedule. The link below will connect you to our calendar and all of the information that you need to get started with Zoom if you have not already tried it. We request that you register for the event either from [MeetUp](https://www.meetup.com/halifaxriveras) or our web site directly to our email address: members@halifaxriveras.org. You can also send any questions that you have to that address in advance of the meeting. For reasons involving security we're asking that you to preregister for the event.

Joan Tague

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Calendar & Events

Monday, September 21st, Member's Meeting- Join us for this first member's meeting held via Zoom. Our speaker, Dr. Michael Brothers. Terns will be the subject for the evening. Anyone who has walked the beaches in Florida is familiar with this group of graceful birds. Michael will give us tips on identification of the gorgeous birds. Again, please be sure to preregister for the meeting so we can send you the link for the meeting via [MeetUp](https://www.meetup.com/halifaxriveras) or our email address: members@halifaxriveras.org

Field Trips

Friday, September 18th, Dunlawton Bridge- Join David Hartgrove at 4:00 pm at the bridge. No lunch for this one as we walk the area looking for migrant and resident shorebirds and others. A Common Eider was reported here recently. Maybe the bird will still be here when we are. Questions, Call David at 386-235-1249.

Saturday, September 26th, Merritt Island and Biolab Road- Join David Hartgrove for this trip to a great birding destination. We'll meet at 7:30 am at Target in Port Orange, on Dunlawton just east of I-95 behind Panera. Carpooling will be limited to those you feel comfortable with and we'll have our radios to maintain communication. Bring lunch. We'll be finished by 3:00 pm. Questions, Call David at 386-235-1249.

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Here's a link to a story Ray Scory sent for the Pelican

A Man, A Dog and a Hummingbird

Here's a [link](#) to a story from Southern California. The bird is a female Allen's Hummingbird. Enjoy!

* * * *

From The Quotable Birder

"He was like a cock who thought the sun had risen to hear him crow."

George Eliot, Adam Bede

² George Eliot was the pen name of Mary Ann Evers. Adam Bede was her first published novel in 1859.

Birding 101 for Fall 2020

The annual "Bird Class for Beginners" was a rousing success last year. We actually had to turn people away. With that kind of response to the program, we have devised a way to offer the class this year. The lectures will be over Zoom. There will be 3 lecture sessions scheduled 3 weeks apart. A complimentary Field Experience will be offered in the week following each class. If we have a large class, we will divide the class between 2 or more trips to provide individual instruction and social distancing. You can make your reservation and pay directly from the web site. The information brochure with the date and details and mail in form are available now on the website.

Here's the link to the [Birding 101](#) webpage. This year the flow of the lectures will be "organic" in nature. Each session will focus on the birds that we would expect to see on our field trips. For instance, we will study warblers, blackbirds and more in the October session. Raptors and more are covered in November. In December we will look towards lakes, marshes and the ocean the study the birds that live on or near the water. During each of these sessions we will introduce the tools and skills that you will learn while exploring the diverse habitats of Central Florida.

Who should attend this class? Beginners, naturally but those that wish to brush up on their skills have enjoyed this class. Another demographic would include birders that are new to Central Florida. Birding is always a matter of perspective and the point of view in our neck of the woods could be quite different from what you re used to.

Snowbirder? Sign up for the lectures and we will have "make-up" and continuing sessions for folks that want to have birding sessions that are paced to reinforce the basics you will learn in class. We will work with our wintering friends to accommodate their schedules as they "migrate" south.

Questions? Please address them to Joan Tague at members@halifaxriveras.org.

Joan Tague

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Here's a Bird We'll Be Looking For When We Go To MINWR

On September 26th we'll be taking a field trip to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge along Biolab Road. The reason we're going to this place in late September is that it's a great spot for migrating shorebirds, like this Purple Sandpiper.



Purple Sandpiper, *Photo by Chuck Tague*

Here's a report from Bob Lane. He and his wife, Denise, winter here in Pinellas County from their home in Ohio.

Strange Goings On in Ohio

Florida birders, the unthinkable has happened, a state record juvenile Brown Booby is in Northeast Ohio. First seen by three birders late Tuesday night, August 25th, at Nimisila Reservoir Metro Park, in Summit County. The location is a popular destination this time of year to watch thousands of staging Purple Martins coming into roost just after sunset. Thus, this was probably the arrival date of the celebrity visitor, otherwise, it would have been detected earlier. Why or how it got here, who knows! Being in Florida six months of the year, as some of you know, my wife Denise and I have followed the comings and goings of The Pinellas County Brown Boobies for the past four years. Those birds roosted on towers that once held power lines and now both the lines and the towers have been removed.

Yesterday morning, Wednesday, just after daybreak, apparent karma was on my side. With about thirty-two other birders present, I was the one to relocate the booby on a dead snag along the shoreline. It must have been meant to be! Thirty miles from our Ohio home, I became the fourth birder to see it. Shortly after, the word got out. The floodgate of birders and photographers was constant the rest of the day up until dark. The Brown Booby adds to the Florida connection of Ohio state record birds recorded in recent years. Last year, about this same time in August 2019, we had a Limpkin, possibly two. A remarkable Gray Kingbird was here in October 2018. Presently, just to the north on the south shore of Lake Erie, is an adult Brown Pelican. Some of the other recent notables are Roseate Spoonbill, Sooty Tern, and Reddish Egret. Times are a changing. Anything can show up! And by the way, the cooperative Brown Booby is reportedly still present this morning, Thursday, in the same dead snag tree.

Bob Lane



Juvenile Brown Booby photographed in Northeast Ohio

Photo by Bob Lane

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has a monthly digital publication called "Kite Tales." Here's a sample.

Backyard Birding

"When my husband and I moved into our current home in the summer of 2017 we were not avid birders. Some time after that we realized our neighborhood was home to a flock of White-winged Doves, a new species for both of us. We started counting them when they visited our yard and made a house checklist on eBird. After that we started spending more and more of our free time birding. In 2018 we had a total of 61 species on the house checklist. In 2019 that count rose to 92, with some extra special sightings including a Purple Finch, 16 species of warblers, and a Summer Tanager that overwintered with us. 2019 also marked the year we started to make our little yard a little more wildlife friendly. We planted coral honeysuckle and firebush around the yard as natural hummingbird feeders. We built a brush pile for cover that was quickly occupied by a family of Carolina Wrens, and added a DIY water feature that all the birds use regularly. Just this month (March 2020) we've seen 60 species in (and flying over) the yard. I'm working from home as much as possible, and with that comes more time in the morning and afternoon to sit out in the yard with binoculars and birdwatch. House bird #103 was a Louisiana Waterthrush that I spotted walking through the backyard while I was answering emails (the home office has a great view of our feeders)."

Kelly O'Connor



White-winged Doves on her feeder. Photo by Kelly O'Connor

Have a backyard birding story you'd like to share? Email us at wildlifeviewing@myfwc.com for a chance to be featured in Kite Tales!

* * * *

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. 45.00 dollars will cover the cost for one classroom. Any amount will be greatly appreciated. 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!

Welcome to Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and renewing members: William Batchelor, Judith Becker, Nancy Brown, Donna Burley, Walter Bushika, Renate Calero, Larry Carrico, Janet Clark, Susan Countryman, Mary Jane Dill, Joan Ellis, Willie Fields, Richard Goldstein, Jane Hecker, Shirley Horn, Delores Jackson, Carl Krueger, Richard Litkenhaus, Richard Moore, Christopher Ringue II, Phillip Waldstein, Donna Weber, Ken & Margo Wenzel. We hope to see you on a field trip or in one of our upcoming Zoom meetings.

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A Special Thank You

We extend a special note of thanks to David Groh for the generous donation made in his mother's honor. Virginia Groh was a long time member who passed away recently and David made the donation in her memory. Thank You!

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October, 2020



Comments & Conservation Notes

ECHO VOLUSIA FOREVER

Protect our quality of life

By the time you read this some of you will have already voted by mail. I hope you voted for ECHO/Volusia Forever. If you're waiting for early voting, it begins on Monday, October 19th. The two initiatives are located on the second page of the ballot, along with all of those confusing amendments. One of which, number 4, was added by our ever helpful state legislators. It seeks to make it even harder for citizens to force state government to do what we plead with them to do. As my Dad used to say, "Some of these guys are so crooked they could slide through a barrel of fish hooks and never get a scratch." The take home message here is to be sure you vote for ECHO/Volusia Forever.

If you're willing to take a step further and volunteer a few hours of your time, we have a project you can help out with. In order to help guarantee a win for these two important initiatives I'm looking for some volunteers to hold signs at early voting sites. Our sister chapters, West Volusia Audubon and South-east Volusia Audubon will be doing this in their areas. Here in our area we have three early voting sites: City Island Library, Ormond Beach Library and the new site, Midtown Cultural Center. I'm not naive enough to think we can get all sites covered daily all 2 weeks that early voting is open. We'll do what we can. My idea is to have signs mounted on 7' handles. These can be rested on the ground so that volunteers have only to hold them upright to attract the attention of voters arriving to vote. The signs can be left at the voting sites by securing them to a tree or sign in the parking lot with a bungee cord. That way, when a volunteer arrives to fill their shift, they have only to retrieve their sign and display it. When their shift is over they can hand over the sign to their replacement, assuming we get enough volunteers to have replacements. Otherwise the sign can be secured to the tree or post with the bungee cord for the next volunteer. It's important that volunteers be able to discuss the merits of these two programs. So that if approached by a voter with questions the volunteer can give simple, cogent responses.

I know that volunteering several hours of your time for perhaps several days a week for two weeks is a big thing to ask. However, the personal rewards you'll receive from doing such an important volunteer effort will warm your heart long after the election is over.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, October 19th, Program Meeting- Due to the virus shutdown of meeting facilities and an abundance of caution on our part, we now hold our program meetings via Zoom. In some ways this offers a better experience since the photos our speakers show look so much better on your screen at home than when viewed from across a room at Sica Hall. We hope to be able to get back together in person when our new season begins in September, 2021. For now though we meet virtually using Zoom. Last month we marveled at the photos of terns presented by Michael Brothers. At this meeting we'll learn about Snail Kites. Tyler Beck, Snail Kite Conservation Coordinator with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will present a program on these fascinating birds and the challenges they've faced. Click on the link to learn how you can register and be assured of joining us for the [meeting](#). We begin at 6:30 and the program starts at 7:00 pm sharp. We hope to see you, in cyberspace if not in person.

Field Trips

Wednesday, October 7th, Hontoon Island State Park- Join us for this first trip ever to this island paradise to look for migrating warblers. We'll meet at 8:00 am at the park headquarters and ferry, 2309 River Ridge Rd, DeLand, FL 32720. Here's a link to more [information](#). Be sure to look at this page. This trip will involve strenuous hiking on possibly wet trails so be prepared. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan Tague, 386-871-6049.

Friday, October 9th, Washington Oaks Gardens State Park- This is a much more relaxed hike looking for migrating warblers, tanagers, etc. We'll meet at the park, 6400 N. Oceanshore Blvd. Palm Coast, FL 32137 and join Joan Tague for a day of birding fun. Bring lunch. Here's a link for more [information](#). Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Wednesday, October 21st, Princess Place Preserve- Join Joan Tague for a trip to this Flagler County treasure. We'll meet at the park, 2500 Princess Place Road Palm Coast, FL at 8:00 am. Here's a link to more [information](#). Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Friday, October 23rd, Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive- Join David Hartgrove for a trip to one of Florida's birding hot spots. We'll meet at 7:00 am at Int'l Square - East of I-95 on Int'l Speed-way Blvd behind Krystal, 2550 West International Speedway Blvd. Daytona Beach FL 32114. Then we'll drive to our destination. Here's a link to more [information](#). Bring lunch Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.



The Okefenokee Fishing Spider, *Dolomedes okefenokensis*



An Okefenokee Fishing Spider with its recently captured prey. You can see how well it's camouflaged against the tree bark.

Photos by John Serrao

A Spider That Eats Frogs!

This story first appeared in "The Hummer", the monthly newsletter of the West Volusia Audubon Society. It is reprinted here with permission.

Gliding along the St. John's, Oklawaha, or Silver Rivers is one of the most relaxing and stimulating ways to look for birds in Florida. There are Limpkins, moorhens, kingfishers, Wood Ducks, Ibises, 10 kinds of herons and egrets, Ospreys, Bald Eagles, Swallow-tailed Kites (in summer) and maybe a Prothonotary Warbler. And there are alligators, a half-dozen species of turtles, brown and Florida water snakes, tree frogs and pig frogs. I've seen manatees, river otters, and even a black bear swimming in front of my kayak, and I've counted as many as 25 species of beautiful dragonflies and damselflies on a single outing.

There's one other secretive animal that isn't seen by most boaters, but it never fails to attract my attention and fascination. Pressed against the trunks of the big cypress trees, with legs stretched out to the size of a human hand, are the largest spiders in the eastern United States. The Okefenokee Fishing Spider (*Dolomedes okefenokensis*) is so well camouflaged in this resting position that few people ever notice it, but once you develop a "search image" for this impressive arachnid, you'll see many of them resting motionless waiting to ambush and snatch prey above and just below the water's surface.

There are a few other species of *Dolomedes*, or fishing spiders, in the eastern United States, but this one takes the prize for size. The body of an adult female may be 1 ½ inches, and the legs spread as much as 5 ½ inches across. It ranges from its namesake Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia through all of Florida. Some of the biggest ones I've seen are from Fisheating Creek in the northern Everglades. When you paddle too close to one of these spiders on a cypress trunk, it scurries with lightning speed to the other side of the tree, sounding almost like a squirrel! Or it may dash down the tree straight into the water to escape, but if it lets go of the tree it immediately bobs back up to the surface like a cork.

Okefenokee Fishing Spiders prey on insects, crayfish, small fish and even tree frogs, all of which are swiftly captured without a web. The venom is harmless to humans, and the only possible way to get bitten is by grabbing one in your fingers. Females are often seen holding their huge, round, white egg sacs in their jaws, each holding as many as 350 eggs. Before the eggs hatch, the female constructs a "nursery web" for her babies and stands guard outside this for a short time before they disperse to begin independent lives along the rivers and lakes of Florida.

John Serrao

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Welcome to Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Gwen Bills, Mary Anne Bishop, Russell Boner, Debbie Bryant, Hildegard Carter, Betty Cunningham, Helen D'Antonio, Lisa Davids, William Gray, Katherine Hailey, Shravanti Halpern, Mary Kern, Susan Lund, Ray Massari, Harold Masson, Terry Mercer, Cheryl Miles, Candace Miller, Joan Myers, Helga Nelson, Frances Pettigrew, Bernice Pinter, John Roessler, Carol Rojas, Mary Shepard, Elizabeth Smith, Margaret Snyder, Sharon Sparacino, Elaine Stacy, Barbara Strickland, Leonora Tordini, Virginia Underwood, Laurie Van Dusen and David Walsh. We hope to see you on a field trip or at one of our Zoom meetings.

The Mighty Blue Jay

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

It is difficult to fathom the mind-boggling examples related to the behavior of Nature. Is Nature our brethren not just to preserve, to conserve or admire, but to treat as an equal? To realize Nature is a friend not a thing, not to be used or controlled, but to love as a living, viable equal. Should not Nature nurture us, help us understand the workings of ourselves, to show us how to live in harmony? Is that what the screeching Blue Jay is trying to say to us, to understand?

I haven't experienced an overwhelming number of Blue Jay encounters, but the ones I have had have been memorable, explosive and profound. I rarely see them along a wooded trail or in a deep forest. Yet their preferred habitats include forests, farmlands, parks, groves and suburbs. They're a worthy backyard visitor. They're not seen along water edges, though Volusia County alone has over 300 miles of shoreline.

I have witnessed their raucous behavior since I was a little boy. I didn't know until I earned my Bird Study merit badge from the Boys Scouts of America that I, for a long time, had been an experienced "Bird Watcher." I couldn't identify many birds at that time. But I didn't care. I just liked to watch them and so did my mother. And we watched them together - the Robin, the Bluebird, the Jenny Wren, the Starlings, the Crows, the Gray Catbirds and, of course, the Blue Jay. All fun birds to watch around our small bungalow on a hill in Waterbury, Connecticut. It has been said many times before, "what goes around, comes around." So here I sit now at the window in my home in Port Orange and have fun looking at the birds visiting my yard. Guess I was meant to be a backyard Birder.

My first contact with the Blue Jay began in an eight foot high Red Cedar tree alongside the front porch of my childhood home. It was favorite place for medium sized songbirds to yearly make their nest and fledge their family under the watchful, fascinated eyes of that young, boy. Dad trimmed the tree just right so the birds felt concealed, yet opened enough for the boy to watch the maturation process. On the other side of the porch, Mom planted Honeysuckle vines and hummingbirds came to them. Thus began my entrance into the wonderful world of birding.

The year the Blue Jays came to the porch I watched the construction of the nest, saw the brown spotted eggs and watched the adorable featherless chicks turn into the four most beautiful, tiny blue and white creatures I had ever seen. I was hooked. I felt the stirring of bird watching and knew it was for me. And so did Mom.

The Blue Jay is a noisy, incredibly designed blue/white bird with a sharp black barred tail, featuring blue/gray upper parts and soft, light gray under parts. A distinct black necklace and a bold, blue head crest rounds out its flashy appearance. Yes, it is noisy and bold and pushy and does raid small bird nests.

But then, I look out the window and watch a Blue Jay land on my feeder with an explosion of energy, as if slamming open a door and yelling, "Hello, I'm here."

The Blue Jay needs to be noticed. Is that so bad?

Ray Scory

"Thank you, Thank you, Thank you" Jane is home and recovering nicely. She is happy to be home and I am happy. Your thoughts and prayers sent her way are sincerely and deeply appreciated. They Worked. Ray



Blue Jay Photo by Ray Scory

Blue Jays aren't really blue. The color we see is due to the prismatic structure of their feathers reflecting light in the blue range of the color spectrum. The same is true of Bluebirds, Indigo Buntings, etc. Actual blue pigment is extremely rare in nature.

* * * *

I Vote Because

The League of Women Voters of Volusia County (LWVVC) is proud to announce its release of the video, "I Vote Because." ["I Vote Because"](#) is a non-partisan campaign to register voters and get people to vote in 2020.

Social Justice and Diversity Chair, Vickie Presley, indicates, "This collaboration effort fits with the LWVVC goal for 2020-21 to promote collaboration and build positive relationships with diverse groups." League President, Nicki Junkins, states, "One of the purposes of LWVVC is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government. COVID-19 has forced us to pivot and revamp our ground game. We now are relying on social and digital media platforms. This video effort does that and showcases why our residents consider voting to be important."

The last date to register to vote in this year's November 3 presidential election is October 5th. You can register at <https://www.vote411.org/>

Please help us share this video to help promote voting in this election! ThankYou!

Carla Christianson, Voter Service Chair,
League of Women Voters of Volusia County

Reports of micro-plastics in our water, in fish and in us are enough to make even skeptics take notice. Here's information on an easy, inexpensive way we can each reduce the amounts of plastic pollution we all generate. This piece was published in the newsletter of the Flagler Audubon Society. It appears here with permission.

EDITOR'S CONSERVATION CORNER

Following our September educational program, I felt ready to begin the slow process of reducing the use of plastics in my home, beginning in the kitchen. This was a bold move as my hubby is the dishwasher in the family and likes sponges. We were both quite surprised with how much we liked the items I ordered, and how easily we made the transition. It's a small start on this journey.

If you're interested, I ordered cotton napkins and [Wettex Swedish Dishcloths](#) to reduce my use of paper towels and napkins. To replace sponges and scrubbies, I ordered a [kitchen loofah](#) set, natural hemp sponges, and a [coconut bristle brush](#) set. And, yes, I have a close, personal relationship with Amazon:-)

For more ideas to get started, check out this [list](#) from the Green Education Foundation and this [article](#) from Audubon.org.

Priscilla Reed

One more note, if you order from Amazon be sure to sign up for Amazon Smile. This free service from the retail giant makes a 0.5% donation to the charity of your choice. It can be our Audubon chapter, the Red Cross, whatever you choose. That amount, though small, can add up quickly. Editor.

* * * *



You Really Should Buy A Duck Stamp

The Black-bellied Whistling Duck on this year's Duck Stamp is a gorgeous bird in real life. Ninety-eight cents of every dollar spent on Duck Stamps goes to preserve and maintain our national wildlife refuges. As birders we use the refuge system often when we go on field trips. Buying a Duck Stamp grants you access to every national wildlife refuge in the system. The website says that they're available at post offices but I've never found one there yet. They are available at refuges with visitor centers but due to the virus, they're closed. So here's a [place](#) to order them online. You'll be glad you did.

David Hartgrove

No Goodbyes, Just Good Memories

It is with a deep sense of loss that we report that Fran Carr, our long time newsletter editor and board member, passed away on April 14th. Due to a break in communication I only learned of this last week. Fran's rapier like wit and gentle manner will be sorely missed in this world. Our condolences to her family.

Editor

* * * *

From The Quotable Birder

"An election is coming. Universal peace is declared, and the foxes have a sincere interest in prolonging the lives of the poultry."

George Eliot, Felix Holt, The Radical

George Eliot was the pen name of Mary Ann Evers. Felix Holt was published in 1866.

* * * *

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Past President: Melissa Lammers

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* * * *

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The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

Volume 66-Number 11. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
November, 2020



Comments & Conservation Notes

Today, November 1st, is the last day of early voting. Tuesday, November 3rd is Election Day. I imagine most, if not all of you, have already voted. If not, please be sure to vote YES on both of the last two ballot initiatives, ECHO and Volusia Forever.

* * *

Under the guise of reducing “burdensome” regulations the Environmental Protection Agency has a plan to wreck the Clean Water Act by shifting regulatory authority over Section 404 to the state. Section 404 provides strong guidelines for the permitting of construction in or near wetlands and bodies of water. Developers have long cried crocodile tears over the fact that they can’t dredge and fill wetlands the way their daddies did when they were wrecking Florida’s environment to line their corporate pockets. The final public hearing on the issue took place via Zoom on October 27th. The decision will be announced later. By a show of hands, any guesses as to which way the decision will go?

Sierra Club has a list of very well thought out objections.

Florida’s water resources generate billions for our economy and deserve the highest level of scrutiny and protection -- something that FDEP is not well-positioned to provide.

Florida’s wetlands are essential to our resilience and drinking water supply, and are unique ecosystems that draw tourists and new residents to our beautiful state.

State 404 permitting assumption would add more regulatory burden to FDEP - an agency that cannot meet its existing regulatory demands. *Which of course is the idea. DH.*

FDEP is already too underfunded to properly carry out its own programs and there is no commitment that additional annual federal funding will be available to support the state’s assumption of a new permitting authority.

This will fast-track development permits for powerful special interests that want to exploit Florida’s wetlands and other water resources for profit.

FDEP will not have the checks and balances needed when they review 404 permit applications from other state agencies and water management districts. FDEP will essentially be like a fox guarding the hen house.

As sea levels rise and there’s increased pressure to expand development we need a large and power rooster with a Louisville Slugger guarding our state’s henhouse where our water is concerned.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, November 16th, Program Meeting- Join us for an inspiring presentation by Jim McGinity, a licensed bird bander from Dunedin. Jim’s presentation will be full of photos and an education in what bird banding is all about. Click on the link below to learn how you can register and be assured of joining us for the [meeting](#). We begin gathering at 6:30 and the program starts at 7:00 pm sharp.

Field Trips

Thursday, November 5th, North Peninsula State Park- Join Joan Tague for this trip to walk the trails along the river and into the dunes. Here’s a [link](#) for more information. Meet at the parking lot. 40 Highbridge Road Ormond by the Sea, FL 32176. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Thursday, November 19th, T M Goodwin Marsh- Join David Hartgrove for this long trip to this excellent birding hot spot. We’ll meet at 7:00 am in the Target parking lot in Port Orange behind Panera Bread. Click on this [link](#) for more information. After our birding those wishing to can join David for lunch at [Marsh Landing Restaurant](#), in Fellsmere. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.

Citizen Science Opportunity

Save Our Springs and Rivers Academy

Want to become a Blue Spring advocate and help us spread the word about solutions to water pollution? Volusia County Environmental Management’s “Green Volusia” is offering a free 6 part adult education course via Zoom meetings that will have you speaking like an expert on the issues as an “Ambassador.” Space is limited and you must register ahead of time. The meetings will be from 5:30 to 7:30 pm on the following dates: November 4, 5, 11, 12, 18, and 19, 2020. Here’s a [link](#) to the registration form.

* * * *

From the Quotable Birder

“Crows are, as you must know, our most intelligent birds... Crows know the value of organization, and are as well drilled as soldiers- very much better than some soldiers, in fact, for crows are always on duty, always at war, and always dependent on each other for life and safety.”

Ernest Thompson Seton, “Wild Animals I Have Known”

Dirt Digger? and other opportunities at HRA

Yes, another plea for volunteers.... (Dirt Digger explained below)

Like any volunteer dependent organization, Halifax River Audubon depends on the dedication of selfless people that set the meeting agendas and lead the field trips. Every year a beginner bird class is offered. For two years we have shared our love of all things bird at The Great Backyard Bird Count at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center. We sponsor the Christmas Bird Count.

These events are the most visible services that we provide to the community. And to be perfectly honest, these are activities common all to bird clubs, Audubon and otherwise, across the country. Do we do other things? Sure - we support and distribute Audubon Adventure packets to Volusia County Schools. We conduct bird counts for North Peninsula State Park and the Shorebird Alliance. And we manage all of the administrative details that come with the management of a non-profit. Are we doing all that we can? Of course not. More accomplishments require more dedicated individuals to cover the work.

I've frightened you, haven't I? I have been in this situation. "Don't look at me - I am doing enough already." We all are. So what are we asking for? We are looking for folks that can spare a few hours a month to do any number of tasks. We are looking for folks who just want to do things that they enjoy. Like what?

Do you enjoy social media? Keep our Facebook page current, interesting and relevant.

Do you take photographs or short videos? We would love to use these in our social media and website.

Do you love spending time with people? You could lead a field trip! (Yes you can.)

Do you have basic computer skills? You can keep the membership rosters current.

Do you have writing skills? You can write short pieces about club activities, field trips and more. Help us to document our history.

Speaking of history, would you like to help us archive documents and write our history for 2023? HRA will be 100 years old. Help us plan a great centennial. We are scanning documents and creating an on-line library of these fascinating artifacts. Let's plan a celebration.

Plants for Birds - do you love the Zen of Gardening? We need speakers, native plant enthusiasts and dirt diggers. Could we have a beautiful sample garden in one of our communities? It's not out of the question. What a swell project.

Do you love to be in the field? We are often asked to provide talent for bird census work. Help us help our partners in parks and on public lands.

Can you help us communicate with public stakeholders and officials in the name of conservation? From writing letters to attending public meetings and hearings this work is so important.

Do you want to do something that I haven't mentioned? We love new ideas.

There are no little volunteers. When you step up to help us, you are giving the very precious gift of your time. I have volunteered for many different organizations over the years

Continued on the following page

Adam Hull is a Ranger at Hontoon Island State Park. He sent along this update on his first Volusia County Big Year.

Volusia Big Year

How do you fit over 250 species of birds in your binoculars? Well, you see them one bird at a time. When January 1st came around, I was excited to say, "Oh, that's the first so-and-so bird of the year." Carolina Wren got the worm, ringing in the first day of the new year with its boisterous, rolling song. That first day I documented 40 species and went about birding as usual. I had kicked around the idea of doing a Big Year for the county after hearing that Michael Brothers and Bob Wallace had their share of fun in 2019. It wasn't until January 13th, being encouraged by some birding friends while chasing (and missing) the Black-chinned Hummingbird in DeLeon Springs, that I decided I would commit 2020 to seeing as many birds as possible in Volusia County. Thankfully I was already birding obsessively and had racked up enough birds to consider doing a big year. By this point, I had added five birds to my all-time Volusia list, three of them being life birds!

The year progressed and so did the length of the bird list, including some real humdingers. One would be surprised to know that I didn't see a Green Heron until February 18th, two weeks after seeing Snail Kite. I tried six times for Lark Sparrow before seeing the two in Ponce Inlet. On one of these attempts, I found a male Western Tanager. Of course, there was the Shearwater invasion of Summer, with Cory's and Great Shearwaters ornamenting the coast in June and July. Also in June, I had the rare chance of photographing an adult Pomarine Jaeger on the sandbar at Disappearing Island. The biggest surprise of the year was on October 13th when I found the most mind-boggling bird in all of my birding adventures, a Sage Thrasher in DeLand! A bird normally seen in Colorado, Utah and Arizona.

As of today's date, October 24th, the list stands at 260 species. I'm hoping to tick off at least twenty more birds before the end of the year—roughly 10 birds per month. It's going to be very difficult at this point, but not impossible. For the past two winters, a Short-eared Owl has shown up at Shiloh Marsh Road. If by December 31st I haven't gotten it, I'll be down in the marsh, celebrating a year with the birds.

Adam Hull



Pomarine Jaeger on Disappearing Island, June 29th. This is a bird more likely to be seen 40 miles offshore.

Photo by Adam Hull

focusing on nature. I have worked hard but I have also been rewarded. I have expanded my knowledge, sharpened my skills, and gained new ones. Most of all, I made some great friends (ok, and a spouse) and had a lot of fun. Come on and sign up. Questions? Ideas? Let us hear from you

Joan Tague - HRA Membership members@halifaxas.org

* * * *

Time for another in our continuing series, "Everyday Birding"

by Ray Scory

Nothing But A Walk

I walked to my verdant creek and came upon a flower nestled on its stem. There all alone, displayed in its continuing beauty. It remained absolutely still. Not moving. And I wonder why so still when planet Earth spins on its axis at a 1000 miles per hour and the Earth revolves around the Sun at an average speed of 67,000 miles per hour. Quite extraordinary speeds and the flower is so still. Is it the everlasting beauty of the flower that is so mesmerizing or is the wonder of the relationship so complicating to truly understand the mystery that is so fascinating. One describing the other. Then a Carolina Wren chatters high in a nearby tree and it is easier to explain.

My walk becomes more fun. I pass house after house and say hello to a few walkers along the way. My eyes are sharper. My gait is much more sure. I am steady. I see things more clearly and I look for the hawk in the tree or stop to listen to the ascending zee, zee, zee song of a Prairie Warbler. I feel better. My mind is clear, open to the varieties ahead.

Occasionally, I drive by the creek over the imperceptible bridge and glance to see what is there. A fleeting hint of upright red topped in dark gray tells me a Roseate Spoonbill is visiting late this afternoon and I feel good that I make walks to the creek. One day I saw a shadow drop down into the creek. I pulled my car over, grabbed my camera, looked down at the meandering waters of the creek and spotted a Green Heron intently searching along the edges of water. Poking at what this bird knew was there. I looked down from the bridge to the top of the Green Heron, and marvel at the harmonious colors and exquisite design of shapes and lines. What a great opportunity to look down at this bird and observe it from a different perspective as it nonchalantly probes for fish and invertebrates along the waters edge.

The Verdant Creek, a quarter mile from my house, has become my treasure chest. Every morning I walk up to the sidewalk railing and look down and then up stream anticipating a new sighting. Whether it be a bird, insect, plant, fish or simply a reflection on the surface of the stream, something is always there. There is always something to see - never the same always ever changing. At times, some changes are subtle, other times explosive. But always something to experience. To stop and be there. To be still. To be quiet. To be with me and Nature's gifts, close by.

How far away is close by?

To a place where the crows choose to fly.

Or a spot in the mind

without limits with the birds in the sky.

Or along side a creek, close by.

Ray Scory



My meandering verdant creek, painted in early morning sun light, displays an artistic composition of interlocking lines of plant life and water, a vast number of images that abound from this simple creek without the influence of wildlife present.



A Great Blue Heron is in juxtaposition with a stylish reflection of early morning overcast light on slow moving water.

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!

* * * *

Audubon Coverage in the Hometown News

[The Hometown News](#) publishes weekly in print and is available digitally all the time. We were pleasantly surprised when they ran an [extensive article](#) on Audubon Florida's Assembly and then included information on local birding and all three local chapters. Click the link above and see if you recognize the birders pictured.

* * * *

Help The Marine Science Center

The Mary Keller Seabird Rehabilitation Sanctuary, Raptor Education and Conservation Exhibit is a mouthful. The planned new building will be an important enhancement of the existing facility. Our chapter will make a donation and we and the folks at MSC hope you'll be inclined to donate too. They want to build a new flight cage to replace the one damaged by Hurricane Matthew. They also want to improve the exhibits of the raptors so that the birds and visitors have a better experience. Please consider a making a donation to this worthwhile project. Here's a link to the [donation page](#).

* * * *



Cedar Waxwings will be in our neighborhoods again soon.

Photo by Chuck Tague

Welcome to our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Jane Allison, Gwen Bills, Mary Blackledge, T. Bohn, Dee Borbely, Douglas Brown, James Carter, Carol Chillemi, Brenda Cranmer, Christine Day, Caroline Efstathion, Regina Farley, Mike Frontczak, Richard Goudey, Betty Hendricks, John Hoag, E. T. Hoisington, Karen Jorgensen, Hilary Kaufmann, Carolyn Keene, Marti King, Marjory Kline, J. Kotas, Ed Kocis, Kathleen Mylotte, Violet Nolte, Eileen Pazos, Richard Peterkin, Sally Peterson, Donna Racino, Sharon Rappaport, C. Richardson, Rebecca Sapsford, Barbara Strickland, William Taylor, Joan Vincent, Kathryn Wells, Susan Williams, Dale Yeager, William Young, Joan Youngblood, Bernard Yvon, Mary Ziebell, Rosemarie Zukas. We hope to see you at one of our virtual Zoom meetings or on a field trip.

* * * *

Big Snapping Turtle Story Has Happy Ending

Corresponding Secretary, Steve Underwood, sent along this link to a [You Tube video](#) with a happy ending. You can skip the opening commercial after a few seconds. The sounds of the kids in the background are priceless. Enjoy!

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The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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December, 2020



Comments & Conservation Notes

Anxious to do as much environmental damage as possible while still in power, the Trump administration had its stooges at the US Fish & Wildlife Service publish a final ruling in the last week in November. It dealt a near death blow to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Under the Act industries whose activities caused the deaths of birds were required to try to mitigate the damage by changing their practices. Yes, this cost them money but they were damaging a natural resource dear to all of us. If your son breaks the neighbor's window with his baseball, you pay to have it replaced. A study by the USF&WS shows that 450 million birds are killed annually by industrial practices. Why shouldn't industry be made to pay for their damages?

Birds will be damaged, along with a lot of other species, if the oil leases the Trump administration handed out in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge stand a legal challenge. Again, there was a rush to get this done before Trump and his henchmen are shown the door on January 20th. There's much more at stake here though than some caribou and Snow Geese. If a legal precedent can be established that it's okay to drill for oil in ANWR, then no refuge is safe any longer. If some clown decides there's something to drill for in the middle of Merritt Island NWR, then it'll be a lot easier for him to get his drill rigs in there ruining the landscape forever. Poor old Teddy Roosevelt must be spinning in his grave like a whirling dervish.

The father of our nation's refuge system, TR knew what was at stake. We have to remember that he was president during the age of the robber barons. The clear cutting of our nation's forests, the fouling of its waters and air, the labor practices that placed little value on human life when balanced against maximum profits, these were standard practices back in the "Gilded Age." Old John D. Rockefeller polished his image with the public by handing out dimes to street kids. But if you worked at a Standard Oil refinery and lost your arm in an accident you were tossed out in the street without dimes or anything else.

The incoming Biden administration has its work cut out for it. Over the past four years Trump's goons at the Environmental Protection Agency, the Interior Department and the Department of Labor have been busy rolling back laws that took decades to enact. The Clean Water Act was finally signed into law after an Ohio river burned out of control for several days. And that wasn't the first time it had. The Clean Air Act was passed after doctors testified before Congress about the damaging effects of air pollution on children's health and learning abilities. Even mercury, one of the most hazardous substances on the planet saw its rules relaxed under the Trump administration. As we move into the next four years let's hope for a better future.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, December 21st, Program Meeting- Join us for a Zoom meeting beginning at 6:30 pm. The program begins at 7:00 pm and will be an interview with Dr. Frank Chapman. Dr. Chapman actually died 75 years ago but Tallahassee writer and conservationist, James Huffstod, will be appearing in character as Dr. Chapman. Among his many contributions to the natural world Chapman was the founder of the Christmas Bird Count, the longest running citizen science project in history. Through old photos and his deep research Jim gives us a fascinating look at this giant of conservation biology. A brief business meeting will follow.

Field Trips

Friday, December 4th, Orlando Wetlands- Join Joan Tague for a trip to this man made waste water treatment wetland that has become one of Central Florida's birding hotspots. Purple Gallinule, Crested Caracara, King Rail, and if we're lucky, Vermillion Flycatcher; all can be seen here. We'll meet at the site, 25155 Wheeler Road, Christmas FL 32709. Due to the virus the tram has been closed so we'll walk the impoundments. Bring lunch, snacks, water, etc. Questions ? Call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Tuesday, December 8th, Lighthouse Point Park- Join Joan Tague for this fun event. Low tide is 8:22 am. So we'll have good views of shorebirds resting on the exposed sandbars. We'll look for Common and Arctic Terns, Piping Plovers and Red Knots. The grassy areas offer sparrows, Common Ground-Dove, etc. We'll meet at the park, 5000 S. Atlantic Ave. Ponce Inlet FL. Park admission is 10.00 unless you have an annual pass. Bring water and snacks, a mask and hand sanitizer. Questions ? Call Joan, 386-871-6049.

* * *

Christmas Bird Counts

There will be 3 CBC's in our area, with limited opportunities for participation. Due to the virus we're limiting our CBC teams to 2 people, as I believe the other chapters in our area are. There will also be no after count dinner this year.

The West Volusia count is Saturday, 12/19. Ours, the Daytona Beach CBC, will be Saturday, 12/26. The Ponce Inlet count, sponsored by Southeast Volusia Audubon, will be on Saturday, January 2nd. Please contact David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249 or birdman9@earthlink.net if you wish to participate.

Last month Adam Hull wrote about his Volusia County Big Year. Here's a story about a couple doing a Florida Big Year. Thanks to FWC's "Kite Tails" for the information. Ed.

Doing A Florida Big Year

Natasza Fontaine & Robert Gundy have put a lot of miles on their Subaru. She's a graduate student at Florida State University in Tallahassee. Gundy, he prefers to be called by his last name, graduated from FSU in 2010 and is a biologist and field researcher with the Florida Natural Areas Inventory. Starting in January they decided to do a Florida Big Year, an effort to see as many bird species as possible in the state within 365 days. By mid February they were at 250 species. As the weeks rolled on they averaged 5 to 10 new species per weekend. Though once they hit 320 the pace of getting new species slowed considerably. Now they're lucky if they get 2 new species per weekend. Since they both work full time during the week they're limited to doing their Big Year on weekends. COVID-19 has not made the task any easier. If you're doing a Big Year you need to see any many birds as possible and this includes pelagic species. The few people who organized pelagic trips around the state have put those on hiatus. Still, as of November 15th, they were at 371 species, with 363 countable. That last number refers to the American Birding Association's checklist. While they may have seen a Red-masked Parakeet in Miami it doesn't officially count by ABA rules since it's a bird that's escaped captivity.

The virus has changed a lot about the way they travel. They sleep in a tent or the back of the car, having to endure the mosquitoes and "no seums." They report, "We obsessively clean our hands and the vehicle, we prepare all our food for the weekend ahead of time, we've become experts at holding our breath while using binoculars to avoid fogging the lenses while wearing masks and we've gone to the bathroom outside with abnormal frequency to avoid public places. We know all the best bushes around the state."

When asked what their favorite trip was so far, the answer is of course, the Dry Tortugas. While the drive to Key West was just that, the trip across the azure blue waters of the Gulf Stream was a treat that included sea turtles and flying fish. While there they saw Brown Noddies and even got the rare Black Noddy. They also saw a Short-eared Owl and did some snorkeling in the gin clear waters watching parrot fish, snapper and tarpon.

The most asked question they get is, "What's your favorite bird so far?" Of course that's not an easy question to answer. It could be the Smooth-billed Ani or the Red-legged Thrush that was in the Key West Botanical Garden. Maybe it's the Mountain Bluebird that was only the second state record or the Scott's Oriole, that was the first. They persevered in their quest to get a drab little bird accepted by the Florida Ornithological Society's Records Committee. Several years ago Natasza attended a class put on by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology on recording bird songs. So now she records them whenever possible. The Pacific-slope Flycatcher is one of those non-descript members of the Empidonax family. In fact its scientific name is *Empidonax difficilis*. So when they listed it on their eBird checklist alarm bells went off in the state Records Committee. Voice is about the only way to distinguish these species one from another. For most of us identification in the field is all but impossible. Luckily Natasza had a nice, clear recording of the bird's call.

The current Florida Big Year record (set in 2019) is held by Eary & Jennifer Warren, 387! Can Natasza & Grundy make it? Stay tuned.

David Hartgrove



Gopher Tortoises Saved From Who Knows What

In early October chapter member, Celine Sullivan, was birding in Lighthouse Point Park, in Ponce Inlet. Anyone who's been there knows to watch out for the ever present Gopher Tortoises that are frequently seen crossing the road. Celine was shocked to see a man walking toward her carrying a tortoise and dropping it 3 times as it squirmed and scratched in its efforts to escape. Never the shy, retiring type, Celine asked the guy what he thought he was doing. He panicked, dropped the tortoise and ran. Celine went to the attendant in the booth, who was clueless about what to do. So Celine began calling anyone she could think of who might have jurisdiction. When she finally got to the FWC dispatcher she was told there was no one available to answer the call. The tortoise went about its business and disappeared into the dunes.

Lighthouse Point Park isn't the only place where this kind of nonsense is taking place. Across the Inlet in Smyrna Dunes Park 2 men were stopped with 2 of the tortoises in the back of their pickup truck. Again it was a woman who knew these 2 clowns were violating the law and took it upon herself to speak up. Park employees at both parks apparently see their jobs as primarily maintenance and clean up. They're not law enforcement personnel and the laws governing arrest powers are pretty strict. If an office doesn't see an infraction happen, he or she can't just arrest someone based on your statement.

Some more education is necessary to enlighten the public on how to deal with the wildlife. Celine and chapter member, Lisa Mickey, contacted Jennifer Winters, Protected Species Activity Manager for Volusia County. She advised them that in the future violations of this sort should be reported to Beach Safety and Ocean Rescue. They're a lot closer and can respond in a timely fashion. There will also be increased training for park personnel as to the importance of keeping an eye on the wildlife. Gopher Tortoises are state listed as "Threatened" and as a keystone species enjoy increased levels of protection. Celine and Lisa, with Jennifer's help, were able to get new signs (like to one above) installed in both parks.

Some years ago we did a chapter field trip to Emerald Marsh, in Lake County. There were no picnic facilities nearby so when we exited the area we stopped along a county road under a large oak tree for our lunch. I walked about 50 feet away from the group and came across a pile of 15 to 18 empty Gopher Tortoise shells. Someone, who apparently saw it as his god given right to take any wildlife he wanted, had butchered 2 the tortoises for food. I called FWC but it was far too late to do anything about it then. Report violations if you see them.

David Hartgrove

By Ray Scory

One Day - One Hour Walk

On August 9, 2020 between 7:00 and 8:00 AM this budding naturalist began his walk to and back from the "Verdant Creek", a small inconspicuous drainage brook meandering down to and under a busy Countryside road. A favorite place of my morning journey where I stop to observe urban wildlife.

This morning I almost decided to not lug my camera with me, but I did. It has become habit. However, many times I don't use it. Today I walked with it. Hanging from one hand, looking around as I walked. High in a tree were two Red-tailed Hawks. Hmmm. Photo Op! I made use of that and got some very nice photographs. I moved on to the creek. Two Wood Storks in the brook. Made use of that and continued on, I was in the mood to walk. I didn't want to stop. I just wanted to keep going. I was walking to my spots. Twice the distance from the creek and I stopped. I made some photographs of two white Muscovy's and a nice composition of a wedge of White Ibis on a green lawn which firmly pointed into a quiet pond. I thought it made an interesting composition.

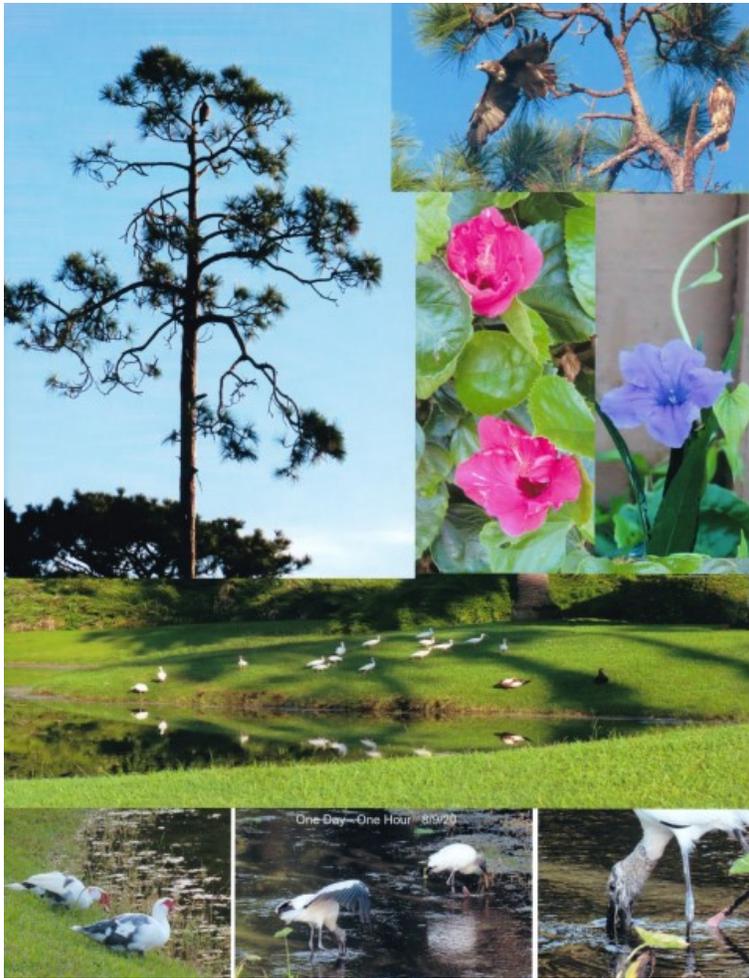
I stopped and looked at my watch and said, "It is almost 8:30 and I must turn around." This is the time that I always call Jane. On my way back I passed some extremely beautiful flowers. These I also photographed. Part of the fun - I have to go home and research their identity. The Wood Storks are still there now in all their sunny splendor. Very bright, against the dark creek. What else is here now? I hear a Blue Jay, a Northern Cardinal, Carolina Wrens and the tireless Northern Mockingbird. I listen carefully to its three notes, not the two of the the Brown Thrasher's repertoire. That can be tricky at times. A Fish Crow "cahed" in the distance, similar to an American Crow but with a scratchy, sore throat. However, I'm not sure I've ever heard an American Crow with a sore throat. Then a hummingbird flew by looking like a speeding fallen leaf.

All in all I'm glad I took my camera. It has been a very vital and rich morning. And I'm glad I turned when I did, because I will be back home shortly after 8:30. I become more and more fascinated by what I see during my morning walks along my urban concrete trail to the verdant creek.

A few mornings ago I was standing at the railing looking down and up into the creek. Just standing still. Quiet. Just after daybreak. Still dark. I heard a "whoosh" close above my head. The sound came from a Great Blue Heron pumping its wings down to quickly rise above me as it was coming in to land in the creek. It appeared the bird didn't see me standing still and quiet at the railing until the last second. The downward force of the wings gave the Great Blue Heron enough lift to clear my head avoiding an unexpected crash.

Thanks to an alert Great Blue Heron. I will always remember the power of its "Whoosh".

Ray Scory



This photo-montage illustrates a few of the many eye-catching images I came upon during my one hour journey along The Verdant Creek Trail.



Red-tailed Hawk - Impact, subject matter and light are key ingredients in making a great photograph. However, being there, patience and luck are equally important when photographing wildlife.

Photos by Ray Scory



Photo by Alice Horst

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The following article is from the [Birding Community E-Bulletin](#)

"BETTY" ANDERSON, Women's Rights Pioneer

Kathleen S. Anderson (1923-2018), best known to her friends and family as "Betty," was a pioneer and fearless champion of women in the ornithological and birding communities going back at least to the late 1950s. Born on a ranch in Montana and the daughter of a U.S. Forest Service Supervisor, Betty soon moved to Carver, Massachusetts, where early on she developed an intense interest in birds and natural history, interests that were rare among young women of her era.

She became a remarkable trail-blazer in both the Massachusetts birding community and North American ornithological community. She was the first woman to be invited as a guest speaker for the Nuttall Ornithological Club (NOC), the oldest bird club in North America, and an original hotbed of male supremacy. Years later, and in a twist of irony, Betty would actually become the first woman President of the NOC. Still, Betty may best be known as the founding director of the renowned Manomet Bird Observatory (now Manomet Inc.) located in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

It was a fine spring day in 2011 when Shawn Carey from Migration Productions, with the help of Wayne Petersen, held a casual but informative interview with Betty on her 100-acre property in Middleborough, Massachusetts.

Shawn recently dusted off and polished this recorded interview to make it available as a [15-minute video](#). See if you agree with us that Betty Anderson was a truly remarkable and interesting person, with a real combination of curiosity and creativity.

* * * *

From The Quotable Birder

"The birds are molting. If only man could molt also- his mind once a year of its errors, his heart once a year of its useless passions."

James Allen, A Kentucky Cardinal



White Ibis and Landscape - Parallel diagonal lines, opposing chevron shapes, intruding soft shadows and water reflections lend repetition and shape to a landscape that support the elegant wedge of White Ibis.

Photo by Ray Scory

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