

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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January, 2021



Comments & Conservation Notes

As we start the new year, with several vaccines for the virus and new administration in Washington, our outlook is, to paraphrase the verse from a song, "So bright I gotta wear shades."

I want to thank all of the folks who came out to do our Christmas Bird Count. We had all sectors covered and Joan Tague even found an Ash-throated Flycatcher. A new species for our count circle.

Our own Steve Underwood was surfing the Internet and came across this bit of encouraging [information](#). Dr. David Vaughn, of the Mote Marine Laboratory, has made an accidental discovery that could offer a chance for recovery of the world's coral reefs. The Great Barrier Reef, off the east coast of Australia, has been dying at a rapid rate due to several factors related to climate change. In the Florida Keys the reefs are dying from climate change and pollution related to increased nutrient loading from septic tanks and sewage outfalls.. Dr. Vaughn has apparently discovered a way to grow coral polyps 40 times faster than happens in nature. He's also able to engineer the polyps to be accepting of the more acidic and warm water conditions we can expect to see in our seas in the future.

While doing the CBC I was out in Plantation Pines looking for Brown-headed Nuthatches. I found some and added them to the list. Now, while looking at [Flight Calls](#), the online newsletter of the American Birding Association, I came across an article on [Pygmy Nuthatches](#). They almost look like twins of the Brown-headed Nuthatch. The Brown-headed lacks the buffy under-parts of a Pygmy Nuthatch and the Pygmy's head isn't as brown. They are both specialists of pine forests. In Ted Floyd's article you'll learn that the Pygmy Nuthatch is facing threats related to climate change. The Brown-headed Nuthatch is a southeastern species, limited to parts of Virginia and Maryland, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and east Texas. The Pygmy Nuthatch is a bird of the Rockies and the Sierras. If you haven't heard the Brown-headed Nuthatch's "squeaky toy" call, here's a [link](#) to a short YouTube video. They personify "cute."

We're just two years away from our 100th anniversary as a chapter. Our board has big plans for making it a real celebration. And by then we won't have the virus to complicate things. Stay tuned. We have a exciting chapter full of dedicated and experienced people. As I said, "The future's so bright I gotta wear shades!"

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, January 18th, Program Meeting- Join us for this Zoom meeting where Maia McGuire, UF/IFAS Extension Sea Grant Agent, will give a program on micro-plastics in our environment. The meeting will be announced on [Meet-up](#) and you can register for the meeting by clicking on the link in that email notification. The meeting begins at 6:30 while we gather. Maia's presentation begins at 7:00 sharp and a brief business meeting will follow.

Field Trips

Friday & Saturday, January 15th & 16th Merritt Island- Join David Hartgrove on Friday and Joan Tague on Saturday to this hottest of hot spots. Winter birding in Florida doesn't get any better than Merritt Island in January. We'll meet at the Target in Port Orange, near Panera Bread at 7:30 am both days. Bring lunch, we can socially distance at the picnic tables. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249 or Joan, 386-871-6049.

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MDC's 2021 Winter Birding Tours Begin in January

Avian enthusiasts eager to observe migratory birds passing through Central Florida en route to Argentina and points south can catch a ride with the Marine Discovery Center to an active spoil island, starting on January 14.

MDC's Winter Birding Tours give guests opportunities to learn more about these species from naturalists and local Audubon chapter members. The tours also offer avid birders transportation to Disappearing Island onboard MDC's Discovery boat, leaving from the North Causeway dock in New Smyrna Beach to Disappearing Island. Guests will disembark at Disappearing Island at Ponce Inlet and walk the shoreline to explore and view such species as Red Knots, Black Skimmers and a variety of plovers, sandpipers, gulls and terns only seen in this area during the winter months.

The Thursday morning tours will be offered once a month with tours set for Jan. 14, Feb. 11, March 11 and April 15. Cost per person for the three-hour tours will be \$40 for adults; \$37 for seniors (62+) and students; and \$22 for children under 12. Trips will leave MDC's dock on the North Causeway at 9 a.m., and return at noon. Guests are encouraged to bring binoculars, viewing scopes and to wear comfortable, water-tolerant shoes to walk along the shoreline.

Due to COVID trips will be limited to 20 persons and you're asked to wear a mask on the boat. To make reservations, call 386-428-4828 or visit the [website](#).

by Ray Scory

High in the Sky

*Two Common ravens in the sky
an Orange-crowned warbler in the brushes near by.
A new camera with a 1400mm lens
making photographs beyond my expectations at best
Last Christmas week began at my home most happily,
whereby my new camera began its task making history.
And with my new camera I carried some sensibilities,
that got me through some days of difficulties.*

I try to carry my camera where ever I go, especially on my Verdant Creek Walks. When I don't have it with me is when the unexpected happens and I miss the photograph of a lifetime. However, those wonderful misses are burned into my memory. And, while only lasting mere seconds, remain a lasting and dramatic visual image.

One of my most mind shaking misses happened as I nonchalantly wandered about my Florida backyard. I heard the rolling cr-r-r-ruck of the Common Raven. I automatically looked up into the clear blue sky. High, high in the sky, two black specks caterwauled northeast toward the Florida coastline tumbling and circling and spiraling upward. I hesitated to identify them at first, trying to see the wedge shaped tail and the wide wings - difficult. However, I knew they were not American or Fish crows. Their calls were distinctively Common Ravens and range maps don't show them here in east central Florida. But they were overhead - high in the sky.

I was birding at the Sleeping Giant State Park, a Connecticut coastal, trap-rock mountain landmark for ancient seafarers, when the Common Raven first appeared after many years absence. I witnessed their antics flying up and down the hard stone ridges and I relaxed under the calls of their songs. For many years after I listened to their call from Connecticut's glacier shaped landscape - from coastal Long Island sound, to the northwest with the rolling Appalachian Mountains, to the central Connecticut valley. I heard ravens and that one morning two flew over my house situated in east central Florida and I identified them.

Two other noteworthy sightings occurred when I birded without my trusty camera and its 1400mm lens. One episode in my Florida backyard. The other at Hammonasset Beach State Park on the central Connecticut coast.

At Hammonasset I watched a Bald Eagle using a mid-morning thermal soar high into the sky. Spiraling up without a flap from its wings, it reach miles high to the apex of the thermal, stopped, pointed west, and then shot out over Long Island Sound like a strike of lightning. A lasting memory high in the sky. My third lasting bird memory is closer to the ground but just as significant.

As I rustled along the bushes, palmettos, weedy plants and vines bordering my backyard a light brown, tiny bird with no outstanding markings had found a restful haven. Who was I to disturb this bird? I had no answer, so I just stood there in place and shared the time with an Orange-crowned Warbler. Time passed without a sense of movement. A first and only time visitor to my backyard. Not high in the sky, but high in my vast collection of lasting memories.

I write this article to realize that in the worst of times, sometimes it is a pleasant memory that carries you through. Birding, photography and good friends work for me.

Jane has been home since the middle of October and has improved remarkably. She is on her way to full recovery. We wish you all a healthy and joyous New Year. Ray and Jane Scory



Sleeping Giant State Park, Connecticut

A favorite Connecticut State Park and a popular birding destination. Common Ravens, Scarlet Tanagers, Worm-eating Warblers, Wood Thrush, Winter Wrens and a variety of songbirds and raptors nest here. A great place to walk or look for birds with or without a camera. Situated in Hamden, Connecticut.



American White Pelicans

Squadrons of American White Pelicans lift off, propelled by 9 foot long wings, from their breeding grounds located in south central Canada, the Rockies and the Great Plains. Flying in formation high in the sky, they follow an ancient trail south into Florida, Texas and Louisiana. Some will stop off at their wintering grounds in Spruce Creek County Park, Merritt Island NWR and other places across Florida.

Photos by Ray Scory

Chapter member and naturalist at the Marine Discovery Center, Lisa Mickey, recently wrote the following article. As our population here grows, recycling becomes more important by the day. Some of the tallest points in Florida's landscape are landfills. They're also a source of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Recycling keeps items out of the landfill.

Recycling, Dispelling the Myths

There is a wide range of misinformation circulating on social media and in conversation when it comes to recycling here in Volusia County. One belief is that everything – trash and recycling – is dumped into the same truck and taken to the county landfill. Another belief is that New Smyrna is no longer recycling at all. Here's the news flash: Both of these popular notions are wrong.

Ken DeForest, division manager of Waste Pro in Volusia County, was more than happy recently to debunk misconceptions and provide clear information about how our curbside recycling works.

"We have spent a lot of money to continue recycling, so yes, we are still recycling," said DeForest. "We have about 35 people working full time in recycling in this area." DeForest said Waste Pro's recycling plant originally cost about \$8 million, but it had to be upgraded "to make a cleaner material" that would be bought around the world. The plant's daily



processing capacity was lowered by about 20 percent, while staffing increased by 10 percent. These steps were taken to make sure locally recycled materials were "cleaner" and "there was a place to go with the material," he added.

Still, the rumors persisted that recycling was dead and Ken thought he knew why. In New Smyrna Beach in particular the rumors seemed to be due to a change in the types of trucks that did the pick ups. Earlier pick ups were done with what's called curb-sort trucks. Workers in the curb-sort trucks would separate all recycling containers — such as glass, metal and plastic — from the fiber materials — such as cardboard and paper — into separate compartments of the truck as they emptied residential recycling bins. "Those trucks look very different from the trucks that pick up the large garbage bins," DeForest noted.

When Waste Pro took over the contract, it converted recycling collection to what is called single-stream collection — designed to make recycling more convenient for residential customers. The process did not require residents to sort

recycled items. "With the single-stream process, residents can put all the material – the fiber, the cardboard, newspapers, magazines – and mix them with all the plastic, glass bottles and metal containers," he explained. "That allows us to use a compaction truck."

DeForest says Waste Pro starts each day with an empty truck and they only pick up recycling in those trucks. The recycled material is then hauled to a different place. While garbage and yard waste are transported to the county landfill, the recycling is taken to Waste Pro's transfer station in Ormond Beach. Some 14 tons of recycled material is then reloaded into tractor trailer trucks in Ormond Beach for the long haul up to a recycling plant in Ocala. Recycled items from local households go from trucks to conveyor belts to sorting stations. Some of the sorting is completed by automation and some is done by hand.

"We are spending a lot of resources to collect recycling separately from solid waste," said DeForest. "In New Smyrna Beach and all our cities where we recycle, we are collecting the material and transporting it to Ormond Beach, then up to Ocala, where the recycling plant pulls it all apart." Three years ago China stopped accepting recycle materials. When that happened, DeForest said companies like Waste Pro became more limited where they could ship recycled product. "That drove down the commodity value of all the recyclables and it just made recycling a whole lot harder," he said. "It would certainly be easier to take everything to the landfill, but we are committed to recycling."

The market for recycled glass also has become more limited in recent years. While glass is still being collected in local recycling bins and taken for processing, DeForest admitted that sometimes it does end up in the county landfill.

"Glass is a commodity that doesn't always have a place to go," he said. "We haul it, but right now, there's really no reuse of glass. The glass goes through our system and we crush it, but most of the time, it's going back to the landfill and is used for daily cover."

When asked what citizens can do to help to help improve the local recycling process, DeForest said citizens could help by learning to look for the recycle symbol with numbers on products they throw into their recycling bins. For plastic items, look for the numbers 1-5 stamped inside a small triangle on the packaging. If there is no number or no recycling symbol on the item, consider it as trash. Items that are not stamped for recycling have to be hand sorted during processing to avoid contaminating usable recycled plastics.

"Sometimes, people 'wish recycle,' which means not all plastics can be recycled, but they recycle them anyway," DeForest said. "The processing system is not set up to recycle these items." This causes extra work for recycling employees, who have to hand sort and throw away what should have been done by the homeowner.

DeForest encourages citizens to wash out items like peanut butter jars and jelly containers before placing them in recycling bins. Failure to do so can "gum up the system," he said. Caps should also be left on bottles, he added. Optical scanners at the processing centers can recognize bottles and sort them into appropriate lots. If caps are removed and bottles are crushed, the item must be hand-sorted, which is less efficient.

Citizens also don't have to remove labels from glass or plastic bottles. When the items are processed, the items are chipped into small pieces and the paper is eliminated. And

We Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Dorothy Berkowitz, Betty Cook, Marjorie Giuffre, Stuart Goodman, Kathryn Hood, Truddie Johnson, Frieda Landsman, Kay Martinovic, Natalie Nachtigal, Eleni Papadopoulou, Chris Peters, Thomas Scott, Jean Snyder and Meret Wilson. We hope to see you at one of our Zoom meetings or on one of our field trips. We're hoping that by September we can again have in person meetings.

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2020 Sea Turtle Nesting Season Roundup

A report from the Marine Science Center says that we had the following totals of nesting sea turtles along Volusia County's beaches this past year. North of Ponce Inlet there were 452 Loggerhead nests, 16 Green nests and 3 Leatherback nests. South of the Inlet there were 390 Loggerhead nests, 37 Green nests, 3 Leatherback nests and 1 Kemp's Ridley nest. These totals do not include the 12 miles of Volusia County beach inside Canaveral National Seashore. Kemp's Ridley is the rarest and smallest of the sea turtle species, Leatherbacks are the largest of all sea turtles. They can reach up to 7 feet in length and weigh 1500 pounds.

At Canaveral National Seashore they had an average year, a total of 7,926 nests along its 24 miles of beach. In 2019 they had 13,302 nests. In 2018 just 4,634. The north half of the Seashore, which lies within the boundaries of Volusia County, is called the Apollo section. The south end, in Brevard County, is called the Playa Linda section. The Apollo section had 1,758 Loggerhead nests, 1,339 Green nests and 11 Leatherback nests. The Playa Linda section had 2,429 Loggerhead nests, 2,4369 Green nests, 15 Leatherback nests and 5 Kemp's Ridley.

The average Loggerhead nest contains 100 eggs. A Green nest can have almost 200. Leatherback turtles lay eggs the size of billiard balls and their nests average around 90 eggs. While these seem like big numbers (1,758 Loggerhead nests x 100 eggs) it must be remembered that only about 1 in a hundred survives to adulthood and returns to nest.

In our recent program with, Jim Huffstodt portraying Frank Chapman, it was mentioned that one of Mr. Chapman's acquaintances here in Florida had to chase a bear off the beach that was digging up and eating sea turtle eggs. Bears aren't much of a threat to sea turtle eggs any more but raccoons, coyotes and bob cats are. Beginning in 1985 nests at Canaveral National Seashore were screened, using 4' x 4' pieces of wire mesh with openings 4" x 2". These openings allow the baby turtles to crawl out but prevent predators like raccoons and coyotes from digging into the nest. Prior to 1985 85% of nests at Canaveral suffered predation. At the end of 1985 that number had been reversed. Only 15% of the nests were predated and 85% survived. The screening program continues now every nesting season and this explains why we're seeing higher numbers of nests than back in the 1970's.

David Hartgrove

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From the Quotable Birder

"One swallow does not a summer make, but one skein of geese, cleaving the murk of March thaw, is the Spring."

Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

while cardboard and paper are acceptable items for recycling, pizza boxes are considered trash. Once again, DeForest noted, the grease in pizza boxes can impact and slow processing.

"When you look at the system's cost, the extra items that can't be recycled end up costing extra fuel, labor, time sorting and electricity at the plant, only to be thrown away after all of that," said DeForest. "If somebody puts something in recycling that can't be recycled, there's just a lot of hauling and handling that ultimately ends at the landfill." So it's important that we all do our part in making sure recycling is a success

Lisa Mickey

Photo by WastePro

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Photos of Interesting Bird Behavior

Here's a link to some Audubon [photos](#) of interesting bird behavior. Enjoy!

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Comments and Conservation Notes

Anxious to do as much damage as possible before being shown the door by the incoming Biden administration, the deranged Trumpsters at the EPA went overboard in their waning few days in power.

Citrus greening is a serious problem for Florida's multi-billion dollar citrus industry. It's transmitted to the trees by a tiny insect that first showed up in Florida around 2000. It would be great if an effective solution to the problem could be found. The EPA, showing a complete lack of understanding of the consequences of its proposed solution, has suddenly and with no comment period, authorized the use of a pesticide that's so damaging to the environment that it's banned in more than 100 countries. Aldicarb is sprinkled around trees on the ground, where it's certain to contaminate ground water. It's also a serious threat to the farm workers who would be spreading it. The EPA also authorized the use of streptomycin on the trees. At best this might allow a tree a few more years of reduced fruit output before the disease kills the tree. Saturating the trees with streptomycin contributes to gross overuse of antibiotics in agriculture that have contributed to the rise of so called superbugs, antibiotic resistant microbes like pneumonia, listeria and others. Maybe another Executive Order will fix this?

They also saw fit to give a little present to paving contractors and the phosphate industry. The Sierra Club and several other environmental groups are suing the EPA for authorizing the use of phosphogypsum — a radioactive waste that's left over from creating chemicals used for fertilizer. It gives off radon gas, a hazardous air pollutant. It also includes lead, arsenic, and other metals that have been found to have health consequences for people and the environment. A petition to the EPA to reconsider this decision was submitted in December. Again, the incoming administration has a chance to reverse this idiotic decision before it does too much damage.

The Loop, that scenic stretch of road in northeast Volusia County that includes Walter Boardman Lane, named for our chapter's one time conservation chair, is again under assault by developers. This time the issue is 36 acres along the west side of Old Dixie Highway between the established buffer and Plantation Oaks. The developer has said he's willing to sell the property for 1.3 million, provided he can build the homes that would have been built on the 36 acres elsewhere on his property. The question is, does the county use ECHO funds or look elsewhere for funding. Suzanne Scheiber, founder of [Dream Green Volusia](#), has said she'll apply for transportation grants from the feds. Her offer was ignored for some reason. There's no easy answer here. A compromise is much needed.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, February 15th, Program Meeting- Join us for a virtual trip to our island neighbor to the south, Cuba. Paul Rebmann is the President of the [Paw Paw Chapter](#) of the Florida Native Plant Society. This program will be a brief look at Cuba from Paul's early 2019 trip to our southern neighbor. This photo tour will look at some of the flora and fauna of the island country and sights from both the countryside and the cities of Matanzas and Havana, including commentary on the people and how they live. This will be a Zoom meeting and of course and pre-registration is required. Send a note to [Joan Tague](#) with "Meeting Registration" in the subject line. Then watch your email for a link to the meeting. We open the meeting at 6:30 for everyone to get logged in and the presentation will start promptly at 7:00 pm. A brief business meeting will follow.

Field Trips

Friday, February 19th, Lake Apopka- Join David Hartgrove for a trip to one of Florida's birding hot spots. A good trip if you're not into a lot of walking since we'll be driving this one with brief stops to get out for better looks at the birds. We'll meet at Int'l Square – East of I-95 on Int'l Speedway Blvd behind Krystal at 7:30 am. Bring lunch. Questions, call David at 386-235-1249.

Thursday, February 11th, MDC's 2021 Winter Birding Tour The Marine Discovery Center continues their winter birding tours to Disappearing Island. MDC's Winter Birding Tours give guests opportunities to learn more about these species from naturalists and local Audubon chapter members. The tours offer avid birders transportation to the island onboard MDC's Discovery boat.

The Discovery boat will leave from the North Causeway dock in New Smyrna Beach to Disappearing Island, where guests disembark onto the spoil island at Ponce Inlet. Guests on these trips walk the shoreline to explore and view such species as Red Knots, Black Skimmers and a variety of plovers and sandpipers, many only seen in this area during the winter months. This three-hour trip will give guests time to explore on their own or with small groups of experienced birders, like Joan and David. Cost per person for the three-hour tours will be \$40 for adults; \$37 for seniors (62+) and students; and \$22 for children under 12. Children must be supervised at all times by adults. Discovery is a 40-passenger boat, but under current Covid guidelines, will operate at 50 percent capacity with a maximum of 20 passengers. All passengers are asked to wear masks. Reservations can be made on the [website](#) or by calling 386-428-4828.

Here are a couple of photos that show some of the things that have been happening around our area as we wait for a chance to get a vaccine shot.



Dan Gribbin was out one day and caught this young Red-shouldered Hawk with its lunch, a snake.



This Bald Eagle nest (VO100) is located on the west side of Town Homes West, west of Clyde Morris, north of Reed Canal Road. The chicks are about 2 weeks old. That's Mom on the left and Dad had just flown in with a second fish.

Photo by David Hartgrove

Plant a Tree For MLK Day

The [Climate Reality Project, Daytona Beach Chapter](#), has been around a short time but they're motivated. They were able to get Port Orange to authorize the planting of a number of trees on some city property on the east side of Spruce Creek Road just south of Nova Road. Fourteen people showed up, wearing their masks, to dig holes, haul



Photo by Kat Paro

water and help make this little corner of the neighborhood a bit more green. There were slash pine, red cedar, bald cypress and live oaks planted, trees that will help stabilize the soil, clean the air and replenish the oxygen. Derek LaMontagne, a member who lives nearby and is the founder of "[Save Port Orange](#)", enabled this project by having the trees dropped off at his home and is coordinating the ongoing efforts to make sure the trees are watered while they're getting established. This was an example of what can happen when a few dedicated people get together to help solve a big problem.

David Hartgrove

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We Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Jaqueline Beckley, Jennifer Benson, Frank Bruno, Susan Bucek, Carol Chapin, Eric Datz, Carol Eiberger, Joan Flamm, Dana Jacobsen, Lorin Love, Richard McCracken, John Palser, Sybil Picchetti, Sandra Roberson, Noyes Rogers, Martin Roll, and Maria Summerlin. We hope to see you in one of our Zoom meetings or on one of our field trips. We're hoping that by September we can again have in person meetings.

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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*

Carolina Wrens, Sensational !

Carolina Wrens are just so beautiful. I welcome them into my backyard every day and they favor my feeding station with dedicated regularity. A bundle of nonstop energy all packed into a body weighing less than an ounce (0.7oz). They fly across my backyard not more than 4 feet off the ground and quickly disappear into two brushy, palmetto islands bordering my property. With short rapid wing beats they make the journey, stopping at the centrally located feeding station to peck away at the suet or bird seed.

I haven't yet seen them bathing in my bird bath, but they do come to it. Gripping the edge they will take a sip or two. Always alert, bobbing up and down always looking up, looking down. Then dropping down to the ground. A tasty snack, a tiny ant, maybe. But always moving. Then up to the feeder and here the show gets better - riveting. They check out my feeder like it's an abandoned castle. "What's around the corner? What will I find there?" Every hidden space is an adventure. Every elevation is a platform for viewing. Looking out to the horizon seems important. They do it frequently. In all directions.

They put on quite a performance when they appear at my feeder station. Climbing up and into my narrow suet cage, a trick that always brings a smile to my heart. They do not hang on the outside of the wire cage like all other birds. They climb right inside the cage where all the good stuff is. Up close and personal. That's the Carolina Wren, quite the individual. Cute to us, survival to them.

Their nest is made of sticks, leaves, feathers, snake skins and other soft materials and, at times, is built in the most unseemly places - in a beat-up work shoe on a bench in a garage, in a wicker mailbox basket hanging from the front door of a house in a residential neighborhood, or in the confines of a coiled garden hose attached to the outside wall of my house. What a thrill it is to look down into the nest and witness the maturation of this beautiful little brown bird. It is easier when the nest is in a shoe, not so easy when in a nest box or hanging from a front door. My neighbors did not disturb the wren family occupying a nest in a wreath on their front door. Instead they entered the back door during the length of the wren family's occupancy (24 to 28 days). The key phrase in this paragraph is "did not disturb" If you come upon an active nest, peek in, and move on. Respect their privacy. They can be skittish during this period.

If you see a tiny 5 to 6 inch bird dressed exquisitely in shades of brown with a short barred tail pointed straight up and seems to always be looking for something, here in Florida, you are probably looking at a Carolina Wren. When you hear a bird singing "chooo-wee, chooo-wee, chooo-wee or tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle and you look for a large bird, "Don't." Should you find, instead, a little brown bird singing very loudly, you have found a [Carolina Wren](#). The volume of their singing is surprising.

They range in a variety of habitats and climates. The family is spread out over approximately 1.2 million square miles from Connecticut to the backyard of my Florida home to Honduras out to Nebraska and Texas. To watch them go through their daily routine is worthy as watching the "greatest show on earth." When the Carolina Wren enters my yard, I smile.

Ray Scory



This Carolina Wren checks out Ray's suet feeder.



These two fledglings have just exited the nest box for the first time and landed in Ray's backyard. They're surrounded by a whole new world. They stayed this close together for about 15 minutes, then moved on.

Photos by Ray Scory

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Check Out The Nesting Bald Eagles

Steve Underwood sent out this [link](#) to the Northeast Florida Bald Eagle nest cam. It's high def and has sound quality good enough that you can hear a Mourning Dove calling in the background. As I write this on Saturday afternoon, 1/30, the female was incubating 2 eggs, which she turned once as I was watching. The nest is called the "Hamlet" for some reason and the players are "Gabrielle and Samson." Be sure to check out the running commentary to the right of the camera view.

Editor

The following article is from the January, 2021 issue of *Kite Tales*, the monthly newsletter of the Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail.

Science Spotlight: Spice is Nice

Have you ever heard the tip that hot sauce or cayenne pepper will keep squirrels off your bird feeders and wondered whether this was a myth?

It turns out that it is true! Birds are not sensitive to capsaicin (the chemical that makes peppers taste hot) in the same way mammals are. They can consume even the spiciest peppers without tasting a thing. There may also be an evolutionary explanation for this – studies have shown that pepper seeds germinate much better after passing through the digestive tract of a bird than that of a mammal, meaning that birds are more effective at dispersing seeds that will grow into more pepper plants. It is in the plants' best interest to ward off mammals and leave the seed dispersal to the birds.

So, yes, hot sauce can potentially help ward off unwanted feeder visitors, but we wouldn't necessarily recommend it (would you want to be surprised by a mouthful of hot sauce when you were expecting a tasty sunflower seed?) There is a better way to avoid battling with squirrels on your bird feeder altogether – turning your yard into a habitat for wildlife with native plants, shelter, and water will ensure that there is plenty to go around! Learn more and order your copy of our *Planting a Refuge for Wildlife* booklet today at this [link](#).

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Hatching Wood Ducks Video

Chapter member and documentary film maker, George Sibley (that's George's film you see at the beginning of the tour at the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse), sent along a link to a YouTube [video](#) that was very well filmed and edited. It's just over 16 minutes long and if you've ever wondered what's going on inside a Wood Duck nest box this short film will answer your questions. Thanks George!

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Bachman's Sparrow, Photo by Peter May

Bird Note And Questions From The Past

Last year board member, Steve Underwood, was scanning back issues of the Pelican so that these old paper copies can be more easily archived. One of the columns that ran in the Pelican in March, 1964, was "Question and Answer." One of the questions was, "Do some birds hibernate rather than migrate?" The answer, based on the state of bird biology 57 years ago, was that some birds do enter what's called "torpor." Searching the web I came across [Bird Note](#).

In 2004, Chris Petersen, then Executive Director of Seattle Audubon, had an idea: [Star Date](#) for birds. Eventually Bird Note became a separate entity and is now a non profit with brief shows on some NPR stations and a daily podcast. Now, getting back to the question of hibernating birds. In the desert southwest there is a cousin of the Whippoorwill, the Common Poorwill. Here's a [link](#) to the fascinating podcast that will answer that question about hibernating birds.

Steve suggested that maybe we should run the Question and Answer column in the Pelican again. Fifty-seven years later we have the answers to our questions at our finger tips online.

Editor

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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

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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 67-Number 3. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
March, 2021



Comments & Conservation Notes

The Florida Legislative session begins on March 2nd. Of course our elected representatives are already up there, hard at work trying to devise new ways to ignore the will of the voters. There are bills to make voting by mail harder and others that endanger funding for our public schools.

From an environmental perspective there are several that are particularly damaging. First, regional planning councils are about all that's left of the old Department of Community Affairs. Back when Rick Scott was governor, he and the "Lege" (as the inimitable Molly Ivins used to refer to that august body in Texas) saw no reason to plan for growth so they gutted that agency. About all that's left are regional planning councils. So along comes Senator Jennifer Bradley (R), Fanning Springs, with SB 62. It does away with the last vestiges of sensible planning for large developments. With our water and traffic problems multiplying daily why would any sensible person want to plan ahead for growth? All those pesky regulations they propose might mean that some enterprising developer would be prohibited from slipping a WaWa into your residential neighborhood, or tearing out that last stand of old growth oaks where you see a Pileated Woodpecker family when you walk your dog. Please, call your state senator and ask them to vote "No" on SB 62. Here's a link to the [League of Women Voters](#) website that makes finding your state and federal governmental officials easy. Use the phone numbers you find there. Generally, you won't be speaking to a person. It will take a few minutes to leave a voice mail and you'll have done your part to make life a bit better for us all.

Last year the "Lege" was concerned that locals had too much control over trees in their communities. So they passed legislation that made it all but impossible for local governments to protect the trees in their jurisdictions. The power rests with the home owner, whose interests may be more in the "I hate raking leaves so cut that 200 year old oak down." Yes, it's his or her property but the community should at least have the power to require a permit. Apparently the bill last year didn't go far enough for Senator Jason Brodeur (R), whose district extends into Volusia from Seminole County. His bill, SB 916, will further weaken what remains of local tree ordinances. Thankfully, riding to the rescue, comes Senator Linda Stewart (D), Orlando and Representative Anna Eskamani (D) Orange County, with companion bills SB 596 & HB 6023. These bills essentially reverse what the "Lege" did last year and restores the local tree ordinance authority to municipalities. Please, use the information above to contact your representative and senator. Ask them to vote for SB 596 and HB 6023.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, March 15th, Program Meeting- We had fun going to [Cuba](#) last month with Paul Rebmann for plants. So this month we'll go down for a birding trip. In December, 2014, our chapter sponsored a birding trip to Cuba. Fourteen people went and one afternoon Rachel Ramsey, who was treasurer at the time had an idea. Why not use the trip donations we collected to produce a coloring book for Cuban school kids about Cuban birds. You'll get the whole story and see great photos from the trip. This will be a Zoom meeting of course and pre-registration is required. Send a note to [Joan Tague](#) with "Meeting Registration" in the subject line. Then watch your email for a link to the meeting. We open the meeting at 6:30 for everyone to get logged in and chat. The presentation will start promptly at 7:00 pm. A brief business meeting will follow. Be sure to click on the Cuba link above.

Field Trips

Wednesday, March 10th, Lake Woodruff- Join Joan Tague for a late afternoon walk around the impoundments. Target birds will be rails but also anything else we can find. The marsh at sundown can be a real treat. If weather permits, the evening may conclude with an exciting scientific experiment. You won't want to miss this. Meet in the Impoundments Parking Lot (the last one at the end of the road) at Lake Woodruff NWR at 3:00 pm. Questions, Call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Thursday, March 19th, MDC's 2021 Winter Birding Tour- The Marine Discovery Center continues their winter birding tours to Disappearing Island. MDC's Winter Birding Tours give guests opportunities to learn more about these species from naturalists and local Audubon chapter members.

The Discovery boat will leave from the North Causeway dock in New Smyrna Beach at 9:00 am in route to Disappearing Island, where guests disembark onto the spoil island at Ponce Inlet. Guests on these trips walk the shoreline to explore and view such species as Red Knots, Black Skimmers and a variety of plovers and sandpipers, many only seen in this area during the winter months. Cost per person for the three hour tours will be \$40 for adults; \$37 for seniors (62+) and students; and \$22 for children under 12. Children must be supervised at all times by adults. Discovery is a 40- passenger boat, but under current Covid guidelines, will operate at 75 % capacity with a maximum of 30 passengers. All passengers are asked to wear masks.

Reservations can be made on the [website](#) or by calling 386-428-4828.

NEWS FROM CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (RCC)

Borrow Pits – Wekiva Parkway

In December an editorial in the Orlando Sentinel and a strongly-worded letter from Lee Constantine, a Seminole County Commissioner, notified Gov. DeSantis of FDOT's use of un-permitted borrow pits in Lake County. Because of lack of communication between FDOT and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Lake County and SJRWMD have pursued litigation. FDOT suspended accepting fill from 1 of 2 companies under litigation, so the outcome is moving in the right direction.

Sheryan Epperly (Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society) spoke to the Lake County Board of County Commissioners on February 9 and followed up with a letter thanking them for doing the right thing.

EPA Grants Florida Sole Authority on Fill Material Permits

[Section 404](#) grants sole authority to the State. Audubon Florida and most other environmental organizations do not support this decision for reasons below:

1. The State of Florida (and the Water Management Districts) don't have the capacity due to budget and personnel cuts under the Scott administration.

2. The Corp of Engineers has been a check/balance for pressure on FL to allow bad permits. With sole responsibility, there is no oversight on State decisions.

Note: Section 404 is not universal. Permits for dredging and filling in and adjacent to navigable waters (bays, rivers, estuaries and major lakes) will remain under the control of the Corps of Engineers and EPA.

M-Cores

Recommendations from the task forces for all 3 roads were nearly identical:

- * there is no demonstrated need for new roadways; if/when needed, existing roads should be expanded rather than new roads built
- * roads shouldn't invade environmentally sensitive lands
- * environmental study must be done for all property within 10-mile radius of proposed new site. ***

Stay informed about AF activities during the Florida legislative session by signing up to receive [The Advocate](#).

AF Climate Work

[Olivia Sciandra](#), AF Climate Team Organizer, has a variety of ideas regarding how chapters can advocate for climate change with local governing bodies. Or visit Audubon Florida's Climate Change Advocacy [web page](#) for more information. [Sign up](#) here to receive Audubon Climate Updates.

Paula Wehr

Central Florida Chapters Representative

Audubon Florida Board of Directors

*** There are some environmental groups advocating for a bill to kill M-Cores entirely. Audubon Florida strongly believes this would be a mistake. Once killed the bill could be revived easily and this time minus the strong environmental safeguards that were negotiated in the existing, though dormant, bill.

Editor

The Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count was a roaring success. All across the globe people looked in their backyards, the park down the street or went for a hike in a favorite spot. 6,387 species were counted on nearly 320,000 checklists. Among those who entered their totals were Constance Clark, from Tuscarawas County, Ohio, who counted 3 Black-capped Chickadees and 2 Hairy Woodpeckers, among others. Down in New Zealand, Sharon Roberts counted 8 [Plipipi](#), an endemic species there. Caroline Cicero was counting at Trancas Canyon Creek, near Los Angeles, CA and had 4 Marbled Godwits and a California Scrub Jay among her 19 species reported. Karen Falls, counting in her backyard in Springfield, MO had 20 species, including a [Harris' Sparrow](#). Finally, Sonia Agustini, counting down in Santa Fe, Argentina had an American Kestrel and 2 [Campo Flickers](#) among the 19 species she saw.

Here in Volusia County we had 308 checklists entered totaling 162 species. Joan Tague produced several videos about the GBBC, in cooperation with the [Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center](#). Paula Wehr and I, along with Ken and Margo Wenzel, helped out with the production. The videos are now posted to our [website](#) and I hope you'll check them out. There are 5 of them. They're well done and full of useful information.

David Hartgrove



2 Top photo, Paula and David; above, Ken, Margo and Joan.

Photos by Joan Tague

by Ray Scory

A Migratory Moment

January 8, 2021 - Far from the deep Northwest sweeps a cold hard wind across a tender southerly landscape on course to push away a brilliant ocean sunrise on the beaches of Port Orange, Florida. One benefactor of this expected clash of Nature's power will be birds and they will react with energy and excitement. I suspect similar natural events created by this meeting of stormy winds and oncoming sunrise were igniting in some form or other - up and down our coastal communities. But I was there, on my walk between two special trees, at the right time to witness a natural phenomena beyond comprehension.

I was taking my daily early morning walk to my Verdant Creek and stopped to witness a rush of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings charge back and forth between two trees on opposite sides of my neighborhood road. I was in the middle of a deafening ruckus of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings frantically feeding and then resting after a night of migratory flight. I felt like I was whirling about in a dichotomy of avian behavior, another way of life. I wanted to fly wildly about with the birds and in another way, at the same time, I wanted to stay still and absorb the wildness surrounding me.

I have experienced this profound "another form of life" position a few times in my birding life, both personally and listening to stories from others. I find it works best for me when I stop thinking. I ease away from my mind and just feel. All around me becomes one, no attachments.

One morning I stood back and watched Kevin Karlson, a noted international Birding Advocate/Teacher stand silently and still under a singular tree, bare of leaves but covered in Florida's white, wintery frost. It was cold this morning and the darkness could not hide the frost blanketed landscape. Kevin was the leader of a field trip for the "Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival" and I followed to photograph the event. Our destination was a rural piece of property with varied habitat - pastures, high grass fields, wooded forests and a slow moving river. We were to arrive before daybreak and watch the majesty and offerings of the coming day. The sun had not yet appeared, yet Kevin stood motionless looking to the top of the tree. He was alone. As the sun rose above the horizon, it clipped the top of the tree in a blaze of yellow/orange and birds exploded from the tree as if shot from a cannon. An awe-inspiring sight. Kevin knew. He was there at that moment with the birds.

For many years my friend, Paul, and I spent a week in October hiking different sections of the Appalachian Trail. One particular night we pitched our tent high on the side of Bear Mountain in New York State. Long before daybreak we awoke to the harsh sounds of screeching and loud traveling birds. Daybreak exposed to us the sight of millions of blackbirds speeding through the chiseled valley on a southerly route below. We broke camp at 8:00AM and could still hear them when we hiked onto and over a distant mountain. As I looked down upon this thick black mass of iridescence gushing through the valley I wanted to jump in and go for the ride.

Light bulbs switching on and off against a picturesque Florida sky display American White Pelicans beginning their lazy, smooth spiral from high, high above to their wintering grounds in Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Titusville, Florida. As they drop down after traveling from their breeding ground in upper central USA, they create an amazingly electric thing to

thing to see. A mesmerizing sight at best.

My wife, Jane, once told me that when she was a teenager, she would dream of flapping her arms like wings and lift off into the air and fly above her house and look down upon her yard. She said it looked so real and yet she had never been that high when she was awake.

Sometimes it feels good to jump out of this world for a bit and join in with the birds.



Kevin Karlson in a frost covered field.



American White Pelicans at Merritt Island NWR

Photos by Ray Scory



Coral Honeysuckle grows with or without a trellis



A closeup of those tubular flowers so irresistible to hummers

Photos by Leslie Nixon

* * * *

Guided Hike - Longleaf Preserve

Join Trey Hannah, Specialist with Volusia County Environmental Management, and take a walk through Longleaf Pine Preserve's pine flat woods, cypress domes and swamps. Participants will learn about the connections between soils and the plant and animal communities of the wetlands. Meet at 9:00 am, on Friday, March 12th for this 1.5 hour hike. Meet at the west entrance, 3637 E. New York Ave, DeLand, FL 32724. Registration is required. Call 386-736-5927.

Here's a new column to the Pelican, "Plants For Birds", Leslie Nixon is a Master Gardener and FNPS member.

Coral Honeysuckle, Hummingbird Magnet

If you want to feed hummingbirds without the trouble of maintaining a specialized feeder, then you need a coral honeysuckle vine (*Lonicera sempervirens*). Before you say you don't have a trellis or fence to support a vine, you should know that this adaptable native can be planted as a shrub. Without a support it will grow to about 3-4' tall in an informal, somewhat sprawling but delightful manner.

Whichever form you choose, coral honeysuckle is an attractive evergreen plant with bright red tubular flowers that are irresistible to hummingbirds. As a bonus for bird lovers, coral honeysuckle produces berries that lure in larger songbirds such as mockingbirds and cardinals.

Coral honeysuckle is a well-behaved vine; it does not spread uncontrollably in the landscape and so it is much more environmentally friendly than invasive vines like flame vine or Japanese honeysuckle.

Growing conditions: Coral honeysuckle flowers best in full sun but will also bloom in part-sun (4 hours per day). Once established (about 3 months), it does not need supplemental water except during a drought.

Plant Information basics: Bloom: Red flowers year-round. Hardiness zones: 8-10. (Volusia is in zone 9.) Maintenance: None necessary but can be lightly pruned once a year.

Plant a coral honeysuckle near a picture window or next to your porch and you can enjoy the thrill of hummingbird visits throughout the year.

Leslie Nixon

* * * *



Most Bald Eagles here have chicks in the nest now

Bald Eagle chicks are hatched with a coat of natal down. This down is very light in color and does not have much insulating ability (chicks must be brooded by an adult for warmth). Natal down is replaced by thermal down beginning around 10 days of age. Thermal down has very good insulating qualities and by 15 days chicks are typically able to thermoregulate on their own. The final month of development is consumed by acquiring the coordination needed for movement and flight. Adults will continue to bring the eaglets food for up to six weeks following fledging.

Text and Photo by Lou Newman Visit his [website](#)

We Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Donnie Anderson, Meredith Babb, M. Boydalexandre, Linda Chadwick, Reid Conrad, Patricia Davis, Marie French, Andrea Gilbert, Wayne Grant, Nancy Heins, Yvonne Meier, Richard Moore, Joyce Nitto, Paul Reeves, Eleanor Rossero, George Sibley, Shoshanna Tempest, Danielle Weigel and Denise White. We hope to see you in one of our Zoom meetings or on one of our field trips. We're hoping that by September we can again have in person meetings.

* * * *

Melissa's GBBC Experience

I realize almost 2 weeks have gone by and I know you are sitting on the edges of your seats wondering what wonders I was able to spy on February 13th, during the Great Backyard Bird Count, 2021. It was a cold and rainy day in my backyard. I seem to have caused that weather phenom by putting on comfy clothing, grabbing a field guide and slinging my binoculars around my neck, ready to brave the walk from my dining room door, into the garage and from the garage, out onto my patio. I set upon my trail and when I opened the garage door, the skies opened too! I made the wise decision to execute an immediate about face and head up to my bedroom where I have an, uhm, "bird's eye view", of the prime bird real estate in my yard. In the (sigh, non-native) Cape Honeysuckle. I was richly rewarded by spying a [Yellow-rumped Warbler!](#) I have no doubt about my bird ID. I saw the rump. It was yellow. This was a much more successful way to ID the bird compared to the previous week's worth of attempting to distinguish between the "chek chek"s I had been hearing and interpreting as "chuk chuk"s, leading me to believe I had Common Yellowthroats in the yard (maybe I did, too). Supposedly I have a good ear for music --I play several instruments by ear and can speak Spanish well enough to fool native speakers, but the chek-chek and the chuk-chuk dialects are still eluding me. However, I scored TWO MORE SPECIES, one each, by EAR BIRDING! Yes! I know! Astounding! I registered one [Northern Cardinal](#) and one [Eurasian Collared-Dove!](#) Who knew these birds could be RIGHT IN MY BACKYARD!?!?

I am tempted to say I have no talent for birding but the truth is I am unpracticed. I won't know if I have talent or not until I make some more field trips. When my foot heals. I'm good at spotting movement (presumably I would be a good hunter) but I am terrible at the ID-ing of the LBBs. So perhaps this year, I will do better.

Melissa Lammers

Photos from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

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From the Quotable Birder

"The silence and solitude were touched by wild music, thin as air, the faraway gabbling of geese flying at night. Presently I caught sight of them as they streamed across the face of the moon, the high, excited clamor of their voices tingling through the night, and suddenly I saw, in one of those rare moments of insight, what it means to be wild and free."

Martha Reben, A Sharing of Joy



A male Blue-winged Teal in flight showing their diagnostic wing patch. It's never seen when they're swimming, which is when we usually see them.

Photo by Lou Newman, For more beautiful scenes here's a link to Lou's [website](#).

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April, 2021



Comments & Conservation Notes

Florida Conservation Voters is the reformed organization that was originally the group behind Amendment 1 in 2014. Here's information on their latest project.

2021/2022 Briefing Book

Whether in our freshwater systems, estuaries, or marine waters, water degradation is the result of excess pollution, made worse by inadequate monitoring and lack of enforcement of environmental standards. Water quality crises affect human health, natural systems, and Florida's economic stability.

While Florida is blessed with abundant freshwater resources including numerous springs, large rivers and lakes, and the extensive Floridan and Biscayne Aquifer, these resources are not limitless. Erratic and changing weather patterns, made worse by climate change, can result in prolonged droughts, as well as heavy rainfall that brings flooding. These concerns and others are all highlighted for your lawmakers in our [2021-2022 Briefing Book!](#)

We have collaborated with 24 conservation and social justice experts to produce this comprehensive guide for Florida lawmakers. Every Florida state Senator and Representative has received a copy of this guide and now you can access it too.

We hope that this briefing book will serve as your lawmakers' guide to understanding the critical environmental issues facing our state along with the social justice issues to which they are inextricably bound.

More than 90% of Floridians rely on underground aquifers for drinking water. The Florida Legislature must safeguard our water and the long-term health and well-being of all communities. Our elected officials need to hear about the importance of these issues to you and your family.

Aliki Moncrief, Executive Director

* * * * *

ECHO/Volusia Forever is moving forward quickly after the resounding vote in favor of these two programs last November. Advisory boards for both have been named and listening sessions for ECHO were [scheduled](#) earlier. Listening sessions for Volusia Forever took a little longer to schedule but they're now posted to the County's website too. Scroll down a bit on this [linked page](#) for that schedule. We hope you'll get involved and attend one or more of these listening sessions. It's important work and your input can make a difference.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, April 19th Program Meeting- Join us for trip into the past as we learn about the history of New Smyrna Beach. Our guide for this trip back in time will be documentary film maker, George Sibley. A film maker for over 40 years, his work spans a lot of subjects. If you've seen the film at the beginning of the tour of the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse, that's one of George's productions. He's done films for several national parks and on a host of other subjects, all with an eye to conservation. This will be a Zoom meeting of course and pre-registration is required. Please check [our calendar](#) for more information and the link to the Zoom reservation system for your login. We open the meeting at 6:30 for everyone to get logged in and chat. The presentation will start promptly at 7:00 pm. A brief business meeting will follow.

Field Trips

Wednesday, April 7th, Washington Oaks Gardens State Park- Join Joan Tague for this trip. Meet at the parking lot in the state park, 6400 N. Oceanshore Blvd. Palm Coast FL 32137. We will explore the gardens and trails while looking for Spring migrants. This can be our best opportunity to see a good number of Neotropical migrants as they pass through Florida. Check our [website](#) for more information. Questions, call Joan at 386-871-6049.

Marine Discovery Center Boat Trip

Thursday, April 15th- MDC's 2021 Winter Birding Tour- The Marine Discovery Center continues their winter birding tours to Disappearing Island. MDC's Winter Birding Tours give guests opportunities to learn more about these species from naturalists and local Audubon chapter members. This is the last of these trips for the year.

The Discovery boat will leave from the North Causeway dock in New Smyrna Beach at 9:00 am in route to Disappearing Island, where guests disembark onto the spoil island at Ponce Inlet. Guests on these trips walk the shoreline to explore and view such species as Red Knots, Black Skimmers and a variety of plovers and sandpipers, many only seen in this area during the winter months. Cost per person for the three hour tours will be \$40 for adults; \$37 for seniors (62+) and students; and \$22 for children under 12. Children must be supervised at all times by adults. Discovery is a 40-passenger boat, but under current Covid guidelines, will operate at 75 % capacity with a maximum of 30 passengers. All passengers are asked to wear masks. Reservations can be made on the [website](#) or by calling 386-428-4828.

Marion County birder, Alice Horst, sent this story recently

Sandhill Cranes in the Villages

March 15th, I stopped for a quick look at Alhambra Way Pond. Water level is lower now and not too attractive for much of anything. I did see 8 Blue-winged Teal, 2 Yellowlegs and 2 Least Sandpipers.

But the BEST was watching the Sandhill Cranes that are nesting on the bank of the pond. Originally they were working on a nest in the middle of the pond but when a rain storm elevated the water level that nest was abandoned. Then they began working on a nest on dry land. Tonight I saw one adult sitting on the nest while the other adult was wandering in the middle of the very shallow pond.

The wanderer wandered toward the nest-sitter. When the nest-sitter stood up 2 large eggs were visible. She turned the 2 eggs while he stood guard in the water nearby. Then she slowly sat down again on the egg and he just wandered awaywhat a guy!

Sometimes you just have to be lucky for photos. I certainly was tonight. Every day is a GREAT day to go birding!

Alice Horst



Standing guard while Mrs. turned the eggs
Photo by Alice Horst

* * * *

From Large to Small

The article above is about birds that stand 4.5 feet tall. This one is about birds that are 3.25 to 4.5 inches in length. Steve Underwood, our Corresponding Secretary, was cruising the Internet recently and came across this [You Tube video](#) of hummingbirds in high def, slow motion Enjoy!

Editor



Comfortably(?) incubating her 2 eggs

Photo by Alice Horst

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Below is a report from the GBBC website.

Birds Brought the World Together

The 2021 Great Backyard Bird Count was an incredible success. Congratulations! Look at what we accomplished:

- 6,436 species of birds identified
- 190 participating countries
- 379,726 eBird checklists submitted
- 479,842 Merlin Bird IDs submitted
- 151,393 photo submissions to Macaulay Library
- + 300,000 estimated global participants

Thank you for your contributions to this important effort to celebrate, watch, and count birds around the world so we can better protect them. No matter where your literal backyard was, our global backyard connected us to each other and the birds. To see a more in-depth summary of the 4-day event and engage with interactive world maps, [check out our final results](#). And be sure to watch our [Thank You Video](#) showcasing people and birds from around the world.

Congratulations to Anna Anders who won the Zeiss binocular give away! Anna says, "I had always been interested in birds but never felt I had the time to truly identify and observe them. And then the pandemic happened. Like many others I found solace in the natural world, especially in birds. I can't wait to do the GBBC next year and continue my birding journey!"



The Great Backyard Bird Count is an inter-organizational partnership.

Here's another plant profile from our resident expert, Leslie Nixon

The Catbird Plant

Florida Privet (*Forestiera segregata*) is a large shrub that often goes unnoticed in the landscape – except for two weeks in spring when it is chock full of small dark berries - and the catbirds who can't resist the tasty fruit. Catbirds are notoriously shy and are more often heard than seen, unless you have a Florida privet.

Florida privet is a fast-growing, drought-tolerant, hurricane-resistant Florida native that can reach 10-15' tall and 5-10' wide. It will work well in your yard as a single specimen or in multiples to form a hedge that can be sheared or left informal. In our area (planting zone 9) its dense cover thins out in December and January, but come February, just before it regains its fullness, tiny yellow-green flowers appear, which are followed in March by the bountiful berries (and birds).

Growing conditions: Florida privet is very adaptable, thriving in full sun to part shade, and dry or moist soil. Since it is tolerant of salt spray, it can also be enjoyed near the beach.

Only female plants produce berries, so if you are getting only one, make sure it's a girl. This young lady will take a couple of years before she starts producing berries, so be patient. If you plant one, the catbirds will come!

Note on purchasing bird-friendly plants: Most of the plants discussed here are Florida natives, which unfortunately means they are rarely sold in big box stores. To locate a nursery carrying native plants, look on the Florida Association of Native Nurseries [website](#).

Leslie Nixon



A Gray Catbird enjoys Florida privet berries

Photo by Leslie Nixon

* * * *

From the Quotable Birder

“In order to see birds it is necessary to become part of the silence.”

Robert Wilson Lynd

For those of you looking for Ray Scory's regular column, "Everyday Birding", it's absent this month. Ray had an unexpected visit to the hospital. He's home again and resting comfortably. His column will return next month. He did send the following along though.

Hi David,

Thought you might find this article interesting. My son-in-law from Connecticut emailed it to me.

Ray

Rare bird: 'Half-male, half-female' Cardinal

Some of what follows ran on the BBC website. As you can see the bird exhibits the colors of both sexes and appears split right down the middle.



Though not unheard of, mixed sex birds are rare. Male Northern Cardinals are bright red but females are pale brown, suggesting this specimen may be a mix of the two sexes.

Retired ornithologist Jamie Hill, 69, told the BBC it was a "once-in-a-lifetime, one-in-a-million encounter".

A friend of Mr Hill told him that she had seen an "unusual bird" coming to her bird feeders in Warren County, in Pennsylvania. At first Mr Hill wondered if the bird was leucistic - a term that means the specimen would have a loss of pigmentation in its feathers, but would not be half-female, half-male.

But after seeing mobile phone pictures, he suspected it had what is called bilateral gynandromorphism, which is when a bird would have both a functioning ovary and a functioning single testes.

Google that term, bilateral gynandromorphism, and you'll get hits that include information about a half and half Rose-breasted Grosbeak that was also discovered in Pennsylvania. That article ran in [National Geographic](#) in October of last year. Sort of makes you wonder what's in the water up there.

Of course, with millions of birds in the country, extremely rare events like these two examples are most likely the result of coincidence and not some hidden, man made, external cause.

It's a strange and wonderful world we live in. While we see evidence daily of the disastrous effects our species has on the others we share the planet with, sometimes things like those above are the result of simple genetic variation. If indeed the workings of genetic diversity can ever be called "simple."

David Hartgrove

3 Thanks to the BBC and retired ornithologist, Jamie Hill for parts of this article.

We Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Dave Bachansingh, Toby Berger, David Billmeier, Joseph Bilotti, Sam Cline, Irene Curran, Ralph Inman, Bill Kappa, Richard Langston, Nancy Lewis, Billie Lynch, Anne Marshall, Dean Palamara, Shivani Rudradat, Sherry Salvaggio, June Sefscik and Christopher Van Duynes. We hope to see you in one of our Zoom meetings or on one of our field trips. We're hoping that by September we can again have in person meetings.

* * * *

From the Birding Community e-Bulletin

Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Future?

In our November 2020 Birding Community E-bulletin we described the actions then in motion to "down list" the Red-cockaded Woodpecker from "Endangered" to "Threatened" under the Endangered Species Act. The proposal was published in the Federal Register, with a 60-day public comment period ending on December 7th.

Indeed, it was in the final months of the Trump administration that the down-listing process was started. At the same time there were a number of conservation groups who claimed that the action might undermine gains made in part with the aid of public-private partnerships that had taken decades of work to put in place and accounted for millions of dollars spent.

There had been success, of course. In the early 1970s, near the time when the woodpecker was first listed as Endangered, there may have been no more than 1,500 clusters (groups of cavity trees used by one or more woodpeckers) of the birds. By the mid-1990s there were perhaps 4,600. Today, there are almost 7,800 such clusters ranging across 11 states from southern Virginia to eastern Texas.

But these same increased numbers also can be viewed differently: they are located in 124 distinct populations, and 108 of those populations have fewer than 100 clusters, usually with low or very low "resiliency." Moreover, many of these locations are in or near coastal regions, vulnerable to increasingly common and powerful hurricanes, ready to potentially snap pine trees with woodpecker cavities.

A number of observers see the as-yet-unresolved listing proposal as simply part of a Trump-administration holdover effort to erode environmental protections. It is no accident that the down-listing is still under consideration even with a new administration in Washington.

Mike Lynch, formerly on the leadership team at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, overseeing training areas where Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were a serious wildlife-management issue, summarized an ongoing concern: "If we don't stay focused, we'll just relive history again, in 10 years... It doesn't take long for a forest to choke itself out, or a species to be on the brink if it is not properly managed."

Stay tuned for more on this issue, but you can hear a good summary of options [here](#) on WUNC, North Carolina Public Radio.

Birding Community E-Bulletin

You can access all the past E-bulletins on the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) [website](#).

Birding Community E-Bulletin is published by Wayne R. Petersen, Director, Mass Audubon IBA Program and Paul J. Baicich, Great Birding Projects and [NWRA](#).

West Volusia Audubon Society Fund Raiser

This has been a difficult year for all of us, and we need your help to meet your chapter's goals to protect birds and their habitat. The West Volusia Audubon Society Board has set a goal of raising \$5,000 in the next three months, with the board members pledging to match the donations we receive, dollar for dollar, up to half the goal amount. This will effectively double the donations that we receive.

This funding will allow us to continue protecting birds and their environment through projects like the Friends of Lyonia Environmental Center, Blue Spring Alliance, Gemini Springs Alliance, Jay Watch at Lyonia Preserve, the Institute for Water and Environmental Resilience at Stetson University, Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, and the Florida Wildflower Foundation. You can donate on our [website](#), with a credit or debit card or by PayPal. You can also donate by mail: West Volusia Audubon Society, PO Box 1268 DeLand, FL 32721-1268. Thank you so much!

Arnette Sherman, Chapter President

* * * * *

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The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

Volume 67-Number 5. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
May, 2021



Comments & Conservation Notes

Responding to citizen requests, the Volusia County Council has directed staff to study the idea of opening more sections of the beach to dogs. Currently dog friendly areas are limited to both sides of Ponce Inlet, at Lighthouse Point Park and at Smyrna Dunes Park. Both locations require that dogs be leashed at all times and that owners pick up after their dogs. Some owners strictly observe these rules. Many do not.

One section of the beach apparently under strong consideration lies north of Granada Blvd. in Ormond Beach. Board member, Melissa Lammers, lives up in the area under consideration and walks the beach daily. She reports that even though this section of the beach is currently off limits to dogs, she sees them on the beach daily and often off leash. The potential for harm to feeding and resting migrating shorebirds is obvious. While most dogs do not truly pose a direct threat to shorebirds, the birds don't know that. To them that's a 4 legged predator, no different than an arctic fox or a wolf, which on their nesting grounds kill and eat them and their young.

If we could be sure that ALL dog owners would be responsible and keep their dogs on leash then we would have no problem with expanding the areas open to dogs. The existing areas open to dogs are plagued with owners who apparently assume that rules are made to be broken. That Fido's right to run free trumps all other considerations. As with so much of our experience in life, it's the actions of a few that force limits on all of us. We have written to the County Council expressing our opinion. We await the reports from the planned workshops.

* * *

Listening sessions for Volusia Forever are going on now. We worked hard to get this and ECHO renewed by the voters. Three listening sessions remain, on successive Wednesday evenings: May 5th at the Beach Patrol Headquarters, May 12th at the Ormond Beach City Commission Chambers and May 19th at the Deltona Regional Library. All are scheduled from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The program has been an outstanding success. Its future going forward will be enhanced by adding language to its charter that takes into consideration the needs we have to protect our freshwater recharge areas, continue connecting the established wildlife corridor and make decisions based on science, not political connections. Please plan to attend one of these meetings. If you're so inclined, fill out a card as you enter and speak out in favor of the concepts outlined above. Our leaders want to make this program successful and that's far more likely to happen if they hear from all of us in the environmental community.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, May 17th, Program meeting- Join us for a birding trip to that birding mecca, Costa Rica, with our host for the evening, Chris Fisher. This will be a Zoom meeting of course and pre-registration is required. It is **imperative** that you use this [link](#) to the Zoom reservation system. You'll then receive an email with the link to the meeting. We open the meeting at 6:30 for everyone to get logged in and chat. The presentation will start promptly at 7:00 pm. A brief business meeting will follow.

Elections

It's time once again for our chapter elections. Our bylaws state that we have four positions elected by the membership: President, Vice President, Recording Secretary and Treasurer. The rest of our board is appointed by the President and approved by the board.

Since we're meeting by Zoom this means that if you have someone you'd like to nominate for one of these positions, including a self nomination, you're free to do so. The candidates below were the product of the nominating committee. Once nominations are closed, if we have no more nominees, the slate of candidates below will take office. If we have other nominations we'll hold an election by a show of hands.

Our slate of candidates

President	David Hartgrove
Vice President	Joan Tague
Treasurer	Ellen Tate
Recording Secretary	Catherine Goodman

The Rest of Our Board For the Next Two Years

Past President	Melissa Lammers*
Membership Sec.	Joan Tague
Corresponding Sec.	Steve Underwood
Historian	Holly Zwart-Duryea
At Large Members:	Barbara Northrup, Steve Underwood and Peggy Yokubonus

* Melissa is being asked to remain as Past President, beyond the required tenure, because we need her expertise.

One Time Only

“A one time and one time only sighting.” And that makes it special. A White-winged Dove, a Common Nighthawk or a Sandhill Crane, a backyard can be a marvelous place to bird. A place that will rattle with excitement as that “one time only” bird appears. The event can trigger a memory that will last forever.

Jane and I have lived in the same house here in Florida for the past 21 years. We enjoy looking out our kitchen window to the backyard bordering a half moon shaped small pond. One day a tall Sandhill Crane nonchalantly walked up from the pond to the screened porch where I was sitting. It turned right to walk around our house. I immediately spun 180 degrees and charged into the house, grabbed my camera and shot out the front door to the street. I made my photo of the crane at the front door. Back around the house into the back door, through the house, opened the front door and made another photo through the storm door from inside the house. During one frantic charge around the house, the crane strolled by me not four feet away. My camera was on motor drive. I was on motor drive. Many photographs were made of the Sandhill Crane’s half hour visit that day. A “one time only sighting” in 21 years. Never to visit again.



This Sandhill Crane visited my house once. Walking around once, stopped at our front door and continued on. It waited so long at the door I expected it to ring the doorbell!

One Summer morning in 2005, a White-winged Dove visited our feeder. It came every day for two weeks. It mixed nicely with the other regulars at the feeder, especially with the ever present Mourning Doves. I was excited. Would White-winged Doves become regular visitors to my feeder as the Mourning Doves? I had observed them in Southern Florida but not up here in Port Orange. But alas, it didn’t happen. We had the pleasure of a two week visit and gone. Never to return again.



This White-winged Dove, a two week visitor, juxtaposes smartly with its counterpart, the Mourning Dove. The White-winged dove is larger, has a squared off, white tipped tail and an obvious white marking on each wing.

There were other “one time only” backyard birding moments in the past 21 years in Florida:

Sitting at my desk I saw a Common Nighthawk whizz over the roof. I grabbed my camera, ran to the back yard hoping it stopped in one of our pine trees. It did. I make my photo.

A male and female Great Horned Owl roosted in our backyard pine tree every day. Many evenings Jane and I watched as they silently flew across the pond to begin their nightly excursion. They stayed one season only. Never to return.

A color faded Painted Bunting. First time in yard. Never saw one like it before.

One Mute Swan sailed peacefully by. Lasting only a few minutes, but bringing grace and majesty to our backyard pond. Never to appear again. “One time only.”



This Mute Swan casually sailed by Jane and me while we were sitting at our screened porch. It sailed around the bend in the pond and disappeared.

I cherish these fantastic “one time only” birding opportunities. They bring wonder to my medley of birding experiences.

Oak Trees Are Superstars

According to Doug Tallamy, the noted entomologist who studies bird-insect-plant interactions, the best thing you can do to help birds is to plant an oak tree. Oak leaves are the preferred food for hundreds of species of caterpillars which, in turn, are the preferred food for baby birds. Think of an oak tree as a grocery store for bird parents.

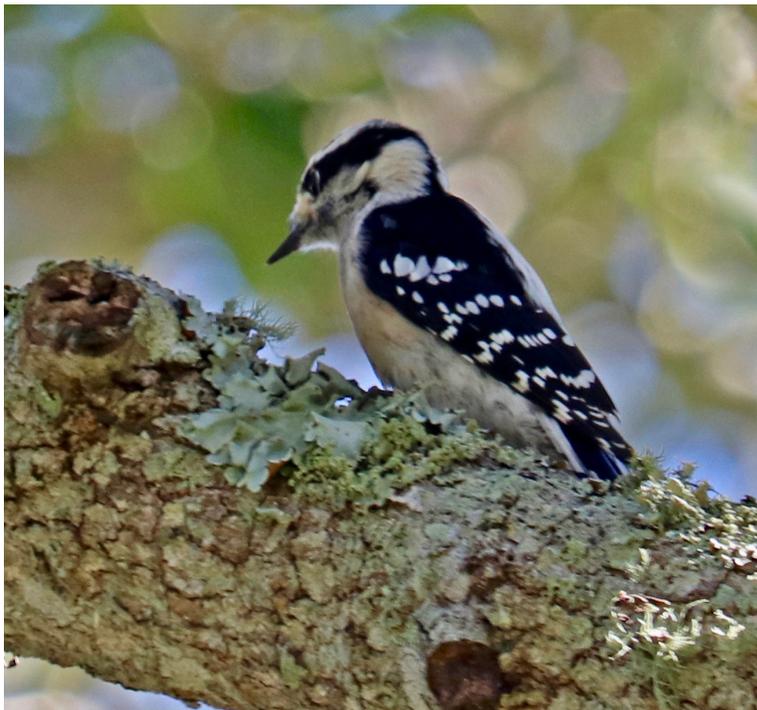
Oak trees also provide good cover and materials for nesting. In the fall and winter, they produce acorns – a valuable nutritional source during the lean months. Migrating birds especially appreciate a pit stop at oak trees during their long journeys north and south.

A massive live oak is a superb tree for our feathered friends, but there are three smaller oak species that are just as worthy and almost as long-lived: sand live oak (*Quercus geminata*), myrtle oak (*Q. myrtica*), and turkey oak (*Q. laevis*). All of these Florida native trees grow less than 40' tall, tolerate drought, withstand winds, and provide abundant insect delicacies for hungry birds.

When planting an oak tree, consider that it needs supplemental water for 6 months, full sun, and room to grow. Be sure to keep turfgrass several feet away from the trunk because some caterpillar species drop down on the ground to pupate and will be pulverized when the lawn is mowed.

Not only do oak trees supply essential resources for birds, they also provide many other ecological services. They create cooling shade, reduce CO2, store carbon for decades, increase oxygen, support other wildlife, buffer wind, and reduce rain runoff. Oak trees are environmental superstars. As Tallamy says, if you are planting a tree, "let it be an oak".

Leslie Nixon



A Downy Woodpecker looks for insects under lichens on an oak branch.

Photo by Leslie Nixon

Legislative Issues/Updates

SB 100, the M-CORES repeal bill passed with only one dissenting vote after senators voted unanimously to include an amendment that requires DOT to use M-CORES Task Force recommendations in any future road project planning and design. While SB 100 does not have an identical House companion, similar bills alive in the House are good candidates to conform and ultimately result in passage of this important legislation. See additional details in the 3/27/2021 edition of [The Advocate](#).

St Johns WMD and Lake County government went to court to stop the use of unauthorized borrow pits on the Wekiva Parkway. Future legislation may require documentation of all requisite land use permits before a borrow pit can be created. Language being formulated now will probably pass.

Florida Forever funding is requested at \$100 million in the House but only \$50 million in the Senate, most of which will be directed to conservation easements. Funding for Rural and Family Lands may go to DEP which will pick up the obligation for conservation easements.

Fast changing events in the Florida Legislature have secured 100 million dollars for Florida Forever since this report was written. Ed.

The River Cross Development proposed for rural east Seminole County was rejected by county commissioners in 2018. A new proposal was submitted to settle a pair of lawsuits filed by the developer against the County. It is not believed that the County will approve this new proposal.

Since this was written the Seminole County Commission voted unanimously to reject this ill conceived development. Ed.

On April 27 Lake County Commission will discuss a request to approve White Water Farm Sand Mine. The Planning Board has recommended "no."

The Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously to deny the permit. Ed.

Chapter Activities

All reporting chapters continue to monitor local government agenda and planning/zoning agendas and meetings and stay in contact with their elected officials.

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive continues to be a popular outdoor destination, particularly during the pandemic. Visitor attendance in nine months of 2020 (the drive was closed for 3 months) exceeded attendance in 2019 by over 8%. Hiking and bicycling numbers are on the rise as well. Friends of Lake Apopka hope to host a fishing tournament.

Several chapters are progressing with our ED&I goal by setting up student chapters at a college, a university and a grade school. Audubon Adventures is being used in the school and an eco-camp. Six hundred native plant seedlings were grown and will be distributed to Lyonia Preserve, Stetson University and to local residents under a Plants for Birds Program.

Paula Wehr, Central Florida Chapters Representative, Audubon Florida Board of Directors

What Can Individuals Do About Climate Change

The University of Florida's IFAS Extension and Climate Smart Floridians think they have an answer to that question. The Climate Smart Floridians program is specifically aimed at educating participants on individual actions they can take to reduce their environmental impacts. The program takes an innovative, fun, and comprehensive approach to climate change, to help build community support and reduce household impacts on climate change.

Through the program you'll learn what greenhouse gases are, how they impact our climate, and individual actions that can make a big difference to reduce those impacts on us all.

Topics covered by the course include climate change, and how it relates to water resources, green building, home energy, renewable energy, yards, food, water, transportation, and consumption with a special focus on issues that impact Volusia County and its residents.

This program is being hosted by Lyonia Environmental Center. In an effort to keep everyone safe and healthy during the pandemic, this program will be held online. These will be held on the Zoom platform. So if you've been attending our meetings you already know how this works.

The program will address the following topics and will be held from 10:00 am – Noon on the following dates:

Wednesday, May 12: Florida Climate Change & Volusia Resiliency Efforts

Wednesday, May 19: Strategic Landscaping & Water Conservation

Wednesday, May 26: Green Building & Low Impact Development

Wednesday, June 2: Home & Renewable Energy

Wednesday, June 9: Food Production & Waste

Wednesday, June 16: Transportation

Wednesday, June 23: Consumption & Waste

Registration is required. Please use the following link to register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/climate-smart-floridian-certificate-program-tickets-151128654875>

For more information, please contact Sandy Falcon at sfalcon@volusia.org

* * * *

We Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Marc Allaire, William Chanfrau, Linda Downs, Ronald Englehart, Joanna Lemire, Arden Lusignan, Jennifer Petrucciani and Mary Richardson. We hope to see you in one of our Zoom meetings or on one of our field trips. We're hoping that by September we can again have in person meetings.

* * * *

From the Quotable Birder

"A peacock once placed a petition before Juno desiring to have the voice of a nightingale in addition to his other attractions; but Juno refused the request. When he persisted, and pointed out that he was her favorite bird, she said: Be content with your lot; one cannot be first in everything."

Aesop, The Peacock and Juno

Good News For a Florida Icon

Snail Kites are on every birder's wish list. While not endemic to our state it's the only place in our country where you can see one. Thirty years ago they were almost never seen north of Lake Okeechobee. This year there are at least 20 nesting pairs in Alachua County around Paynes Prairie. A recent article in [North American Birds](#) by Alison Vilag outlines the reasons for this sudden population increase.

Usually the introduction of non native species into Florida is a strong negative. Snail Kites, as their name implies, are very closely associated with snails, particularly apple snails. It's essentially the only thing they eat. Our native apple snail is about half the size of the channel apple snail, an exotic introduced into our fresh water ecosystems by people who bought them for their aquariums from pet shops. These new snails, in addition to being so much bigger, also lay three times as many eggs as the natives. As a result, when these invaders first showed up in local waters, biologists were wringing their hands in expectation that Snail Kites and Limpkins, another bird closely tied to snail consumption, would be unable to handle these much larger snails. It turns out they were wrong.

Snail Kites were suddenly found to be quickly adapting themselves, with slightly longer, stronger bills to be able to open these larger snails. Limpkins too showed quick adaptations to be able to better access this new food source. As a result we're seeing big increases in the populations of both of these species. The young of both species receive so much more protein with each feeding that they're surviving in far greater numbers than before. It's been a win for everyone, except for our native apple snails. That's the way of nature. A change happens and the rest of the biome adapts.

David Hartgrove



A juvenile Snail Kite. Photo by Alice Horst

Nothing fills space in our newsletter better than photos of our bird friends by our birding friends. Here are some shorebirds.



Solitary Sandpiper Photo by Alice Horst



Pectoral Sandpiper w/ Least Sandpiper in background Photo by Michael Brothers



Marbled Godwit Photo by Chuck Tague



This gorgeous male Painted Bunting is seen here on Jim O'Shaughnessy's feeder. We always hope these birds will hang around to nest but often they're only here for a short time.

Photo by Jim O'Shaughnessy

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The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

Volume 67-Number 6. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
June, 2021



Comments & Conservation Notes

Down in Collier County, where yet another Florida panther died under the wheels of a car last week, developers are asking the county commission to amend their Comprehensive Plan to allow two new developments. They're each roughly one thousand acres and if approved will host over 5,300 new homes. Both lie within spitting distance of the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge. What could go wrong?

Eleven Florida panthers have been found dead since the first of the year, eight were road kills. And that's just the ones that have been found. There are fewer than 175 Florida panthers left in the wild. Most are in southwest Florida. News reports say the Collier County Commission gave a thumbs up approval for both of the controversial developments, even after The Interior Department requested that they hold off due to the proposed development's proximity to the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge. One of the developments, Longwater Village, will have designated panther road crossings. Now, if we can just teach the panthers to read the warning signs and use the crossings the problem will be solved.

* * *

Removal of Rodman/Kirkpatrick dam, and restoration of the Oklawaha River in Putnam County, has been a goal of the environmental community since President Nixon quashed the planned Cross Florida Barge Canal in 1971. For decades the debate was framed as "the tree huggers against the bass fishermen." This year a new plan for the river's restoration was designed by the environmentalists.

[The Great Florida River Way](#) looks at the problem from a much broader perspective. A century ago the Oklawaha, the Silver River and the St Johns River were one of the most popular water routes in the country. Steamboats plied the rivers bringing tourists and trade goods here and shipping produce, lumber and other goods to the port at Jacksonville. Audubon Florida is a key player in this new partnership, along with all of the local chapters along the watershed. It is hoped that by looking at the overall picture and what's been lost from a statewide perspective we can finally get Rodman/Kirkpatrick dam breached and a free flowing Oklawaha River restored. Restoring this river is the key to unlocking economic, ecological, and social benefits for all Floridians. George Kirkpatrick, the former state senator who spent so much political capital preventing the removal of Rodman dam was memorialized by having his name added to the dam's title. He did a lot of good things while in office but this wasn't one of them.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

The Summer Solstice (the official start of Summer and the longest day of the year) is the 21st of June. So that means we're in our annual Summer hiatus. Many of our members, having been locked down by Covid last year, are itching to travel again. We will resume having meetings and field trips in September.

Over the next three months our board will continue to meet and we will make the decision on when and where we might again host in person meetings. We will also work on a field trip list. If you look above this column you'll see our logo, which announces that we were founded in 1923. That means it's just two short years until our 100th anniversary. We will form a committee to look for ways to celebrate this milestone event.

* * * *

It's been a while since we heard from Harry Robinson. Harry can be found most mornings at Tom Rennick Park where he conducts his sea watch.

Strong Winds Bring Pelagic Birds Near Shore

May 20th was the best petrel day we've ever had, 45 in all.

The day's report is in three parts. Across A1A we had a Swallow-tailed Kite. In 3 1/2 hours from 6:30am, with Sam Krahe, we had 20 Least Terns, 4 Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, 10 Northern Gannets, 2 Leach's Storm-Petrels, 1 Great Shearwater, 2 Black Skimmers, 3 Roseate Terns, 1 Piping Plover, 6 Arctic Terns, 2 Band-rumped Storm-Petrels, 3 Red-necked Phalaropes, 24 Semipalmated Sandpipers and 6 Wilson's Storm-Petrels.

In 2 hours, from 11:45, we had 2 Roseate Terns, 3 Band-rumped Storm-Petrels, 6 Leach's Storm Petrels, 7 Arctic Terns, 6 Wilson's Storm-Petrels and 50 Semipalmated Sandpipers.

In 3 hours from 3:45, in part with Sherri Brown, we had 9 Leach's Storm Petrels, 10 Wilson's Storm-Petrels, 1 Roseate Tern, 1 Red-necked Phalarope, 2 Arctic Terns, 1 Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, 1 Northern Gannet and 105 Sanderlings.

To summarize: we had 1 Great Shearwater, 22 Wilson's, 17 Leach's and 6 Band-rumped Storm-Petrels, 6 Roseate & 15 Arctic Terns, 4 Red-necked Phalaropes etc.

I There has never been a day quite like this.

Harry Robinson

Time once again for another in our continuing series, Everyday Birding, with Ray Scory.

Neighborhood Hawk Watch

Four Young women of retirement age walked by a very tall pine tree. They were enjoying a robust, sunny morning. A brisk walk under the canopy of a sapphire blue sky sprinkled with white powder puff clouds was the feel of the day. How could they not look up and enjoy the openness of the day. A cherished discovery was to be made this day. Jane decided to fetch her binoculars because a bird was bouncing up and down at the top of the tree. All four young women looked up to see what was happening and the binoculars would give them a closer look.

The dark shadow they saw occasionally moved and became a hawk and the random arrangement of sticks became a hawk's nest. They watched as the hawk appeared to be ripping apart something, then bowing its head down into the pile of sticks. Higher but close by, a bright, brown shape held still. But a wing flap and a red-brownish patch below the bright shape revealed a Red-tailed Hawk. The male hawk perched motionlessly nearby on the other side of the tree. The Northern Mockingbird continued to bounce up and down and a Blue Jay flew into the tree. The scene eventually ended and all the birds flew off from the top of the very tall slash pine tree, The four young women were elated and were still excited when they described to me their experience with the birds high in the tree.

We are all living things wanting to live in our space, to provide for our well being and feel at peace. Happiness and protection control our makeup and we bask in the sights, sounds and memories of our experiences. We revel in the thought that these awareness are uniquely personal. Ours alone. We find pleasure in these facts.

And we should. Why should we not get to know more about the lives of those who share this space with us. The blade of grass. The birds who sing. The sky above. All that they behold. The Wonder of it all. Bend down to touch the grass. Stop to look out your window when you have other things to do. Surprises. Break through the routine of the day. Wave to a neighbor walking by. Open your door to hear the sounds of the day and the quiet of the night.

Watch the sunset glow, bring in the dark of the night. Watch the rain change things to a glistening polish. All neighbors of ours, sharing our space. Differently but sharing. Look up to the top of the tree and stop. Watch to see what is up there and observe. Yogi Berra once remarked, "You can observe a lot by just watching." Look, see, observe are progressive visual techniques you can use to better know your neighbors. Patience begets vitality.

The four young women of retirement age found that moment. They told me in a state of awe and excitement their experience with the birds high in the tree. They will not forget that early morning walk. And they got to know their neighbors just a little bit better.

Ray Scory

* * * *

"If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them with more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it."

Lyndon B Johnson



A lone, tall pine tree in a neighborhood forest. Note the nest at top right in the tree.



No signs of young ones in the nest yet. But a big piece of meat to bring near the nest. This female Red-tailed Hawk shouts out but I can't read lips. I will continue to watch.

Article and photos by Ray Scory

Here's another plant profile from our resident expert, Leslie Nixon.

Beautiful Berries

Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) earns its name from the bright magenta berries that cluster all over its long arching branches. The beautiful berries ripen in the fall and persist well into the winter to nourish both year-round and migrating birds. Robins, in particular, love to feast on the abundant fruit as they plan their trips back up I-95.

Beautyberry is a medium to large (4-8' tall and almost as wide) shrub that performs best in part shade/part sun. This Florida native adapts to any type of soil and will tolerate drought, but not salt spray. In the spring, tiny white-pink flowers appear that attract similarly-sized pollinators. Here in Volusia County, beautyberry is deciduous in the winter, with the leaves dropping a few weeks after the berries have ripened. Beautyberry is a sprawling bush, not suitable for formal landscapes, but what bird likes a neatnik yard anyway?. Once the birds finish consuming the berries, the long stems can optionally be cut back to keep it somewhat tamed.

The berries are also edible to humans. Eaten directly from the bush they will pucker your mouth, but you can find recipes for delicious beautyberry jelly and beautyberry bread online.

An interesting feature of this shrub is that the leaves contain a chemical that repels mosquitos. Before Deep Woods Off hit the market, Native Americans rubbed crushed beautyberry leaves on their skin to protect themselves from the annoying insects.

A Florida native shrub that is bird-friendly, pollinator-friendly, mosquito-repelling, and edible – what's not beautiful about that?

Leslie Nixon



American Beautyberry, Photo by Leslie Nixon

Leave Those Snags Standing

On October 7th, 2016, Hurricane Matthew came roaring along the east coast of Florida. Here in Daytona Beach it caused power outages and took down a number of trees. In our front yard a large laurel oak came over onto the front of the house, though luckily some limbs came to rest on the ground preventing any serious damage to the roof. In the backyard stood the 70 foot sycamore we'd planted as a sapling 30 years ago. The intense rains soaked the soil and the strong winds began to push it over before easing and leaving the tree leaning about 25 degrees at the top. If it came down it would have crushed the back half of the house.

Several weeks after the storm a truck with some young guys stopped and knocked on the front door. They offered to take the sycamore down for a nominal fee. I told them to just take it down to about 15 feet and remove the limbs. After they were through I "ringed" the stump at the base to kill the tree and left it up for cavity nesters. Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers are daily visitors to our backyard and I was hoping one or both species would investigate the stump and begin nesting. Over the past 5 years several of them did investigate and even drilled a couple of exploratory holes but didn't nest.



A male Pileated Woodpecker continues excavation on the nest hole, 2/11/21.

Imagine my delight when in early February of this year a Pileated Woodpecker showed up one afternoon and began excavating a nest hole. This project would take almost 6 weeks. These are big birds and their nest can be 18" deep, 8" or more in diameter. During that time his mate showed up daily too to evaluate his progress. We assumed the eggs were laid around the 15th of March since they became very quiet and it was obvious that one of the birds was in the nest hole at all times. He would arrive in late afternoon and softly call. She would exit the nest and they would hang on the tree together for a minute. They she would fly off and he'd begin the night shift. In early morning she returned and they would exchange places as incubation continued. On April 2nd we watched as the male arrived, entered the nest hole, and then exited a minute or so later carrying a fecal sack. We knew we had chicks now. Nestlings defecate in tiny sacks that avoid fouling the nest and make for easy transport away from the area to avoid attracting predators.

Within 2 weeks we watched as both adults arrived and fed the chicks, which were now often waiting just inside the nest hole. By April 20th the 2 older chicks, both males, were perched at the entrance most of the day and calling loudly.



The female feeding the chicks, 4/13/21.

At some point late in the afternoon of the 26th the first chick fledged and left the nest. We missed that and he was nowhere to be seen. On the 27th we found that we'd missed the exit of the second chick too. The young female was still there on the afternoon of the 27th, calling and being fed. I got up before sunrise the next morning and waited on the back porch with binoculars and camera. But she wasn't ready yet. The next morning, the 29th, I was again ready. She spent most of the morning perched in the entrance with her feet on the edge. She'd lean out, and then lean back. This went on until around noon. I had a doctor's appointment that afternoon and when I returned my wife said she'd missed the actual exit but that the youngster was perched on the neighbor's magnolia tree calling. I photographed her as she clung to the tree, flew to the neighbor's screen porch, then their back wall and finally back to the magnolia tree. The adult female flew in, fed the chick and then they both flew off to the south. That was the last we've seen of them.



The young female fledged in the late afternoon, here perched on the neighbor's magnolia tree. 4/29/21.

We experienced a bit of anxiety and "empty nest syndrome" at not having these big woodpeckers flying into the yard daily and watching their activities up close and personal. It was everything I'd hoped for and more when I made the decision to leave the stump up. Now, in mid May, I've been hearing the calls of Great Crested Flycatchers in the neighborhood and the Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers are still daily visitors. I imagine the old Pileated nest hole is too big for the flycatchers but an Eastern Screech Owl would be a welcome occupant.

Article and photos by David Hartgrove



Steve Underwood's daughter flew in from Portland, Oregon for a visit and they found this Wood Stork nest while cruising the St Johns River. *Photo by Steve Underwood.*

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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

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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

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July, 2021



Comments & Conservation Notes

One of the issues we're watching involves a request to change the required distance between a borrow pit and natural water bodies and wetlands. Current Volusia County regulations require a 150' setback. Neighboring Seminole County requires 300'. The requested change is for just 50' with a built in special option to request just 25'! This issue was to come before the Planning and Land Development Regulation Commission at their June 17th meeting. The PLRDC is an advisory committee mandated by our county charter that advises the Volusia County Council on development issues.

When this issue was discovered on the PLRDC agenda the Environmental Council of Volusia & Flagler Counties was quick to recognize this threat to our water supply. A letter was sent to the PLRDC and the ECVF President, John Baker, attended the meeting and raised our objection. So the item was removed from the agenda and sent back to the Growth and Resource Management Department staff for further review. This isn't the last we'll hear on this issue. Sand is a commodity very much in demand. And where there's money to be made those making the money see no reason why the rules can't be changed to allow them to make even more. Stay tuned.

* * *

Over in Lake County sand miners were all set to start digging right next to Green Swamp. Often referred to as, "the liquid heart of Florida", the Green Swamp is the headwaters for the Peace, Withlacoochee, Ocklawaha and Hillsborough Rivers. Lake County has set aside boundaries to protect this essential resource. The sand miners wanted to change the boundaries. Members of Ocklawaha Valley Audubon and others spoke before the Lake County Board of County Commissioners in opposition. Apparently the opposition was strong enough on the BCC that the sand miners have decided against trying again.

* * *

So many permits have been approved to allow withdrawals from the Floridan Aquifer that it's in danger of becoming saline. Rather than decreasing the number of permits approved the Suwannee River Water Management District and the St Johns River WMD have come up with a plan to install a huge pipe and send water from the Suwannee River into the aquifer. The monetary cost would be off the charts: \$457 million plus \$4.4 million a year for operation and maintenance. The real solution is to stop issuing withdrawal permits. Recently the Water Management District renewed a permit to a bottling company to withdraw 940,000 gallons a day. Will we ever learn?

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

As we begin the second month of our summer hiatus here are several items of interest that have come across the transom.

Identifying Bird Songs With Your Phone

Twenty plus years ago a woman came up to our information table when we were set up at an event. She asked me if there was some device she could purchase that would identify birds by their songs and calls. I told her that I was sure someone was probably working on such a device but it was years away from being available. That time has come.

If you have [Merlin](#) installed on your phone, the bird ID app from Cornell Lab of Ornithology, you can record a bird sound you hear with the recording app on your phone and Merlin will identify the bird for you. So, the next time you're out for a walk and hear a bird, quickly record the sounds with your phone and Merlin will give you the answer.

* * *

Pájaros Sin Fronteras/Borderless Birds

Last year our board voted to donate funds to a project that was the brain child of Megan Martin. Back then she was a student at Daytona State College. Having now moved on to Stetson University she's also a board member of our sister chapter, the West Volusia Audubon Society. Her idea was to look at birds seen here in Florida and also down in Puerto Rico. Many species we see here in summer are found in the Caribbean islands during winter. The film was released in May and there should have been an article about it in last month's Pelican. That oversight has now been corrected. Click on this [link](#) to see the film. Enjoy!

* * *

An Old Friend's New Venture

Back when we were still holding in person meetings chapter member, Dan Gribbin, was a regular fixture. Dan's a retired English professor, guitarist and song writer and photographer. He has a new [website](#) where he sells note cards and photos. He also writes fiction and a very interesting blog. Check him out.

* * *

From The Quotable Birder

"Some social birds apparently call to each other for aid; and as they flit from tree to tree the flock is kept together by chirp answering chirp."

Charles Darwin

Melissa Lammers had an adventure back in April and its account now appears in the Pelican.

Adventures in Accidental Birding and Herding

My attempts to deliberately bird seem to end up as less than orthodox exercises with the results you'd expect. However, my accidental birding has yielded some marvelous encounters. The previous highlight of which was holding a Brown Pelican while it was being disentangled from fishing line, then launching it into the air and watching it fly out over the dawn-lit ocean. I've also rescued an exhausted and freezing Northern Gannet, holding it close to my body inside my fleece jacket while walking it two miles down the beach to my home, then taking it to rehab at the Marine Science Center. When I've been unable to handle a situation on my own, I've called on David Hartgrove. Together we've had two adventures: working with FPL to replace a recently-hatched Fish Crow back in its nest, high in a cabbage palm and rescuing an injured Double-crested Cormorant after waiting 36 hours for it to tire enough to be apprehended. It kept going out to sea when approached but finally was tired enough for the two of us seniors to catch it on dry land, using a net. We both got pecked for our troubles!

For the past many months, I have been unable to take morning walks because of a foot injury and I've missed out on these opportunities. Now my foot has improved enough so that over the past week, I've started two-mile walks again on A1A, alongside the Atlantic Ocean. (The tide has been wrong for morning beach walks but in a few more days, that will change). This morning, when I reached the one-mile point and was about to turn around, I heard some weird sounds a little farther up the road. The hollow "clack-clack" reminded me of a snapping pelican but the raspy calls preceding it, while somehow familiar, were not conjuring up a specific bird (it's the darned ear-birding again!) And that much I was sure of -- it was a bird. I looked up the road and saw no birds but I did see a dog-walker stop walking, turn around and look west, so I headed toward the dog-walker and the sounds.

There on the sidewalk, right next to rush-hour traffic on A1A, was a pair of squawking Sandhill Cranes! I have not seen them beachside before (which doesn't mean they were never there but I have spent many, many predawn and dawn hours on the beach or on A1A next to it, and not seen one.) It was then that I realized that all the hours I've spent watching shepherding contests (doesn't everyone?) were not in vain. These cranes were hell-bent on walking across A1A in the middle of rush hour, mindless (probably an apt description) of the school buses, plumbing trucks, distracted moms taking kids to school after they'd missed the school bus, landscapers pulling trailers of heavy-duty, gas-guzzling lawn "care" equipment and generally, folks in a big hurry to get somewhere else. I spread my arms and walked calmly around the cranes, trying to get them to go west down a side street, instead of east, across A1A. A pair of folks from a balcony yelled down to "leave them alone!" Another woman started videoing the scene with her cell phone.

She was from Lakeland and said that the cranes were lovely but "dumb as rocks" and that she'd never seen one beachside, either. The cranes were not at all perturbed by my attempts to get them to walk away from the highway. They continued further north, rather than west, and I thought they might just stay in the swale on either side of the sidewalk. "Lakeland" and I were monitoring the situation when all of a sudden, Crane A decided to cross A1A and there was no deterring him without also risking Crane B crossing at a different point. So, we stopped the traffic while A made his crossing. "Lakeland" went

with him, making sure no one squashed the bird or her, and I stayed with Crane B on the west side, keeping her off the road. Then Crane A started back across A1A, with oncoming traffic moving toward him fast. "Lakeland" yelled, "What do I do?". "Rush the bird!", I answered. She ran at it and it hurried itself, kinda sorta, across the road ON FOOT, still not particularly bothered by us humans and certainly not by the impending collision with several tons of steel!

Now the cranes were a little closer together and I started herding again, arms outstretched, walking an arc first to one side and then to the other with the cranes seemingly moving at my command. Am I a crane whisperer? Crane A (for Adventurer?) let me get within two feet of him, with no sign that it bothered him at all. This time, the herding had the desired effect of moving the cranes down a side street, with quite a few vacant lots, toward the slightly less trafficked John Anderson Drive. I decided they were going in the right direction and that perhaps as the sun began to hit the side street, they would find plenty of lizards and bugs to keep them moving west. "Lakeland" said, "You looked like you were walking your cranes" and showed me a photo on her phone. She will try to get it to me by Facebook. We'll see. After that, I began to walk home. Other folks from another balcony, called down to thank me for moving the cranes to relative safety. I yelled "Audubon" to them, smiled and limped home. Maybe they'll join us although I can't guarantee that this is how we always bird!

Melissa Lammers

* * *



Least Tern feeding chicks, *Photo by Lou Newman*

Watch Out At The Beach This Summer

Scenes like the one above are playing out daily here on Volusia County beaches and islands. When you're out at the beach or on a boat stopping by the islands in the Intracoastal Waterway watch for them. If a flock of them flies up as you land your boat or as you walk along the shore you may have found a colony. Their eggs are so well camouflaged that it's easy to step into and destroy a colony without knowing it. Some have been found on FWC surveys and have been marked with signs. Be sure to observe the signs and keep dogs and kids from entering the site. These birds flew all the way from Brazil and Argentina to nest on our beaches and they need our help.

David Hartgrove

Here's another plant profile from our resident expert, Leslie Nixon.

Birds Stop for Simpson's Stopper

Simpson's stopper (*Myrcianthes fragrans*) is another dependable Florida native that supplies many resources for birds. It is most commonly a large shrub, growing 5-10' tall and 4-8' wide. However, there is a new dwarf variety available ('Compacta') that is much smaller. Both the large and small stoppers are dense, evergreen shrubs, providing shelter and nesting sites for songbirds year-round. In the spring the shrub is covered in fragrant white flowers that attract insects, which in turn bring in the birds. The flowers are followed in summer by large, red-orange berries, perfect for mockingbirds and blue jays.



The fragrant white flowers of Simpson's stopper

Since it is hardy, long-lived, and wind-resistant, Simpson's stopper will be a durable and carefree addition to your landscape. It thrives in average soil and will withstand drought but not routine flooding. Stoppers can grow in full or part sun, but to benefit birds they are best grown in full sun (4-6 hours per day) which maximizes the production of flowers and berries.



Northern Mockingbird feeding on stopper berries

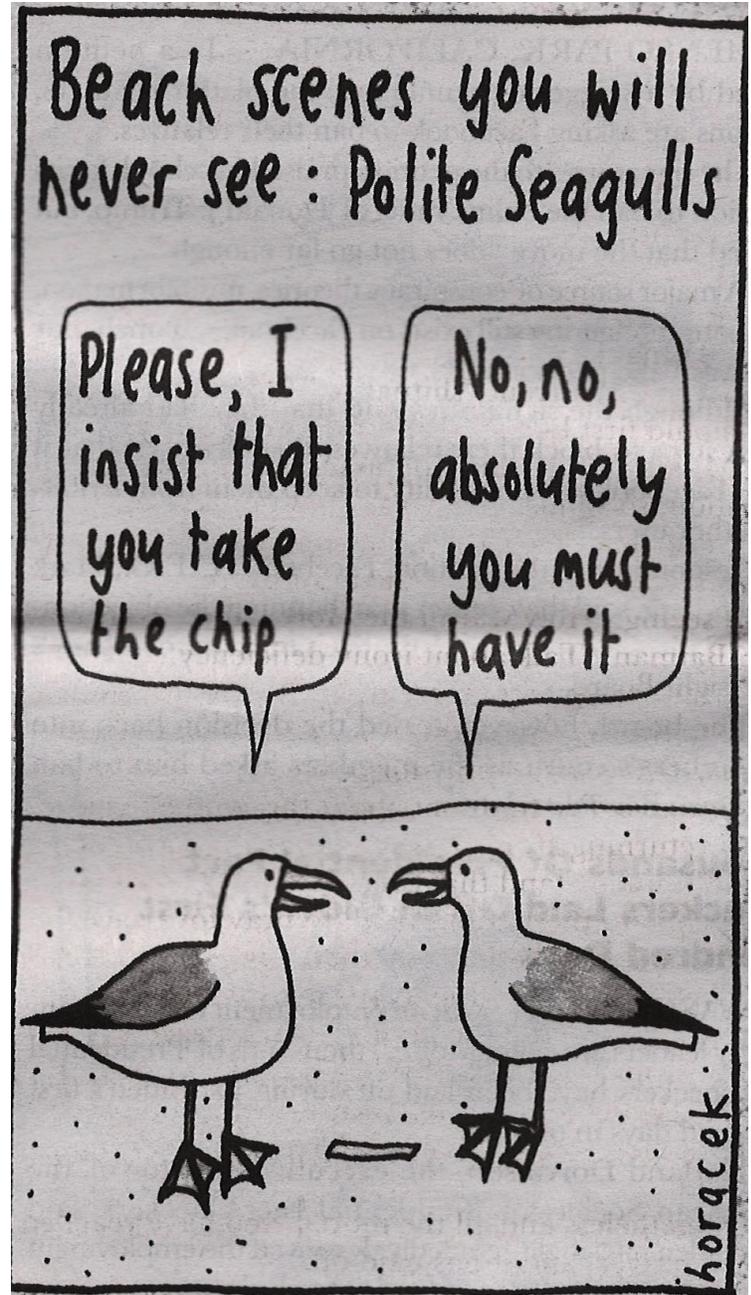
Your stopper can be a single specimen or grown in multiples to create a hedge. The dwarf variety is suitable for planting along the foundation of your home. Imagine during the heat of the summer, sitting in your air-conditioned home, watching birds snacking on the fruit you grew just for them.

Stoppers acquired their common name from their use by Native Americans as a treatment for diarrhea. Please, don't try this at home – go to the drugstore for your medicine but plant a Simpson's stopper for the birds.

Text and photos by Leslie Nixon

* * * *

Some Bird Humor From Funny Times



Time for another in our continuing series "Everyday Birding" by Ray Scory. This month continues from last month's article.

Dear Ms Rt Hawk, If you wish to build your next home in our neighborhood, I will welcome you back.

A Nest No More

A nest no more. High in a lone pine tree in a neighborhood of suburban homes, a lone pine tree still supports a collection of sticks reminiscent of a time well past. What story does this moment speak to when we try to make some sense of what we saw? Or is it enough to just witness the life style of a neighbor who once built a home, raised a family, played and visited with each other and then moved on when the neighborhood changed?

Last year, during one of my many walks to my verdant creek down the street, I spotted a lone adult female Red-tailed Hawk sharing early walks with me. I looked forward to these meetings. Always wondering from which tall pine tree she would look down upon me next. She liked to perch in one pine tree along my route that I called my "Bird Tree." Simply named because it is a tree that attracts a lot of different bird species and bird activities, such as resting, sleeping, grooming, searching, mating, grouping or visiting. All things we all enjoy but in a different way, not in a tall pine tree. Birds have yet to reveal all they know or what they see or how they feel about us. But as we get more friendly, maybe there is a chance they will let us get to know them better.

I walked the verdant creek trail every morning to the coming of a rising sun and expected to see my friend high in that neighborhood pine tree. One morning a smaller male Red-tailed Hawk perched next to her. Both looked down on me. Now we were three. I felt that she would tell him about me and we would all become good friends. Within a week they mated. Thus began my search for nest building in my neighborhood's tall pine trees. It happened in a pine tree close by my house. "Close by" being a key word because the location was just outside my yard. I watched a home being made with the female engaged in the construction and the male faithfully guarding the property. The nest appeared deep and heavily constructed and I did not witness any construction efforts from the male. In fact, once the construction was completed I didn't see much of the hawks at all. It looked abandoned except for the day Jane and her three retired friends witnessed the intrusion of a Northern Mockingbird and a Blue Jay actually forcing the hawks from their nest site.

Calm and emptiness remained in the tall pine tree. Until one morning in our backyard a juvenile Red-tailed Hawk appeared on our bird feeder and opened with a show that I never saw before. I first spotted it perched on my bird feeder getting bombed by a Northern Mockingbird. Then clumsily chasing down yard squirrels numerous times to no avail. Finally a short broken branch grabbed her attention and she began a whirling dance with the stick, throwing it in the air, pouncing on it, rolling on it and covering it with spread wings. I couldn't tell if it was playing a fun game with the stick or practicing the capture of possible prey. Regardless, it was a rollicking, frolicking,, vivacious, playful, comical and yet serious exercise in grand drama of the highest order.

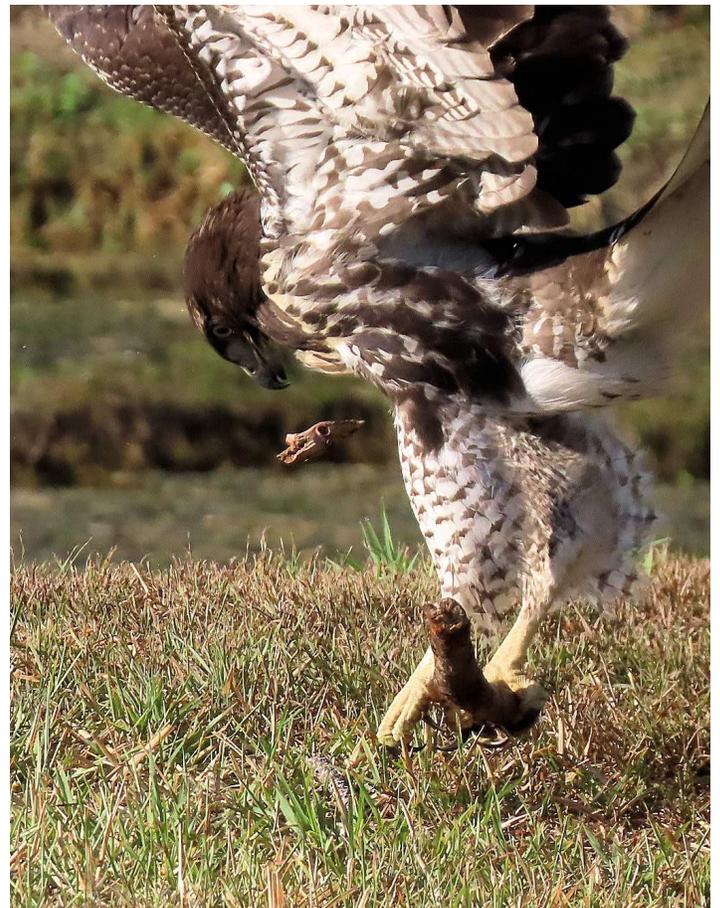
The hawk returned to our yard for the next few weeks as if to remember back to those wonderful teenaged years of absolute joy and freedom. The last few days she perched upon the bird feeder in her accustomed matter but now with a greater display of patience and maturity. She tolerated the repeated attacks from the marauding mockingbird and departed as if it was just another day on the job. I watched with fascination-

this exuberant juvenile hawk experience the blush of independence and felt good about the future of the Red-tailed Hawk.

Article and photos by Ray Scory



Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk at our feeding station. Never before has such a large bird perched on this feeder. The bird repeated visiting for about two weeks.



Whether playing with a stick, or practicing skills for the hunt, or involved in a mysterious routine, you openly expose your life to us.

Robert Lane, a birder who splits his time between Clearwater, Florida and Mahoning County, Ohio has been tracking Piping Plovers. Here he tells the tale of the first Piping Plovers to nest in Ohio in nearly 80 years. The nest is being incubated now.

A Gulf Coast Connection

During the winter season, Piping Plovers can easily be found on Florida beaches and mud flats. However they are not known to nest anywhere in Florida. Mentioned below are some of the Great Lakes Piping Plovers that we know have a connection to The Tampa / Clearwater Area. Two are from the Chicago area at Montrose Beach Dunes Natural Area. They are, to have a play on words, named "Monty" and "Rose."

Monty and Rose wintered in separate places over the 2019/2020 winter: Monty at Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary, in Texas near the mouth of Galveston Bay and Rose at Anclote Key, near Clearwater. Amazingly they found their way back to Montrose Beach Dunes Natural Area to nest in 2020 and produced 3 chicks, one of which, after being banded, was named "Nish." Meanwhile, at Presque Isle, on Lake Erie, in Pennsylvania, another chick was hatched and banded, "Nellie." Nellie was recorded at Honeymoon Island State Park, just a short distance south of The Anclote Key last winter.

The fact that all of these birds are banded with uniquely colored bands that allow for identification of individuals means that I could do some detective work when a Piping Plover nest was found at Maumee Bay State Park in Lucas County, Ohio in early June. It was the first Piping Plover nest recorded in the state since 1942. The bands on the 2 adults identified them as Nish, from the nest near Chicago, 235 miles to the west, and Nellie, from Presque Isle, 175 miles to the northeast. And both birds were seen here in Florida last winter.



Piping Plover nest at Maumee Bay State Park, *photo by Bob Lane.*

The birds can easily enter and exit the protective wire enclosure seen above. However dogs, cats, raccoons and 6 year olds chasing balls can't. The nest was discovered on June 6th, meaning with an incubation time of 27 to 28 days, the eggs should hatch around July 4th. That being about the busiest time of year on an Ohio beach, an effort to protect these very special long missing visitors must be made, hence the wire cage. Thus, these two, plus their potential offspring, will no doubt spend their winters 1100 miles due south on the Gulf Coast of Florida. We'll be looking for them.

Robert Lane

After a missing this notice last month we send a welcome our new members.

We Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Nancy Aguilar, Chet Anthony, Robert Baldanza, Thomas Blanks, Barbara Bode, Mr & Mrs. J Hyatt Brown, Arthur Carlson, Patricia Dietrich, James Doumas, Sylvia Engelbrect, Helen Gettemy, Dr. Ellen Harper, Edith Horner, Frank Iocco, Krystal Johnson, Peggy Law, Penny Moss, Rick Seiler, Thomas Silvey, Robert Ullery, Catherine Wharton, and Pamela Woodworth. We're in our annual summer hiatus and hoping that by September we can again have in person meetings. If the board decides against that for now we'll resume our monthly meetings via Zoom. Our field trips will resume in September and we hope to see you on one.

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Comments & Conservation Notes

Working through the Environmental Council of Volusia and Flagler Counties our chapter has been reviewing proposed changes to wetlands rules as they are impacted by mining operations. Often when we think of mines we think of deep tunnels in the earth but open pit mines have increasingly replaced that type of mining. Florida has largely been built by open pit mining where fill is dug from wetlands to create the land on which to build homes and commercial buildings. The homes are then sold as “water front”, thereby commanding a higher price. It’s a “win win” for everyone but the environment. We continue to follow this issue.

* * *

How about some good news for a change. From [Eco-Voice](#) comes a report on this past year’s nesting season in the Everglades and the surrounding area. Dr. Mark Cook, avian ecologist with the South Florida Water Management District, wrote in a Facebook post that “As the rainy season finally kicks in after a late start, and the wading bird nesting now draws to a close, it’s time to reflect on a very successful nesting season. Final nest numbers and fledging rates are yet to be calculated but in general we can say this was the second largest nesting event (over 80k nests!) since the pre-drainage period in the 1940s, and very likely the most successful year in terms of the number of young birds produced! The late start of the wet season was certainly helpful because it allowed the vast majority of late hatching birds to fledge before the rains started and lost their food supply..... It also extended the period of excellent foraging habitat which increases the probability of survival for these young, naive birds. It’s likely that all wading bird species nesting in the Everglades experienced a significant boost to their populations this year.”

Wood Storks are particularly susceptible to nest loss if water levels get too high. As tactile feeders Wood Storks are at a disadvantage when high water levels allow prey a lot more room to move and avoid capture. It’s why you often see them standing in shallow road side ditches sweeping their large bills back and forth. That big bill is lined with extremely sensitive receptors that locate prey as it’s stimulated to move by the back and forth movement. A prey item bumps into that big bill, which slams shut in 1/200th of a second, one of the most rapid muscular movements in nature.

So we might be seeing a few more of these iconic birds, along with the other waders that make birding in Florida so easy for beginners.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Next month in this space you’ll see information on our September meeting, upcoming field trips, etc. For now we start with a correction...

Identifying Bird Songs With Your Phone

In last month’s Pelican, in this column, I wrote that the Merlin phone app could now be used to identify birds by the sounds they make. I erred when I gave advice on its use by saying that it was necessary to use the recording app on your phone to record the sounds of birds nearby. Those wonderful tech wizards at Cornell Lab of Ornithology have actually included the ability to record what you hear in the field in the [Merlin](#) app. My apologies for any confusion. *Editor*

* * *

Audubon Photo Contest Winners

Audubon’s annual photo contest attracted thousands of entries and the ones selected for a prize are truly outstanding. There are also awards for video entries this year. The winner is 19 seconds of a Red-tailed Hawk riding the winds in a canyon in Colorado. Watching this bird use its tail and wings to hang almost motionless is amazing. There’s a great shot of a female Red-winged Blackbird with her head in a water lily blossom and a Sandhill Crane mom and chick that was photographed here in Florida. Here’s a [link](#). Enjoy!

* * *

Kingfisher Babies in the Nest

Board member, Steve Underwood, was cruising the Internet and found a really nice video of nesting kingfishers. These are Common Kingfishers, a European species, as is evident by their coloration. They’re a lot more colorful than the Belted Kingfishers we see here in Florida but the nesting habits are the same. They’re one of the bird species that nest in underground burrows. Here Belted Kingfishers too excavate a 3 foot tunnel in a canal or river bank and excavate a chamber at the end. The female goes in and lays 4 to 5 eggs which are incubated by both the male and female for just over 3 weeks. Then another 3 weeks or more of explosive growth as Mom and Dad are constantly bringing tiny fish to their young. As the video, which was filmed in England, shows the fish are sometimes almost bigger than the chicks. They still manage to swallow the offering. Here’s the [link](#). Enjoy!



Reid Hughes, photographed on the observation tower at Spruce Creek Park. *Photo by Nigel Cook by permission of the Daytona Beach News-Journal*

Goodbye, To A Man Who Made A Difference

Reid B Hughes passed away on July 3rd. Though born in Texas he moved to Daytona Beach in 1954 and opened his oil company. Oil man/environmentalist seems an odd combination at first but Reid made it work. A long time member of our chapter, he quietly worked behind the scenes to save huge tracts of land for conservation. He served on the board of the St Johns River Water Management District and just about any other board or association where he thought he could make a difference. In addition to his extensive environmental work he was instrumental in helping bring Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University here and helped sponsor many of the visits by the London Symphony Orchestra.

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Past President: Melissa Lammers

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Comments & Conservation Notes

Working through the Environmental Council of Volusia and Flagler Counties our chapter has been reviewing proposed changes to wetlands rules as they are impacted by mining operations. Often when we think of mines we think of deep tunnels in the earth but open pit mines have increasingly replaced that type of mining. Florida has largely been built by open pit mining where fill is dug from wetlands to create the land on which to build homes and commercial buildings. The homes are then sold as “water front”, thereby commanding a higher price. It’s a “win win” for everyone but the environment. We continue to follow this issue.

* * *

How about some good news for a change. From [Eco-Voice](#) comes a report on this past year’s nesting season in the Everglades and the surrounding area. Dr. Mark Cook, avian ecologist with the South Florida Water Management District, wrote in a Facebook post that “As the rainy season finally kicks in after a late start, and the wading bird nesting now draws to a close, it’s time to reflect on a very successful nesting season. Final nest numbers and fledging rates are yet to be calculated but in general we can say this was the second largest nesting event (over 80k nests!) since the pre-drainage period in the 1940s, and very likely the most successful year in terms of the number of young birds produced! The late start of the wet season was certainly helpful because it allowed the vast majority of late hatching birds to fledge before the rains started and lost their food supply..... It also extended the period of excellent foraging habitat which increases the probability of survival for these young, naive birds. It’s likely that all wading bird species nesting in the Everglades experienced a significant boost to their populations this year.”

Wood Storks are particularly susceptible to nest loss if water levels get too high. As tactile feeders Wood Storks are at a disadvantage when high water levels allow prey a lot more room to move and avoid capture. It’s why you often see them standing in shallow road side ditches sweeping their large bills back and forth. That big bill is lined with extremely sensitive receptors that locate prey as it’s stimulated to move by the back and forth movement. A prey item bumps into that big bill, which slams shut in 1/200th of a second, one of the most rapid muscular movements in nature.

So we might be seeing a few more of these iconic birds, along with the other waders that make birding in Florida so easy for beginners.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Next month in this space you’ll see information on our September meeting, upcoming field trips, etc. For now we start with a correction...

Identifying Bird Songs With Your Phone

In last month’s Pelican, in this column, I wrote that the Merlin phone app could now be used to identify birds by the sounds they make. I erred when I gave advice on its use by saying that it was necessary to use the recording app on your phone to record the sounds of birds nearby. Those wonderful tech wizards at Cornell Lab of Ornithology have actually included the ability to record what you hear in the field in the [Merlin](#) app. My apologies for any confusion. *Editor*

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Audubon Photo Contest Winners

Audubon’s annual photo contest attracted thousands of entries and the ones selected for a prize are truly outstanding. There are also awards for video entries this year. The winner is 19 seconds of a Red-tailed Hawk riding the winds in a canyon in Colorado. Watching this bird use its tail and wings to hang almost motionless is amazing. There’s a great shot of a female Red-winged Blackbird with her head in a water lily blossom and a Sandhill Crane mom and chick that was photographed here in Florida. Here’s a [link](#). Enjoy!

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Kingfisher Babies in the Nest

Board member, Steve Underwood, was cruising the Internet and found a really nice video of nesting kingfishers. These are Common Kingfishers, a European species, as is evident by their coloration. They’re a lot more colorful than the Belted Kingfishers we see here in Florida but the nesting habits are the same. They’re one of the bird species that nest in underground burrows. Here Belted Kingfishers too excavate a 3 foot tunnel in a canal or river bank and excavate a chamber at the end. The female goes in and lays 4 to 5 eggs which are incubated by both the male and female for just over 3 weeks. Then another 3 weeks or more of explosive growth as Mom and Dad are constantly bringing tiny fish to their young. As the video, which was filmed in England, shows the fish are sometimes almost bigger than the chicks. They still manage to swallow the offering. Here’s the [link](#). Enjoy!



Reid Hughes, photographed on the observation tower at Spruce Creek Park. *Photo by Nigel Cook by permission of the Daytona Beach News-Journal*

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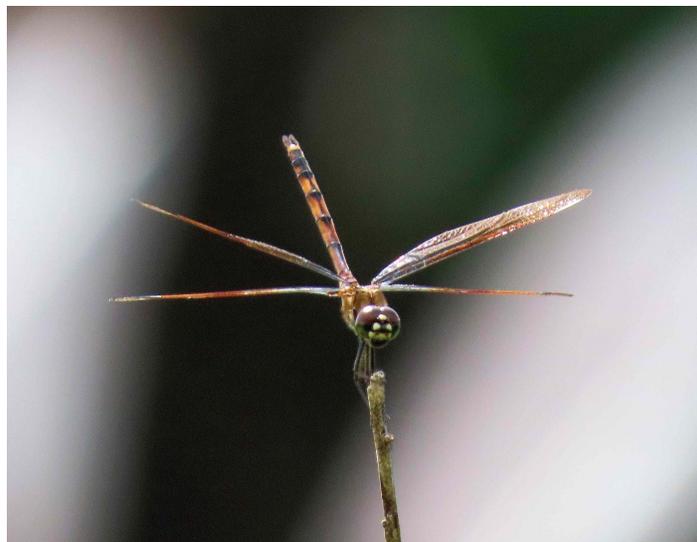
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Water, it's what we're mostly made of and something we can't do without. So as the western US bakes in the hottest temperatures ever recorded and levels in reservoirs drop to points not seen in our lifetime, you'd think states out there would use some common sense in planning for the future. Au contraire.

The proposed Lake Powell Pipeline will guarantee water from the already over burdened Colorado River for golf courses and turf grass in the gated communities of southwest Utah. If this sounds crazy to you just remember that here in Florida our water management districts have issued so many permits that the Floridan Aquifer is in danger of becoming saline and their proposed remedy is yet another pipeline. This one to send water from the Suwannee River into the aquifer at astronomical costs.

Here in Volusia County, in a bid to increase the profits of a few sand mine operators, the County Council is about to vote on changes that would severely reduce the set backs between the sand mines and our wetlands and open water bodies. The current setback limit is 150 feet and several well researched studies opine that this is inadequate and recommend a 300 foot setback. The requested changes set the limit at just 50 feet with a possibility for exemptions to allow the set back to be just 25 feet! The Volusia County Planning and Land Development Regulation Commission (PLDRC) voted 3 to 3 to send this issue to the County Council with no recommendation. It is the hope of our local environmental community that the Council will see this for what it is- a grasp for increased profits for a few to the detriment the rest of us. The set back limits are there to safeguard our Sole Source aquifer here in Volusia County. Once contaminated the aquifer is all but impossible to clean up and then only at exorbitant costs. It would take only a few minutes to call your council person and ask if they'll vote down this ordinance and seek a new one mandating a 300 foot setback. Here's a [link](#) to their contact information.

* * *

[Archbold Biological Station](#), near Venus, Florida on the Lake Wales Ridge, recently held a "Science Blitz" at Eagle Haven Ranch, on the shore of Lake Kissimmee. This 29,000 acre property is now in permanent conservation thanks to a generous donation from an anonymous donor. Fifty-nine species of birds were logged, including Snail Kites and Florida Scrub-Jays; over 160 plant species and assorted mammals, frogs, invertebrates and others were also recorded. This was an opportunity for Archbold scientists to instruct students in the techniques used in scientific studies of biodiversity.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

It's September and that means we're back to our regular schedule of monthly meetings and field trips. We had hoped to be back to meeting in person. However the surge in Covid cases means we need continue with Zoom meetings until at least January. Just like last year you'll need to send an email to members@halifaxriveras.org to register for the meeting. You'll receive an email back with a link to the meeting. Here's a link to our Fall Schedule on our [website](#).

Monday, September 20th, Program Meeting- In what is becoming a tradition, we open our 2021/2022 season with a program by Michael Brothers. Michael (now retired from his position as Director of the Marine Science Center) will give a program on shorebird identification. Flocking together for the meeting begins at 6:30 pm and Michael's program will begin promptly at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow. Please plan to join us.

Field Trips

We're going to ease back into this slowly with just one field trip this month.

Wednesday, September 22nd, Port Orange Bridge- Join David Hartgrove for a casual walk around the bridge area. We should get around 30 species and we'll be scanning the sandbars and mud flats for migrant shorebirds, terns and gulls. We'll meet below the west side of the bridge at 4:00 pm. Questions, call David at 386-235-1249.

* * *

Field Trips With Others

Volusia County Environmental Management has long hosted a variety of monthly field trips. Here are two to consider. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. Call 386-736-5927

Tuesday, September 7th, Tom Rennick Park-

Join us to clean up the beach. After the Labor Day weekend with a high volume of visitors on the beach, there may be a lot of trash left behind. We will clean up the beach and learn about the impacts of trash on sea turtles and other wildlife. We will also learn about washback sea turtles and what to do if you find one. Meet at 1565 Ocean Shore Blvd., Ormond Beach

Saturday, September 11th, Hike Hickory Bluff Preserve-

Explore the natural world on an upland and swamp hike of the St. Johns River watershed to compare habitat characteristics. Meet at 598 Guise Rd, Osteen, 32764

Time For the Audubon Assembly

A little bird humor from [Funny Times](#).

This year's Audubon Assembly will be a combination in person and virtual event. And, in a departure from previous years, this event will be spread out over two and a half weeks. It opens on Thursday, October 21st, with a virtual session at 6:00 pm. Executive Director of Audubon Florida, Julie Wraithmell, will open the festivities followed by Chapters Representative, Jacqui Sulek, with a report on chapter events from around the state. There will be several in person field trips and a virtual keynote address brings the event to a close on November 9th. This is essentially three events, one for North Florida, one for Central Florida and one for Southwest Florida. The Southwest Florida event is already sold out. Registration is 35.00 and here's a link to the [website](#). I found the registration process a bit confusing so take your time making your selection.

David Hartgrove

* * * *

Here's an update on the first Piping Plovers to nest in Ohio in 80 years and their connection to Florida.

All Six Birds Banded and Heading South

Greetings from "Ploverville". Ohio successfully had its first Piping Plover nesting since 1942 at Maumee Bay State Park in the western basin of Lake Erie. The nest produced 4 chicks, all hatched on July 1st. On Monday, August 9th, all four appeared to depart about 9:30AM, and had not returned by the end of the day. About forty days after hatching, all four chicks, alive, independent, and flying off into the history books. The dad "Nish" left over a week ago, and the mom "Nellie" a few days later. As was reported previously, The Gulf Coast connection is: "Nish" was recorded at Anclote Key last winter and "Nellie" was recorded at nearby Honeymoon Island. Hopefully the two parents return to last years wintering locations, and the kids: Erie, Kickapoo, Maumee, and Ottawa, also, somehow find there way to Anclote or Honeymoon, having safe travels. This is another example of the amazing diversity of where the Pinellas County wintering Piping Plovers come from. Also, the numbers of Piping Plovers found on the mainland beaches of Fort Desoto, Outback Key, Shell Key, Caladesi, and Honeymoon, and the offshore barrier islands of the two Three Rooker Bars, part of Anclote Key State Park, is hard to believe. So please keep an eye out for these "Snowbirds" from Ohio. Since "Nish" and "Nellie's" arrival back at the end of May, volunteers from The Black Swamp Bird Observatory have monitored the birds for the past seventy plus days. We owe them a debt of gratitude. We're also express our gratitude to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Ohio Division Of Wildlife, and the staff of Maumee Bay State Park. The six members of the celebrity plover family, have all been banded, so it can be determined who successfully makes the thousand mile journey to our part of The Gulf Coast.

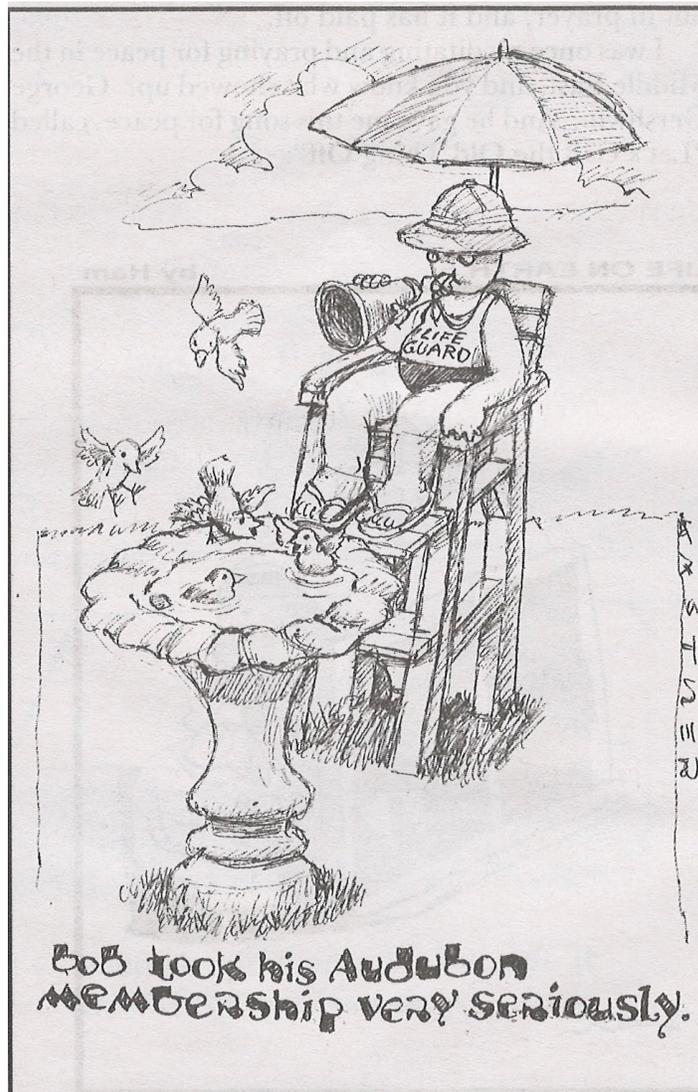
Robert Lane / Pinellas County, FL & Mahoning County, Ohio

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Tips For Using Merlin's Bird Song App

[Merlin](#) is an app for your smart phone, either Android or Apple, that allows you to identify a bird with astonishing accuracy. The good folks at Cornell Lab of Ornithology have now added an information page if you have questions about using the bird song identification feature in Merlin. Here's the [link](#).

Editor



Welcome to Our New Members

While the gentleman in the cartoon above may be a bit over enthusiastic, we hope all our members have fun and learn from their association with Audubon. We extend a warm welcome to our new members: Harvey Barnett, Lorna Beck, Lillian Cocce, Judy Diemer, Deborah Green, A. E. Mirabito, Linda Neubauer, George Weinert and Evelyn Wolfe. We hope to see you at one of our meetings on Zoom or on one of our excellent field trips.

* * * *

From the Quotable Birder

"Lying under an acacia tree with the sound of the dawn around me, I realized more clearly the facts that man should never overlook: that the construction of an airplane depends on an advanced civilization, and that where civilization is most advanced, few birds exist. I realized that if I had to choose, I would rather have birds than airplanes."

Charles A Lindbergh, in an interview shortly before his death.

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

Remembering "The Big Sit"

The rain came in sheets, a pounding force to flatten the coastal landscape. It was not concerned for any earthly comfort on this gray, gray, wet and early morning. I arrived under the Dunlawton Bridge before daybreak to the sound of powerful water pellets machine gunning my car. I did not get out. I waited for John Carr to arrive to decide how we should begin our bird count for the annual "The Big Sit."



Ray and John at The Big Sit circle at the Dunlawton Bridge

[The Big Sit](#) is an international bird count established by the New Haven Bird Club (Connecticut) and has been active since 1992. I participated in the Connecticut count since its beginning until the year 2000 when Jane and I moved to Port Orange. Here I continued to count each year on the second Sunday of October. Great Fun - Great Companionship - Great Birding.

The wind and rain quieted by late morning and John and I continued birding until the early evening. We later found out that we experienced birding during what became known as "The Hurricane with No Name". So named because it came upon Florida with no advanced warning. We counted Species of birds that day from a 17 foot circle, prescribed by rules of the Count. Some notable birds observed during that wildly unusual count were: Brown Booby, Black-crowned Night-Heron, American Oystercatchers and 36 other species of birds.

My first encounter with "The Big Sit" here in Florida was an excited surprise. As I drove under the Dunlawton Bridge to my picnic table count destination on the Halifax River, I heard the mellow calls of two Great Horned Owls quietly sharing a peaceful and endearing moment together flying back and forth between two bridge supports under the bridge. They would come together shoulder to shoulder, tenderly touch their beaks together and expressing a soft "hu-hu hu hoo hoo".

I remember the people who stopped by my imaginary 17 foot circle to ask in a most friendly and inquisitive way, "What is going on here?" I would explain that I was with the Halifax River Audubon and was conducting an international bird count. It was both fun and rewarding to see the expression on their faces after they looked at an American Oystercatcher or wading shore birds through my 80mm spotting scope with its 20x60 zoom eyepiece. Priceless.

One day a young man on a motorcycle stopped by. He was a birder and I enjoyed talking with him. This day was a Sunday in Bike Week. Shortly after, five motorcycles, some with two riders, all dressed in classy black and sequin laden outfits graced my birding hot spot. They all got a chance to look through my scope. All were thrilled by the birds they saw up close. We had a wonderful time talking about birds. I will never forget that motorcycle gang.

Another year, a drab gray van stopped by decorated with faded symbols of the '60's, the peace sign, a lightning bolt, a yellow sun, and other symbols. Six youngsters (8-15) and a young woman piled out excited to see Florida birds. The young woman, the leader of the pack and a Michigan nature center volunteer found six life birds. They all drove off, bumping along, thrilled to see Florida birds up close through my spotting scope.

In the 29 years that "The Big Sit" has been in existence, I have missed two. I sincerely thank our HRA members who stopped by to say hello or stay longer hours with me. Always sincerely appreciated. Many bird ID surprises. Jane brought lunch from DJ's under the bridge. Always did - every year - without me asking. A special bird day treat. Should I never do "The Big Sit" again, I shall always be content with the endless memories of these happy birding days.

Ray Scory



Dawn, and lone Snowy Egret begins breakfast at the bridge.

Photos by Ray Scory

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Swallow-tailed Kites Are Headed South Again

Those graceful fliers are headed south for the winter and you can track their progress, thanks to the fine folks at ARCI. That's the Avian Conservation and Research Institute in Gainesville. One of their researchers, Gina Kent, will be the speaker at our November meeting. ARCI has 11 birds fitted with GPS trackers and their interactive map allows anyone to keep track of where the birds are in their long journey to western Brazil and Paraguay. Six of the birds have carried trackers before. Five were just fitted with their devices this nesting season. It's exciting to view their progress. Here's a link to the [website](#).

It's been too long since we've had a report from Sea Watch Coordinator, Harry Robinson. Here's what he reported in July.

Another month it looked like there would be no new species until the last 30 minutes of the last day. There were 31 surveys over 180 hours and the best days were the 21st with 48 species and the 25th with 838 birds (how low these numbers are compared to November/January). For the month 97 species located this is a joint high count with 2018. There have been ten additions this year with 229 for the year to date and 294 ever (it is creeping up to the 300 count).

There was a Cory's Shearwater on the 1st with two Great Shearwaters on the 6th and one on the 7th. There was a Magnificent Frigatebird on the 7th. There was a Reddish Egret on the 15th with a Green Heron on the 9th. Single Black-crowned Night-Herons were seen on the 4th, 5th and 18th. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were around all month with five on the 5th and the 6th. Glossy Ibis were seen occasionally with 40 on the 22nd and 15 on the 25th. Roseate Spoonbills (adults) migrated to the north to the 15th; 81 in all. The best day was the 3rd when 41 flew to the north. There were also singles on the 24th and 26th. Wood Storks were seen occasionally with eight on the 14th. Most unexpected was a Fulvous Whistling-Duck on the 9th.

Swallow-tailed Kites were seen on most days with 13 on the 5th, 12 on the 11th, seven on the 21st and five on the 22nd. There were two Mississippi Kites on the 2nd with one on the 20th. There were single light-morph Short-tailed Hawks on the 9th, 12th, 27th and 30th.

There were single Black-bellied Plovers on the 13th, 27th and 28th. There were nine Semipalmated Plovers on the 21st. On the beach there was a Piping Plover on the 25th. Black-necked Stilts seen from the 5th there were three on that date with higher counts of 20 on the 16th, 27 on the 19th and 15 on the 23rd. There were two Greater Yellowlegs on the 19th with one on the 27th. There was a Lesser Yellowlegs on the 13th with two on the 19th. Willets' were seen all month with 61 on the 11th and the 13th. There were three Spotted Sandpipers on the 21st with three Whimbrel on the 27th. There was a Marbled Godwit on the 23rd. There were three Ruddy Turnstones on the 15th with one on the 21st, two on the 22nd and one on the 23rd. There was a breeding plumage Red Knot on the 29th. Sanderling were seen from the 20th with 140 on the 25th, 110 on the 27th and 70 on the 31st. Semipalmated Sandpipers were seen from the 12th with 89 on the 21st, 240 on the 23rd and 350 on the 24th (new high count), then 330 seen on the 25th with 30 on the 31st. There were eight Least Sandpipers on the 21st with three on the 27th and singles on the 28th/29th. There were single Pectoral Sandpipers on the 10th and 26th. There were two Stilt Sandpipers on the 21st. There were single Short-billed Dowitchers on the 8th and 13th with six on the 21st and one on the 23rd.

There was a Gull-billed Tern on the 6th with two Caspian Terns on the 4th. There was a Common Tern on the 7th with two on the 20th, two on the 29th and three on the 31st. Least Terns seen all month with 14 on the 5th, 13 on the 9th and seven on the 18th. There were three Black Terns on the 19th.

There were single White-winged Doves on the 1st, 5th and 18th. Common Ground-Doves had a new high count of seven on the 24th. At the last minute there was an addition to the list there was a Budgerigar on the 31st. A female Chuck-will's-widow was present all month. There were single Ruby-throated Hummingbirds on the 6th, 10th and 13th. There were also single Belted Kingfishers on the 12th and 18th. Downy Woodpeckers had a new high count of four on the 5th. Up to two Pileated Woodpeckers were seen on five dates. There was

a Great Crested Flycatcher to at least the 25th. There were two Gray Kingbirds on the 10th (a high count) with one on the 18th. American Crows present all month with four on the 18th.

Purple Martins were seen to the 20th with 14 on the 4th. There was an adult Tree Swallows on the 31st. There was a Northern Rough-winged Swallow on the 3rd with two on the 28th, then singles seen on the 30th and the 31st. There were two Bank Swallows on the 23rd with one on the 27th, then six seen on the 30th. There was also a Cliff Swallow on the 23rd. Barn Swallows were seen all month with 113 flying to the south on the 30th. There were two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers on the 13th. There were 23 Northern Mockingbirds on the 10th a new high count. Single Brown Thrashers were seen on the 3rd, 4th and 20th. There were two Yellow Warblers on the 9th with a Common Yellowthroat on the 22nd. Common Grackles were seen to the 15th. Boat-tailed Grackles had a passage this year with a high count of 93 on the 9th there were also 43 on the 23rd. There were four Brown-headed Cowbirds on the 23rd. House Finches present all month with 13 on the 11th.

Harry Robinson

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THE PELICAN

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Meets monthly September through May

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Vice President: Vacant

Past President: Melissa Lammers

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Recording Sec.: Vacant

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: Vacant

Webmaster: Joan Tague

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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 67-Number 10. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
October, 2021



Comments & Conservation Notes

For our next meeting on October 18th our speaker, Chris Farrell, Audubon Florida's Northeast Florida Policy Associate, will give us an update on efforts to restore the Oklawaha River. Its destruction was part of the wrong headed plan, first proposed over 450 years ago, for a canal across Florida to connect the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. The idea was tinkered with by President's Roosevelt, Kennedy and Johnson and finally stopped by President Nixon in 1971. But not before the Rodman Dam was built across the Oklawaha creating the Rodman Reservoir. Local bass fishermen had the reservoir stocked with bass fry and the rest is history. Having a couple of 'good ole boy' politicians as their fishing buddies meant that the thousands of voices from the across the environmental community pleading for the river's restoration fell on deaf ears. Lead by Majorie Harris Carr, those voices continued speaking out. Now we may be at a point where something good will be done. And you can help to make that happen. Click on the link to the [St Johns Riverkeeper](#) and from there to the SJRWMD's comment page. The Riverkeeper page offers a series of responses to the questions you'll be asked on the SJRWMD page. Please, this will only take you 5 minutes and you'll know you did your part in helping with this problem.

* * *

Tropical Audubon, in Miami, is fighting the good fight against yet another wasteful and damaging proposed expressway. Miami-Dade County has a well thought out growth management plan which, like others around the state, is just a speed bump for developers and their monied interests. The plan forbids extension of a planned expressway across a part of the Everglades. When it was first proposed Tropical Audubon and other environmental groups went to court to force compliance with the plan's restrictions. Expressway planners tout the time saved by commuters from the Kendall area of southern Miami-Dade County if the road is built. An actual study shows that the average commuter will save a whopping...**six minutes** from his daily travel. Estimated cost for this 13 mile boondoggle: one billion dollars. And you know there will be cost over runs. There always are.

Now, riding to the rescue of the developers, comes Governor Ron DeSantis, the "I'm all in for protecting Florida's wetlands" governor. Governor Ron and his Cabinet (Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried voted against it) voted to void the judge's decision and give the green light to the expressway. Tropical Audubon has vowed to go back to court to try to stop the madness. Let's hope they're successful.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, October 18th, Program Meeting- Join us for an update on restoration efforts to the Oklawaha River with Chris Farrell, Audubon Florida's Northeast Florida Policy Associate. This will be a Zoom meeting so you'll need to register for the meeting by clicking on this [link](#). You'll then receive an email with the meeting link. The gathering begins at 6:30 pm and Chris' presentation begins promptly at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow. Please plan to join us.

Field Trips

Hoping to cash in on Fall migration we have 3 trips this month plus Joans' bird walks at Ormond Central Park.

Tuesday, October 5th, Ormond Central Park- Join Joan Tague at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center at 8:00 am for a bird walk lasting about 2 hours. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Thursday, October 7th, Washington Oaks Gardens SP- Join Joan Tague for this walk through the state park looking for Fall migrants. Meet at the park, 6400 N Oceanshore Blvd, Palm Coast at 8:00 am. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan at 386-871-6049.

Thursday, October 14th, Faver Dykes State Park- Join Joan Tague for a walk through this beautiful park as we look for Fall migrants. Meet at Ormond Town Square – Granada & Williamson Blvds Behind Chick-fil-A at 7:30 am. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Tuesday, October 18th, Ormond Central Park- Join Joan Tague at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center at 8:00 am for a bird walk lasting about 2 hours. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Friday, October 22nd, Tosohatchee WMA- Join Joan Tague for this mostly driving field trip. Meet at 7:30 am at the Target East of I-95 on Dunlawton Ave behind Panera Bread. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

We have a new waiver for all field trip participants to sign. In this ongoing time of COVID, National Audubon field trip guidelines recommended having participants sign new waivers every year. Here's a link to the [waiver](#) on our website. It's a downloadable PDF so you can print and sign it now and bring it with you to a field trip. We'll also have them at the meet up sites. All of our activities from now till the end of the year are listed on our website on the Fall 2021 Schedule. It too is a printable PDF. Here's the [link](#). We hope to see you all out there.

Love Your State Tree

We see our state tree, the sabal or cabbage palm, almost everywhere we turn. It is so ubiquitous that we have come to take it for granted. Some Floridians even look down on it as too common (“cabbage” sounds so plebeian, doesn’t it?) and try to spice up their lives with exotic palm trees. But our sabal palm (*Sabal palmetto*) is a classic with many worthy qualities that deserve our appreciation.

For starters, the large panicles decorating the tree produce berries in the winter that sustain songbirds and small mammals throughout the lean months. We tend not to notice the panicles since they are high up in the tree, but they also support hundreds of pollinators during the summer when they develop big plumes of flowers.

The full, rounded crown provides nesting sites and materials for birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Mosquito-eating bats and beneficial bugs roost in the brown fronds. Woodpeckers hammer the trunk and boots in search of a meal.

Our sabal palm is also one of the most durable trees in Florida, having flourished here since time immemorial. It grows in any type of soil, thrives in sun or shade, and survives strong winds, freezes, salt, drought, and periodic flooding. It is evergreen and long-lived.

Can your imported palm tree perform all these ecological feats?

Yet, a sabal palm cannot either – if it is pruned, especially if it is over-pruned. Trimming off green branches weakens the tree by reducing its ability to photosynthesize, i.e., feed itself. Removing the mature green fronds actually makes it more susceptible to hurricane damage because the young fronds cannot withstand strong winds without the protection of their older sisters. Pruning a palm also eliminates its wildlife value, reduces shade, and lessens its absorption of carbon dioxide. Put your pruning tools away for a healthier palm and a healthier environment.

Our sabal palm may not be the most glamorous tree in the landscape, but it remains vital to our subtropical ecosystem. The next time you are out birding, take a scan of our state tree and advertise your new-found appreciation for this enduring Florida classic.

Leslie Nixon

* * * *

There’s Still Time to Register for the Audubon Assembly

This year’s Audubon Assembly will be a combination in person and virtual event. And, in a departure from previous years, this event will be spread out over two and a half weeks. It opens on Thursday, October 21st, with a virtual session at 6:00 pm. Executive Director of Audubon Florida, Julie Wraithmell, will open the festivities followed by Chapters Representative, Jacqui Sulek, with a report on chapter events from around the state. There will be several in person field trips and a virtual keynote address brings the event to a close on November 9th. This is essentially three events, one for North Florida, one for Central Florida and one for Southwest Florida. The Southwest Florida event is already sold out. Registration is 35.00 and here’s a link to the [website](#). I found the registration process a bit confusing so take your time making your selection.

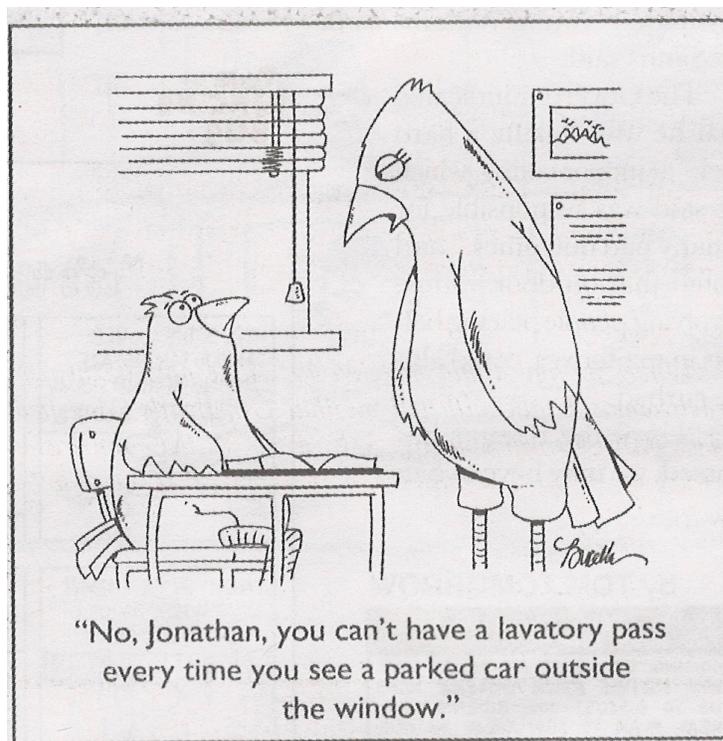


Our State Tree, the Sabal Palmetto,

Photo by Leslie Nixon

* * * *

Some Bird Humor From [Funny Times](#)



Here's another in our ongoing series, *Everyday Birding*

by Ray Scory

Active Memories - Lifetime Birding

I wonder why I recall a birding moment that happened so long ago. One that now wiggles foremost into the province of my memory. So bright and fresh that this ancient incident now seems like it occurred only yesterday. Sometimes these memories flash alive with no provocation on my part. Other times they come about when I'm deep in the aura of birding. The following examples illustrate this phenomena.

Now Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (MINWR), the Mecca of birding on the East Coast is one huge memory for me. I welcomed in the first decade of this 21st century by participating in a waterbird survey every ten days for seven years at this important wildlife refuge. The first section of Black Point Wildlife Drive is surrounded by wetlands, ponds and fresh water impoundments and became my survey territory and passion. An hour's drive from my home to the portal of the Wildlife Drive before daybreak was not soon enough. Since time changes the habits of all living things, at the first touch of light thousands of ducks will explode from the marshes announcing in a new day and the refuge will change in a dramatic way. During migration many birds will stay for the Winter. While some will stop to rest on their way farther South. Watching the lyrical spiraling descent of American White Pelicans or the graceful landing of hundreds of Northern Pintails is a beautiful experience. Finding a rarity, such as a Ross's Goose or a Gull-billed Tern is almost a common occurrence at the Refuge. Merritt Island NWR is certainly a Florida treasure creating endless memories.

My buddy, Paul, and I hiked The Appalachian Trail one week a year for ten years during the 1980's. Many fond memories from that experience abound. I cherish these moments, close my eyes, and let the memories take command. One evening we set up camp on the side of a mountain overlooking a deep rugged valley in the mountainous Adirondack region of New York State. Before sunrise brought light to the valley, millions of grackles and blackbirds were streaming through south at seemingly supersonic speeds. The sound was deafening. The speed was relentless, fast, anxious, noisy. All calling together keeping time with ancient accords, a well choreographed sight. I sat on a large rock, I watched in awe, closed my eyes to listen. I felt the power of this extraordinary event as daylight brushed over the valley. Two hours later, we continued our hike up and over the mountain as the sounds faded away.

On the other end of the migratory spectrum, but equally noteworthy, was the sighting of a green female Painted Bunting the first year Jane and I moved into our new Florida home. It was 15 years later, before another ventured into our yard. Since then, Every year beginning in October, they begin trickling in and gift our yard with a dazzling display of eye popping color. Beginning in April they start leaving for their breeding grounds in southeast Georgia.

Do memories refresh as the actual event or do they grow in importance as time moves along? Do the nuances of life's experiences embellish the original experience to a higher value of awareness and beauty? Only you can say.

I have revealed three long ago bird migration experiences. One a powerful mass of charging black birds. One a trickle of Painted Buntings into a seasonal home base. The other an unencumbered repose for a migratory travel well earned. When I look back upon these moments, I am at peace and thankful for the blessings.

Ray Scory



Thousands of Northern Pintails over winter in Merritt Island NWR. Photographed landing at the refuge after migrating down from Canada's northern provinces. They breed in the upper provinces of Canada and as far north as the Arctic Circle and Alaska down into mainland USA.



Is the male Painted Bunting coming in for a landing on the feeder or is he backing off just after feeding? Two female Painted Buntings are locked on to the skill of his maneuver.

Photos by Ray Scory

* * * *

From the [Birding Community E-bulletin](#)

DUCK STAMP RULE ANNOUNCEMENT

"It's back to the drawing board – literally – with the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, also known as the Duck Stamp. In the July issue of the Birding Community E-bulletin, we explained the proposal to eliminate the "hunting heritage" art- requirement for the waterfowl art in the stamp. We also touched on the missed opportunity to adjust the rules to deliver more nuanced messaging on bird and habitat conservation..."

"Last month, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the final regulations governing these standards in the annual Duck Stamp Contest – beginning with the 2022 contest. Yes, these changes basically revert to the old rules, but they also provide artists more flexibility when designing their art. And, yes, the recent "hunting heritage" art- requirement is being dropped."

"The new rules still require the live portrayal of one of the eligible waterfowl species as the dominant feature for the stamp's artwork. Hunting accessories and scenes, such as dogs, decoys and blinds will now be optional components and their inclusion will be left to the artist's discretion..." Funds collected from stamp sales exceed 1.1 billion dollars since the mid 1930's. Purchasing a Duck Stamp is one of the best things we can do to protect waterfowl habitat.



Reid Hughes, photographed on the observation tower at Spruce Creek Park. *Photo by Nigel Cook by permission of the Daytona Beach News-Journal*

Honoring Him by Renaming North Peninsula State Park

As I wrote in the August issue of the Pelican, Reid Hughes did a whole lot of good for our county and state. A long time member of our chapter, he quietly worked behind the scenes to save huge tracts of land for conservation. He served on the board of the St Johns River Water Management District, Audubon Florida, The Nature Conservancy and just about any other board or association where he thought he could make a difference.

We are trying to have North Peninsula State Park renamed Reid B. Hughes State Park. Clay Henderson, past President of the Florida Audubon Society and long time local environmental advocate, has written a very informative letter to Eric Draper, Director of the Florida Park Service, outlining some of Reid's many accomplishments. Here's a sample:

"Hughes is closely connected to the three state parks we often call the Tomoka Geo- Park. These include Tomoka State Park, Bulow Creek State Park, and North Peninsula State Park, that together protect more than 10,000 acres of lands strategically important to conservation. While Tomoka State Park is one of the state's oldest parks, the additions of the other two would not have been possible without local involvement, leadership, and financial resources. Reid Hughes was an important part of that effort."

"For this extraordinary record of conservation, it is altogether appropriate that the Florida State Parks dedicate some portion of the Tomoka Geo-Park to the memory of Reid Hughes. Both the Tomoka and Bulow names are historic and should not be touched. On the other hand, the name "North Peninsula" is merely a handy reference to a local area without any specific historic significance."

We're asking for a few minutes of your time to help out in this campaign to rename North Peninsula State Park in Reid's honor. Please send an email to: eric.Draper@Floridadep.gov asking that the park be renamed Reid B Hughes State Park. It will be a big help and we'd really appreciate it. Thank you.

David Hartgrove



Here's a sight we don't see here in Volusia County. This is a Snowy Plover with her 2 recently hatched chicks and one unhatched egg. This was taken near Fort Myers Beach.

Photo by Lou Newman

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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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Education: Holly Zwart-Duryea and Barbara Northrup

Field Trips: David Hartgrove

Newsletter Editor: David Hartgrove

Welcome: Vacant

Webmaster: Joan Tague

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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

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November, 2021



Comments & Conservation Notes

In January of this year the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) assumed control and permitting authority over Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. I wrote back then that this was a very bad idea due to FDEP's lack of experience with enforcement of this federal program. They're also woefully underfunded and barely able to do the work they were charged with before assuming this new responsibility. Of course, this was the plan all along on.

Developers have long whined about the time it took to wind their way through permitting process when Section 404 was administered by the Army Corps of Engineers. Abetted by their cohorts in the Trump administration, who changed things at the federal level, their minions in our state legislature wrote a bill that transferred Section 404 permitting to FDEP. They knew that FDEP wouldn't be up to the task and permits would slide through with little or no review. The October 23rd [Audubon Advocate](#) reports that FDEP is now realizing that they're terribly understaffed and unable to handle their new duties. FDEP is asking for 23 new full time staff from the Florida Legislature this session to help cope with the large backlog. I know this will sound cynical but I don't see any way that all those new hires will be coming onboard. They are also planning to use contracted staff from water management districts to help. Yeah, the same water management districts that are so underfunded and understaffed already. That has long been the way things work here in the Sunshine State. Pass "feel good" legislation that appears to address serious problems, like water quality. Then be sure to pass enabling legislation that caps funding at such niggardly levels that all that happens is hand wringing and lax, if any, enforcement.

* * *

From Birds Canada comes information on the decline in most hummingbird species. Most but not all. An article published in Scientific Reports entitled "Current contrasting population trends among North American hummingbirds" offers some encouraging information. While all bird species, including hummingbirds, have declined by over 30% since 1970, some species have actually seen population increases. Among the *Selasphorus* genus (found in western states), Allen's, Rufous, and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds have declined since 1970, and the rate of decline increased from 2009 to 2019. In the East, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have begun to decline, though only since 2004. Out West again, Calliope and Costa's Hummingbirds have remained relatively stable. Anna's has seen big population increases. If you're interested in reading the complete article, here's a [link](#) to it.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, November 15th, Program Meeting- Short-tailed Hawks and Reddish Egrets, two species with very little in common. Except that they're both subjects of study at the Avian Research & Conservation Institute in Gainesville. Gina Kent, Senior Conservation Scientist at ARCI will be our speaker and give what promises to be a fascinating program on these two diverse species. This will be a Zoom meeting. Please register at [MeetUp](#) to receive the link. You'll then receive an email with the meeting link. The gathering begins at 6:30 pm and Gina's presentation begins promptly at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow. Please plan to join us.

Field Trips

Friday, November 5th, Lake Apopka- Join David Hartgrove for this trip to one of our state's birding hot spots. We meet at 7:30 am at Int'l Square - East of I-95 on Int'l Speedway Blvd behind Krystal 2550 West International Speedway Blvd. Daytona Beach FL 32114. Bring lunch. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.

Thursday, November 18th, T M Goodwin Marsh- Join David Hartgrove for this long trip to one of the better hot spots here and it's only open to us on Thursdays. Afterward we'll have lunch at the historic [Marsh Landing Restaurant](#). We meet at Target, East of I-95 on Dunlawton Avenue behind Panera's 1771 Dunlawton Avenue, Port Orange. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.

We also have Joan's bird walks at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center, 601 Division Avenue, Ormond Beach. They're at 8:00 am and will be on Tuesdays, November 2nd, 16th and 30th. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Field Trips With Others

Saturday, November 6th, North Peninsula State Park- Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail will host a trail walk at Smith Creek Landing in North Peninsula State Park, 40 Highbridge Road, Ormond Beach. Dr. Don Spence, Plant Pathologist and Certified Master Arborist, will lead this 2 hour hike beginning at 10:00 am. We'll go over uneven terrain during the hike so please wear your sneakers or hiking boots. Bring plenty of water, snacks, sunscreen and insect repellent, as well. Questions, call Nancy Galdo, 305-467-4412.

NEWS FROM The CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (RCC)

2021 was a banner year for funding from the FL legislature. \$400 million budgeted--\$100M from the document stamp tax and \$300M is a one-time appropriation from the Federal Relief Fund. Farmers and ranchers are realizing that conservation easements align with their interests and are increasingly willing to enter into agreements that will keep their lands undeveloped in perpetuity. Chapters will continue advocating for purchase of Florida Forever pre-approved conservation properties in their geography.

A proposed bill in Lake County will abolish the Lake County Water Authority and transfer its assets to the Lake County Commission. AF is working with EPA and SJWMD to try to have authority transferred to SJWMD instead. Assets include approximately 20 conservation properties.

Audubon Florida owns property in Lake Butler which has become a favorite spot for boaters to dock, particularly on weekends. Boaters trespass on the island, sometimes littering and often disturbing beach-nesting or beach-resting birds. Keeping the public away has become difficult, but Orange County found an ordinance that allows exclusion of motorboats because people swim in the area. This option will be discussed at public meetings scheduled for October 19.

The Orange County Commission voted \$100M from the general fund for Green Place programs. They are setting up an advisory board and Orange Audubon Society has an opportunity to be represented on that board.

Leaders from Seminole and Orange chapters met with Senator Jason Brodeur, Chair of Environment & Natural Resources Committee and Margaret Spontak, Chair of Free the Ocklawaha River Coalition. St Johns River Water Management District coordinated a public survey about the future of the Ocklawaha River's restoration. It is hoped that 10,000 people will complete the survey.

West Volusia AS is working with the Deltona Dept of Economic Development which has recently declared the environment as the third pillar of Deltona's economic plan.

*Paula Wehr, Central Florida Chapters Representative
Audubon Florida Board of Directors*

This will be Paula's last report as an Audubon Florida Board member. She's handing her seat to Melissa Lammers. Our chapter has now sent two very strong, effective women to the Audubon Florida Board.

Editor

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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. 45.95 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!

Back from an absence last month, here's another plant profile from our resident expert, Leslie Nixon.

A Small Treasure



Rouge plant, Photo by Leslie Nixon

A fun little plant for a shady area is the rouge plant (*Rivina humilis*). As a small shrub growing only up to 4 feet tall and 3 feet wide, it can fit into almost any landscape. Its bright red berries and white-pink flowers appear intermittently all year long, bringing cheerful color to your yard. Most plants for birds are trees and large shrubs (to match their preferred altitude), but rouge plant is a low-growing bush that invites mockingbirds and brown thrashers down to the ground to grab a tasty snack.

Rouge plant is an evergreen perennial of the Florida woodlands, so to enjoy it in your yard place it in part shade where a spot of sun helps it to produce its flowers and fruit. It prefers a bit of moisture, but tolerates occasional drought, and while it can survive a freeze, it will suffer from salt air and hurricane winds.

As a carefree native, rouge plant only needs maintenance if it gets leggy, and then you can simply trim back the long stalks – or not. Once it decides it is happy where you have planted it, it will reseed readily to provide you with a continuous supply of down-low berries for birds.

Rouge plant was so named because its berries have been used in cosmetics. Plant a small group under a tree and think of it as a mini makeover for your shady island.

Leslie Nixon

* * * *

From the Quotable Birder

“I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen as the representative of our country; he is a bird of bad moral character; like those among men who live by sharpening and robbing, he is generally poor, and often very lousy. The turkey is a much more respectable bird, and withal a true original native of America.”

Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to his daughter, Sarah Franklin Bache, January 26th, 1784.



Memories are made on walks such as this. Note the wooden barricade in the upper center of the photograph. Jane and I stop here and look left up into the creek embraced by a sylvan setting surrounded in a busy neighborhood. Small fry of Large-mouth bass, Nile tilapia, bluegill, red-bellied Spider mud and red-eared turtles, waterbirds, two Wood ducks, Coopers and Red-tailed Hawks, dragonflies and various water plants frequent this inconspicuous creek. Certainly, a treasure to walk by. You just never know what you will see.

Photo montage by Ray Scory

Walk a Mile with Me

I haven't been out walking on my cement sidewalk trail for the past year and a half. I am so happy to be out with Jane on this sunny, cool morning. So many things to see. So many nice people to share a smile with and just say, "Hi".

When I step out from the doorway, I take a deep breath offered by the fresh coming day. Look out at the neighborhood pine trees and homes silhouetted against a diminishing darkness and walk to the corner, looking first up at the lone tall pine tree anchoring the beginning of our walk. This morning I will be walking with Jane, her first walk to the creek in a long time. "So, Jane, let's start walking to see what we can find that will make this walk different from other walks."

"Ray, do you always start out this early?"

"Yes I do, Jane. I like The Golden Hour, the time when the Sun breaks through the night and splashes burning colors

across the sky revealing itself just above the awaiting horizon. This transitional moment doesn't last long. It is a magical moment edging the observer into a zone of peaceful calm. And you will feel it."

This morning, my friend, the female Red-tailed Hawk, is perched high in the pine tree. She appears in this tree the same time every year. Last year a male appeared and shortly after they were nest building high in a tree near our home. Along the way I occasionally look down at the sidewalk and search for compositions that Nature has placed for me. Consequently, I started a collection of images for a Sidewalk Art collection.

Jane and I spot a Wood Stork perched high in a tree. While we may be more familiar seeing them poking in a highway ditch or along the edge of a pond. I have seen them nesting high in trees in swampy areas where the water affords protection from ground predators and offers readily available

Continued below on Page 4

Welcome to our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Jack Agett, Merryl Black, Lynn Bunnell, Linda Cantwell, Clarence Childs, Laura Chilkott, Elta Cooke, Stephen Daniels, Nelda Davis, Margaret Fyotek, Joe Galdo, Marilyn Garcia, Richard Goldstein, Marge Grosberg, Jacquelyn Hanson, Robert Hanson, Carol Hjorth, William Hunter, Susan Kasnoski, Jill Kelly, Kim Klancke, Ed Kocis, Terry Mercer, Mary Nilsson, Harriet Nolan, Kathleen Peterson, Sang Roberson, Elizabeth Robinson, Patricia Sample, Lois Sessoms, Cresilda Shahzada, Peg Shelton, Linda Simms, Frances Smith, Margaret Snyder, Lori Staudt, Edgar Stewart, Joan Tague, Mindy Taylor, Margaret Venzke, Gladys Walker, Susan Wandelt, Sharon Westlund, Meredith Wilson, Vivian Zielinski, Carole Zink. We hope to see you at one of our virtual Zoom meetings or on a field trip.

* * * *

Another Season of Project Feeder Watch

[Project Feeder Watch](#) begins November 13th. It's an easy way to contribute to a citizen science project that makes a difference. Click on the link above and get registered. Then you can begin counting, totaling and entering your numbers in the database. It's fun and spending time watching will make you a better birder.

* * * *

Some Bird Humor From [Funny Times](#)



food for the nestlings. On this particular walk a Wood Stork flew so close to us that we could hear the sound from its wings flapping and I was able to photograph it in flight. A rare occurrence. Also, we stopped at the creek and Jane spotted a Great Egret close-by and then, clandestinely walking toward us, a Wood Stork disguised in the shade of trees. Rarely do we see more than one bird species in the creek at a time.

Birds singing, birds in the trees, some times in a flock other times alone, colorful flowers, people walking, normally at the same time in the morning, a fast flowing creek or barely trickling, depending on the time of the year. Freshly poured cement sections in the sidewalk, creating a strong graphic design. Nature changing. People changing. Ongoing, always different - never the same. Enjoy today what wasn't there yesterday and might be gone tomorrow.

A walk anywhere, anytime, is a refreshing thing to do.

Ray Scory

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The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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December, 2021



Comments & Conservation Notes

There's a proposal before the DeLand City Commission to okay a Planned Unit Development (PUD) for the South Ridge Golf Course. It's a golf course now but way back when it was the City dump. Back in the good old days we didn't worry much about hazardous materials. If you had old paint, paint thinner, old pesticides, batteries, etc. you just hauled them down to the dump, tossed them in and... out of sight, out of mind. Now, here we are fifty years later and the City is being asked to permit the construction of 600+ single family homes on what's essentially a hazardous waste site.

The Environmental Council of Volusia & Flagler Counties saw the notice about a zoning hearing and sprang into action. A new member of the group, Dr. Denise DeGarmo, spoke eloquently on the hazards involved. Though limited to speaking just five minutes by the rules of the City Commission, a large number of potential speakers ceded their time to her so she could continue her presentation. What seemed a slam dunk when the meeting began was tabled for further study. This is a bad idea and hopefully it will be allowed to go away quietly.

* * *

When the last attempt at developing a marina adjacent to the Port Orange Bridge was made, opposition from Seabird Island Mobil Home Park and our chapter, along with others, doomed the project. Just when you thought the planning couldn't be any worse along comes a guy with a plan for a dry storage boat facility. It would hold 250 boats and use a laser guided machine to retrieve the stored boats and place them in the water nearby. Though the [article](#) in the Daytona Beach News-Journal didn't mention it, in order to store 250 boats the facility would be seventy-five to eighty feet high. The poor folks at Seabird Island thought a noisy marina was bad. How about having an eighty foot monstrosity crammed in just behind your home completely blocking the view you've enjoyed for decades? This is in the very early planning stages. A City of Port Orange spokesperson said, "there has been no official application or pre-application meeting with city staff on this project." We've been in touch with the Seabird Island folks and we'll be watching to see what comes next for this whacky idea.

* * *

On our logo at the top of the page it says we were founded in 1923. That means that in a little over a year our chapter will celebrate a century of sharing birding adventures, teaching birding skills to others and environmental activism. We will be planning over the next year for ways to commemorate this special event. We could use your help.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, December 20th, Program Meeting- Join us for a presentation by local documentary film maker, George Sibley. "Listening to Owls" tells the story of research on Mexican Spotted Owls, a Threatened species, iconic to the desert southwest. This will be a Zoom meeting. Please register at [MeetUp](#) to receive the link. You'll then receive an email with the meeting link. The gathering begins at 6:30 pm and George's presentation begins promptly at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow. Please plan to join us.

Field Trips

Wednesday, December 1st, Lake Woodruff NWR- This will be an afternoon event. Meet Joan Tague at 3:00 pm in the Refuge parking lot at the west end of Mud Lake Road. Watch as Sandhill Cranes fly in to roost for the night and maybe get lucky and see a Black Rail. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Friday, December 10th, Merritt Island NWR- Join Joan Tague for the first of two trips to this best of all birding spots. We'll meet at Target East of I-95 on Dunlawton Ave behind Panera at 7:30 am to ride down. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Saturday, December 11th, Merritt Island NWR- Join David Hartgrove for this trip. Every year we do back to back trips to this hot spot so that folks who aren't retired can come along and enjoy the avian feast that is MINWR in winter. Again we'll meet at Target East of I-95 on Dunlawton Ave behind Panera at 7:30 am to ride down. Bring lunch. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.

Sunday, December 26th, CBC- Though not actually a field trip, the Christmas Bird Count is an excellent opportunity to sharpen your birding skills while making a contribution to oldest citizen science project in the world. This is an all day event but we can accommodate those unable to stay that long. Call David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249, with questions and to see about team assignments. A CBC is done in a 15 mile in diameter circle. Ours is centered at I-95 and the Tomoka River. So we count birds from Plantation Pines to the ocean, from just inside Flagler County on US 1 to the south end of the Daytona Flea Market.

* * * * *

From the Quotable Birder

I "How helpless we are, like netted birds, when we are caught by desire!"

Belva Plain, 1915-2010

The Painted Bunting - male & female

Life is full of surprises. Not necessarily the knock down roll around eye-popping kind. Just endless honey-like flickers of joy that sweeten our everlasting journey, “Jane, come here, quickly. A female Painted Bunting at our backyard feeder. So beautifully green. They came back!” First one this year, and on the day of The Big Sit. I burst out excitedly shouting like I just witnessed the explosive drama of a walk-off home run.

For me, this singular event is a scrumptious feast for body, mind and soul. Especially since this year two Painted Buntings, one male and one female, arrived together the same day that I was participating in [The Big Sit](#). This year, for the first time in 21 years, a recovery from a hospital stay prevented me from hosting my beloved Big Sit under the Port Orange Bridge.

By noon Sunday I started to feel the ethereal tug of The Big Sit. Consequently, I decided to use the kitchen window and a portion of our back screened porch as my official circle. As darkness seeped into our yard I took one last look out the window. Feeding at my most distant feeder were a male and female Painted Bunting. Wow! Painted Buntings in my yard on the day of the Big Sit,

Faithfully, every year from October to April for the past six years, Painted Buntings have graced our backyard like colorful postage stamps, flashing their beautiful colors and feeding at our two feeding stations.

However, they were absent from our yard for many years. In fact, the first one to appear in our yard was in October of the first year we moved to Florida, in 2000. I briefly spotted the green flash of the female in our saw palmetto thicket. I was elated. I expected a dazzling Autumn display of colors in our yard for years to come.

But it was not to be. The next Painted Bunting didn't appear again in our yard for fifteen years. I can offer a few reasons why. While I have not scientifically studied this behavior, I only reasoned through my personal observations and conversations with longtime Florida birders.

When we first moved to Florida I was told that Titusville was the northernmost boundary for wintering Painted Buntings before they migrate north in April to their breeding grounds in southeast Georgia. Today, in the year 2021, they are spending their winter months here at many other bird feeders here in Volusia County. That is a substantial change in northern limits of their wintering grounds.

I wondered if there was a reason they've been faithfully returning each year. I noticed that my two backyard bird feeders are located very close to small island of palmetto thickets and short fruit trees. Thus giving birds the opportunities to quickly get out to feed or back into protective cover. Also, our bird bath is located close by a four foot high palmetto island. Painted Buntings love to bathe in water - alone or in the company of others. The Painting Bunting is a sociable bird, one of the most beautifully colorful birds in North America and are just nice to have in the yard.

Along with my shallow birdbath always filled with fresh clean water, I make sure there is always an ample supply of white proso millet seed in the bird feeders. Red Millet is good also, though it is not as rich in vitamins and minerals. Try other small seeds in your feeder but leave cracked corn to large billed birds as Rock Doves, Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds.

The buntings will just ignore them and might just kick them to the ground.

So, the key words for attracting Painted Buntings to your backyard are, cover, water, small white proso millet seeds. I hope you'll have the kind of luck we've had.

Ray Scory



Painted Buntings on the feeder, female on the left, male on the right.

Photo by Ray Scory

* * * *



Little Blue Heron with a fresh caught crawfish

Photo by Lou Newman

Myakka River State Park is east of Sarasota and photographer, Lou Newman, took his camera there in late October. Heavy rains had flooded much of the park and wading birds were having a feast. At 37,000 acres it's one of the state's largest parks. Since everything a Little Blue Heron eats must be swallowed whole this bird has a somewhat prickly menu choice to deal with. More of Lou's photos are below.

And now here's another plant profile from our resident expert, Leslie Nixon.

Florida's Christmas Tree

Yaupon holly is sometimes called Christmas berry because at this time of year its bright red berries clustered on dark green foliage bring a festive look to the holiday season. Many people trim off branches and use them as indoor decorations, but for bird lovers the branches should be left on the tree so the berries can sustain hungry birds in winter.

Yaupon holly is a large shrub or small tree growing 15-25' tall and almost as wide. A fool-proof plant, yaupon holly will grow in any type of soil, wet or dry, plain or salty. It is hardy, hurricane resistant, and evergreen. To get the most berries, plant it in full sun, but it will also fare pretty well in part-sun. Pruning it in late winter will keep it more dense.

Both male and female plants produce small white flowers in the spring that attract pollinators, but only the female plants develop the characteristic berries. Now (winter) is a good time to shop for a female yaupon holly, because you will be certain to get the right gender by purchasing one with fruit.

Yaupon holly is the only naturally caffeinated plant native to North America. A company located right here in Volusia County produces a tasty green tea made from wild yaupon hollies. You can purchase it online (<https://yauponbrothers.com/>) or at local health food stores.

The Latin name for yaupon holly is *Ilex vomitoria*, but it will only make you sick if you eat the berries. Native Floridians drank yaupon tea on a daily basis, but it was also used medicinally and ceremoniously to induce vomiting, essentially by overdosing on it. This custom was acknowledged by the scientists who named it.

Yaupon holly is an easy to grow native plant that is essential for a bird lover's yard. Get one soon, while you can still identify the females - and give the wild birds a holiday treat.

Leslie Nixon

* * * *

The Great Backyard Bird Count

Here's an opportunity to help make a difference when it comes to our feathered friends. Observing and counting the birds in your backyard or at your favorite neighborhood park offers hours of relaxation and learning. Then entering the results of your efforts into a national database contributes to a vast storehouse of knowledge. Researchers and government scientists can then access this vast knowledge base when making decisions that affect bird populations all over the country. [The Great Backyard Bird Count](#) begins February 18th, 2022 and runs 3 days through the 21st. However, once you're registered on [eBird](#) you can send in a report when ever you like.

* * * *

Whimbrels, Long Distance Migrants

Scott Weidensaul, renowned bird researcher and author gave the keynote address at this year's Audubon Assembly. His subject was migration and Whimbrels offer great examples of the threats birds face when migrating. A recent discovery off the coast of South Carolina offers a bit of hope. Deveaux Bank is a sandbar at the mouth of the North Edisto River and recently it was found to be a roost for up to 20,000 Whimbrels! Here's a [link](#) to a story by Scott Weidensaul.



Yaupon Holly,

Photo by Leslie Nixon

* * * *



This Great Blue Heron has a catfish. Slow and methodical these birds seldom seem to be the apex predator they truly are.

Photo by Lou Newman

Bob Lane splits his time between Pinellas County, FL and Mahoning County, OH. He last wrote about Piping Plovers.

Thanksgiving Oystercatchers

Each year, by Thanksgiving, The Courtney Campbell Causeway becomes the wintering home for around forty American Oystercatchers that have traveled south from their summering homes along the Atlantic coast. "The Causeway", is Florida SR60, crossing Upper Tampa Bay for eight miles, thru Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties, bringing throngs of visitors to Clearwater Beach. Sometimes, depending on the tide, or when there is inclement weather, the oystercatchers can be found west of The All-Purpose Trail Bridge, along the trail on the south side, or the marginal road on the north side. To date, we have recorded eleven banded birds this season. The colored bands tell the story of where our celebrity visitors come from. Orange YAC was banded on 06-17-19 in Queens County, New York; Black K6 was banded 07-03-13 in Accomack County, Virginia; Red APW was banded 06-17-19 in McIntosh County, Georgia.

Our favorite oystercatcher is "Yellow 77". Impressively, it is our longest tenured, and farthest traveling celebrity. Originally banded on 06-14-10, at Chappaquiddick, Dukes County, Massachusetts, twelve years ago. So apparently during each of the past years, "Yellow 77" has traveled about 1175 miles down the east coast, eventually crossing mainland Florida, to reach Upper Tampa Bay, and then in the spring, doing the return north. Unbelievable!!! Band color determines a birds origin. Black banded birds come from Virginia, Yellow bands come from Massachusetts or Connecticut, Red bands come from Georgia or Florida, and Orange bands from New York. Sort of a rule of thumb, if you see pairs of oystercatchers, they are local birds, if in larger groups, they're more true "Snowbirds". So if you are lucky enough to encounter the banded birds, appreciate what they have accomplished to be here in our neighborhood. Lucky for me, Courtney Campbell Causeway is the wintering hangout of my favorite shorebird.

Bob Lane



American Oystercatchers seen along Courtney Campbell Causeway

Photo by Bob Lane

The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

Circumstances have forced a change in the dates and location of next year's Festival. Renovations at East Florida State College in Titusville, long the Festival headquarters, meant that the Festival needed to find an alternative location. The organizers, The Brevard Nature Alliance, settled on the Radisson Resort in Port Canaveral, Cocoa Beach. The Festival will be in the first week in February, 2022. There's a special 10% discount on the registration for those who register before December 15th. Beginning on February 2nd and running through February 6th there will be field trips, photography and identification workshops, presentations by famous birders and a large exhibition hall filled with all things birding. This is also the 25th anniversary for this event and it will be special. You can register for the entire festival or just for select events. Click the link above to start your adventure now.

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