

The Pelican

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

Volume 60-No.11 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
May, 2015



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thoughts from on High



May means Mother's Day. The Mute Swan, an introduced species from Europe, is not mute but has a hoarse and much quieter voice than that of native swans. The graceful neck, brilliant white feathers, orange bill and black facial skin make this female a very photogenic mother. Mute Swans have been introduced into park and estate ponds for their ornamental beauty. In some areas, they've become common enough to be considered pests. They feed mostly on plant material by dabbling at the surface, dipping the head and neck underwater or by upending with the tail up and head extended to the pond bottom. They also graze on land.

Pairs form at about 2 years of age, with first nesting usually taking place at 3-4 years. Pairs conduct courtship by facing one another and turning their heads from side to side in unison. Nests are on small islands, shorelines or mounds built up in shallow water. The male helps to gather nesting material but the female builds the nest. The female does most of the incubating of the 5-7 eggs. Both parents tend the young. As seen in the photo, it is common for very young birds to be carried on the adult's back.

Tiny Piping Plover mothers have a very tough life. The number of Piping Plovers of both sexes has been reduced due to habitat loss until the species has been listed as Threatened in Florida and Endangered in many other states. They are one of the smallest plovers at 7.25 inches and weighing just under 2 ounces. Their backs and wings are nearly the color of sand and they lay their eggs in a small scrape on the open beach where they have little protection from the weather, predators from the animal world and the chance of being stepped on by human beach visitors. Males perform display flights over breeding territory. On the ground, *Continued on page 2 below*

Calendar & Events

Monday, May 18, 2015- Program Meeting: "Human Impact on the St. Johns River". Join us on Monday evening, May 18, when Quinton White, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Marine Science Research Institute and Professor of Biology & Marine Science at Jacksonville University will discuss the impact humans have made on the St. Johns River – both good and bad. The doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

Field Trips With Others

Our chapter's field trips are over until next September. West Volusia Audubon Society still has two more scheduled in May.

Saturday, May 9- Bicycle birding at Lake Apopka. Pump up your tires and join our friends from WVAS for this fun outing. Meet at 7:30 am at Magnolia Park, 2929 S. Binion Rd. (CR 437), Apopka. The ride will be on the Lake Apopka Loop Trail, beginning at Magnolia Park and going along the NE shore of Lake Apopka. This is an excellent location for finding a wide variety of bird species. Bring lunch. Questions, call Eli Schaperow, 407-314-7965.

Friday, May 15- Audubon Park in Deltona. Meet at 8:00 am at the park, corner of Doyle Road and Lush Lane. Bring your binoculars and lunch. Questions? Call Harry Robinson, 386-801-4472.

Programs Of Interest

Friday, May 22- Blue Spring Alliance Public Forum. Hear from community leaders about the threats to Blue Spring, the region's water supply and what the community is doing to address these threats. Also learn about the new Springs Council and ProjectH2O – new, local initiatives to protect our water resources. The public is encouraged to attend and ask questions, give input and participate in the Blue Spring Alliance Forum. Join your neighbors and members of local government at the Wayne G Sanborn Activity Center, 815 South Alabama Avenue, DeLand. The forum will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 23- "John James Audubon: The Artist Scientist in Florida" presented by James Zacharias, Museum of Arts & Sciences. As part of the "Discover Our History" Lecture Series presented by Ormond Beach Historical Society at Anderson-Price Memorial Building, 42 N. Beach Street, Ormond Beach. Zach will recount the story of Audubon's travels to St. Augustine, Bulowville, the St Johns River, Key West and the Dry Tortugas. Refreshments served at 9:30 a.m.; the presentation is from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. Free admission. Questions: 386-677-7005. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Do **not** park on the church property; your car will be towed. Limited parking is located behind the Anderson-Price House, across the street at Bailey Riverbridge Gardens or behind the City Hall/Public Library.

Conservation Notes

males approach the female, stand upright and stretch their necks out while rapidly stamping their feet. Both parents incubate the 2-4 eggs for 26-28 days. The downy hatchlings are ready to walk and leave the nest within a few hours of hatching. Hatchlings feed themselves immediately. Parents protect the youngsters until fledging. The female often deserts the family a week or so after the eggs hatch, leaving the male to care for the young which are ready to fly 3-5 weeks after hatching.

Paula Wehr



A Piping Plover at Lighthouse Point Park

photo by Dan Gribbin

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One Less Species Soon?



Common Redpoll

photo by Sharon Watson

Hoary Redpoll

photo by Chris Wood

The American Ornithologists' Union, along with professional ornithological societies around the globe, determines what constitutes a species and what they're to be called. Long time birders will recall that the name of the Common Gallinule was changed some years ago to Common Moorhen. Now, after genetic testing, it's back to Common Gallinule again. To avoid confusion with a European cousin.

Now comes word that listers, those birders among us who count each and every species and keep meticulous notes on the total of their life list, are about to lose a checkmark on those lists. Hoary Redpolls are mostly white and live in extreme conditions near the Arctic, seldom straying south of the Canadian border. Common Redpolls are slightly larger, darker and are regularly seen in the northern U.S. in winter. Here's a [link](#) to an article on the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's website that announces that the latest genetic testing shows that these two species are essentially identical. The next revision of the AOU's taxonomy listing could be a source of disappointment for those listers among us.

In last month's issue I wrote of the shenanigans going on in Tallahassee. These annual exercises in malfeasance and bad governance are what we get when the bozos we elect get settled into their plush offices and start taking phone calls from their corporate sponsors. One of those phone calls apparently was about how wonderful it would be if we could just open up our state parks to farming. Florida's state parks are some of the best in the country, or were. But large donors to legislative races have plans to plow profits out of our state lands. SB 7086 directs the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (a name that's quickly turning into a cruel joke) to allow "low impact farming" in state parks, state forests and wildlife management areas to help assure these places pay their way. HB 7135 allows adjacent landowners to lay ownership claims to state parks, forests, and wildlife management areas. The bill appears to be a special favor to a big dairy producer that has been after a piece of the Withlacoochee State Forest. Florida's poor soils don't produce that kind of forage that dairy cows need to be big producers of industrial milk, so feed and fertilizers would be needed. Nutrient management plans for dairies do not prevent groundwater contamination. So we lose a section of a state forest that currently belongs to all of us; a big time corporate donor gets to pollute more ground water with his industrial dairy operation on what used to be our land and meantime, state park biologists' positions are cut as a cost saving measure. Clearly, the contempt our legislators have for us and our agenda of land preservation knows no bounds.

It appears all but certain that we'll see Florida's black bears being hunted sometime later this year. The reasoning is that by reducing the population of the state's bears we'll reduce the interactions between people and bears which often end with the bears being relocated or shot as nuisance bears. "A fed bear is a dead bear", so say signs in many state and national parks. Still, there are people who live in areas frequented by bears who think they're doing the bears a favor leaving dog food out at night for them. There's an old saying that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." Putting up a bird feeder is one thing. Feeding an animal that can and will eat your neighbor's poodle is just plain irresponsible.

Hopefully, the appearance of President Obama on a walk along the Anhinga Trail, in Everglades National Park to mark Earth Day, didn't send the tea party folks into paroxysms of foaming at the mouth and scree filled screaming at their television sets. Or give them another reason to delay Everglades restoration. In a bit of irony, his visit coincided with the opening day of public hearings on a proposed expansion of Florida Power & Light Company's Turkey Point Nuclear Plant. They want to add two new reactors and extend three new transmission lines across the edge of Shark River Slough, part of Everglades National Park. In addition, the plant is adjacent to Biscayne National Park. Current plans call for the use of treated waste water for cooling the reactors. This means the household chemicals, hormones from prescription medications and other substances which aren't effected by current treatment facilities will be aerosolized and carried up in the massive amounts of steam to be deposited in both national parks. This plan is in the very early stages of development and environmental groups down south are working on modifying it. We'll be alert to ways we can help.

It appears that the bill to open Tiger Bay State Forest to off road vehicles will die in the Agriculture Committee where it's been since soon after it was filed. Representative Dwayne Taylor (who's term limited out of office after this session) has filed to seek the position of Volusia County Council Chair. He was hoping to rally support for his election bid from that bill's supporters. I think he was surprised at how unpopular the idea was.

David Hartgrove

Elections Will be Held At Our Annual Meeting

Monday, June 15, 2015

By-laws for our chapter state in Article IV Officers, Section 1: "The officers shall be elected at the annual meeting of members, occurring in odd years, and assume their duties immediately following the close of the meeting. They shall hold office for two years."

Following are candidates who have volunteered to stand for election at our June meeting:

President – Jim O'Shaughnessy

Vice-President – David Hartgrove

Treasurer – Betty Butcher

Recording Secretary – Peggy Yokubonus

Membership Secretary – John Carr

Historian – John Carr

At-Large Board Member (Class of 2018) – Holly Zwart-Duryea

At-Large Board Member (Class of 2018) – Celine Sullivan

Nominations will be accepted for all positions, providing the nominee has been asked and accepts the nomination.

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Florida Forage Fish

Last year Halifax River Audubon joined a birder sign-on letter in support of the [Florida Forage Fish Campaign](#) which was sponsored by Pew Charitable Trust, US Oceans. The Pew organization is putting together a logo mosaic that will feature logos from our 150+ partners so it can be presented to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission leadership at a meeting with them in Tallahassee in April. HRA's logo will be included.

Our Pew contact, Senior Associate Cameron Jaggard (speaker at our September 15, 2014 chapter meeting) reports that FWC has agreed to include a discussion of forage fish management and monitoring during their public meeting June 23-25 in Sarasota. This meeting could be a huge turning point for the campaign. In preparation for that meeting, Pew is working to get 10,000 people to sign the Florida Forage Fish pledge by June 1. If you have not already signed the pledge at our April chapter meeting, please visit www.FloridaForageFish.org to sign the pledge online. Feel free to forward this information to friends and neighbors who may also want to protect forage fish in our local waters. Cameron is also encouraging folks to print and collect signatures on paper copies of the forage fish pledge. Contact [Paula Wehr](#) for a PDF copy of the pledge and mailing info on where to send your signed pledges.

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Welcome To Our New & Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Chuck Bachstein, Dorothy Viola Berry, Alicia Dana, Robert & Danielle Neetz, Joan & Nile Harter, Kathryn Hood, Clara Loesch, Lelia Matson, Terry Purcell and Norma Washburn. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on one of our excellent field trips, which will resume next September.

Good Things Happen To Good People

And sometimes they happen out of the blue, when we least expect them. In the last issue of the Pelican I ran a short piece about member, Robert Wilson, and his passion for digiscoping. This is the use of a spotting scope, an adapter (though that's not always necessary) and a small digital camera to photograph objects at a distance. It's a practice that has revolutionized bird and wildlife photography, especially in the hands of someone who was an expert to begin with.

Robert was recently contacted by Kowa America, manufacturers of some of the finest optics in the world. They had seen his work and asked him to represent them at four large birding festivals, beginning with "[The Biggest Week In American Birding](#)." Held in Magee Marsh and Black Swamp, in northwest Ohio, this annual event is warbler heaven as the birds stage for their flight across Lake Erie. Robert and Tobey will be there, hobnobbing with America's birding elite and showing them how to capture great images of the birds. Two of Robert's recent images are below.



Anhinga chicks begging for food from Mom



Digiscoping isn't just for larger members of the animal kingdom. Here's a female four spotted pennant dragonfly. Congratulations Robert! You're in for an interesting year.

David Hartgrove

Chipping Sparrow

A chipping sparrow. A what? A chipping what? I never heard a bird's name like that, how it stuck in my mind. Always chipping - there in my mind - randomly appearing throughout my lifetime to remind me of this tiny sparrow with a chipping name.

This light breasted bird, cloaked sparrow-like in black and brown markings, has held its position in my mind since the first day I spotted it. There they were one a day when I was chasing birds in a familiar grassy field that I used as a required habitat for the purpose of attaining the Bird Study merit badge from the Boy Scouts of America. They were seemingly huddled in some open patches of the field anxiously pecking away at invisible seeds. I had never seen such tiny birds feeding on the ground at such a rapid pace - poking, poking always active, always moving, hopping to a new spot, continuously poking, poking, always poking, feeding.

Checking my recently purchased Petersen Field Guide, I discovered I was looking at a small flock of Chipping Sparrows. I was elated, I made a bird identification. I was star struck. It was the year 1948 and I was beginning the year to study birds for my merit badge.

What was to become of this bird study and would my fascination with the Chipping sparrow stay focused during the coming years? It is now the year 2015 and I don't have a bird study merit badge to achieve anymore, but those Chipping sparrow are still with me in my Florida backyard. I am elated. After all these years, I am still star struck.

During a lifetime of change, I found them from Maine to Connecticut to Virginia out to Colorado and California and now to Florida where they visit my humble feeding station every winter. Long before daybreak, they are the first at my feeder, disappear when it gets light, show up for moments throughout the day and appear at the end of day staying until dusk, still feeding, poking and moving. I like to watch them change positions dropping from feeder to the ground and back again, always busy, searching and moving.

A strong, black eye-line, a white supercilium and a grayish breast and rump are diagnostic features that distinguish breeding Chipping Sparrows from similar sparrow species. The female breeding specie is slightly more subtle in appearance. The non-breeding species are even more subtle in appearance sporting a more brown cap and a pink bill. The juvenile wears soft dark breast stripes.

Ranging from Alaska to Mexico, some of the Caribbean Islands and from east to the west coasts, the Chipping Sparrow is wide spread and relatively tame. Their song is a sweet one note trill.

Take some time to watch this tiny, discreet sparrow and its highly charged feeding behavior. They are not easy to spot, because their brown, black, and gray colors blend nicely with the open grounds and fields that they like to find their seed oriented nutrition. I am glad the Chipping Sparrow has stayed with me all these years. It a real neat bird.

Ray Scory

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Viewing A Virginia Rail

Mark Vance is a photographer whose work has appeared in these pages before. Rails are notoriously difficult to see, let alone photograph. Here's a [link](#) to a short video Mark shot at the Celery Fields, a refuge developed by Sarasota Audubon. In the background, listen for the sounds of a calling Limpkin.



A Chipping Sparrow in winter plumage



A Chipping Sparrow in breeding plumage

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Slightly Used Binoculars

If you're in the market for a backup pair of binoculars or some to keep in your car, these might be just what you're looking for. Kathy Winter has a pair of AMC 7x35 wide angle binoculars she'd like to sell for just 35.00. They're in like new condition and come with the original case. Call her at 386-615-9198.

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A Real Citizen Science Opportunity

The [Florida Breeding Bird Atlas II](#) is entering its fourth year and we need your help. Do you like birding in your neighborhood, in a local park or in areas you're not familiar with but you can read a map? Then you can make a considerable contribution to the data base of bird knowledge and have fun too. It's easy, we can teach you what you need to know in a morning and you'll be doing real citizen science. If you're interested contact me at 386-788-2630 or by e-mail: birdman9@earthlink.net. You'll be glad you did.

David Hartgrove

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

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

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

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

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