

The Pelican

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

Volume 61-No.2 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
February, 2016



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

A number of our members recently returned from a wonderful field trip to Circle B Bar Reserve near Winter Haven. This 1,267 acre reserve was a cattle ranch until the year 2000 when the property was purchased by Polk County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Since then restoration of the marsh and uplands has been ongoing, creating habitat and providing new food sources for thousands of resident and migrating birds and other wildlife. Polk County's Nature Discovery Center is on the property and provided us with great local information and shelter from morning rains. The sky cleared and we enjoyed a wonderful tram ride throughout the property. We then took a walk through the marshes and along Lake Hancock. The next morning we were provided access into a water restoration area on the opposite side of Lake Hancock. The birding was great! We saw American Bittern, Green-winged Teal, American Avocets, Savannah Sparrows and many more. The highlight (for me at least) were the hundreds of American White Pelicans that we saw. One flock flew right over our heads and we could see just how big these marvelous birds are. Special thanks to our treasurer, Betty Butcher, who made all the arrangements for the outing.

I encourage you to check our field trip offerings for the remainder of the season. Our chapter is so fortunate to have talented members who volunteer to organize and lead these trips.

The second annual [Birds of a Feather Fest](#) will take place in Palm Coast on February 5-7. Three days of field trips, classes and workshops will be offered. Family activities on Saturday, the 6th, include Beginning Birding Walks in Linear Park and Gina Holt's presentation on raptors. Our own David Hartgrove will be leading trips to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and to Viera Wetlands. There are additional trips to Payne's Prairie, Matanzas Inlet for shorebirds and others. Photography classes and field trips are also offered as well as workshops on what to do with your photos after you've processed them. No registration fee is required.

Jim O'Shaughnessy

Audubon Adventures Needs Your Help

Yes, that means we need your money. Supplying Volusia County schools classrooms with [Audubon Adventures](#) is a major HRA project. The cost to supply one classroom with this exceptional educational material is \$45.00. Please donate what you can to this special project. We are currently serving forty five teachers in sixteen schools. Make your generous check payable to HRA and designate it's for Audubon Adventures. And Thank You!

Chapter Education Co-Chair, Marion Monaghan

Calendar & Events

Monday, February 15th, Regular meeting, David Baker, PhD., retired educator and Southeast Volusia Audubon Society member will give a presentation entitled "Birding Ireland." Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

Field Trips

Wednesday, February 3rd, Gull Watch Join David Hartgrove for an afternoon of larid delights. Larid is the family name for gulls and we'll see plenty, as many as 100,000 on the beach. Meet at Frank Rendon Park, 2705 S. Atlantic Ave., Daytona Beach Shores, at 4:00 pm. Questions, call David at 386-235-1249.

Friday, February 5th, Orlando Wetlands Join Bob North for a trip to this water treatment facility where in the past we've seen Crested Caracara, Vermillion Flycatcher, Limpkin and others. Meet at 7:30 am in the Target parking lot on Dunlawton Ave. just east of I-95 in Port Orange. Plan on about a 2 mile walk on level ground. Bring lunch. Questions, call Bob at 352-302-3510.

Wednesday, February 17th, Merritt Island NWR Join Peggy Yokubonus for our last trip of the season to this outstanding birding location. Spoonbills, avocets, ducks and shorebirds galore grace this refuge in winter months. Meet at 7:30 am in the Target parking lot on Dunlawton Ave. just east of I-95 in Port Orange. Bring lunch. Questions, call Peggy at 386-316-4085.

Friday, February 26th, Apopka Wildlife Drive Join Peggy Yokubonus for a trip that's mostly driving and may reach a species count of over 75 species. Meet in the International Square Mall just east of I-95 on Int'l Speedway Blvd., behind the Krystal Restaurant at 7:30 am. Bring lunch. Questions, call Peggy at 386-316-4085.

Reminder, Fort DeSoto in April

Wed.-Fri., 4/13-15 Fort DeSoto This is just a heads up. It's been several years since we've done this. We're having another overnight trip to this incredible birding location. We have a block of rooms reserved at the [La Quinta](#) with a double room rate of 70.18 per night. Call 727-527-8421, ext.6 to make your reservation for the nights of April 13th & 14th and state that you're with Halifax River Audubon. We'll carpool over to St Petersburg and meet at the big flag in Fort DeSoto Park on the afternoon of Wednesday, April 13th. You won't want to miss this one. It can be about as good as birding in Florida gets.

Field Trips With Others

Saturday, February 13th, Apopka Wildlife Drive Join our friends from Southeast Volusia Audubon Society for a trip to this reknowned birding destination. Meet at 7:30 am in the Florida Shores Plaza parking lot in Edgewater, (at the corner of US 1 and Indian River Blvd), south of the new Dunkin Donuts building. Bring a picnic lunch. Questions, call Gail Domroski, 386-428-0447.

At MOAS thru February 28, 2016

The Museum of Arts & Sciences owns 63 original prints and a total of 103 artifacts of John James Audubon. Seventeen prints from the permanent collection can be seen on display at the Museum until February 28, 2016. I enjoyed a scheduled lecture and collection viewing by Zach Zacharias, senior curator of education. The prints are located in the hallway of the north wing. John Audubon was a self-taught artist and scientist who single-handedly lifted bird portraits to a status of fine art. The result of his work is found in the book The Birds of America. Zach said that there are two originals, one in America and one in Russia. I was given a book by my family titled John James Audubon The Watercolors for the Birds of America. I enjoy looking at and reading through it often.

Of the seventeen bird portraits currently on display, the ones in action pose are the most appealing. The Northern Mockingbirds at nest being raided by a Diamondback Rattlesnake has an error in it. Maybe you have already guessed the problem. Next, the Great White Heron with a fish in its bill is stunning. This bird is a color morph of the Great Blue Heron. Audubon found this bird at what is known as Great White Heron NWR, established in 1938. Another startling action portrait is of the Virginia Partridge or Northern Bobwhite. The birds are being scattered by a hawk descending from above, talons open.

Continuing along the wall of action pose portraits, you will see the Eider Duck pair being disturbed by a second male that wants to invade their peaceful habitat and take the female for himself.

If you go, pick up a copy of the MOAS Winter 2016 magazine. An article titled "John James Audubon's Travels through Florida" is full of information about this great American frontier ornithologist.

Marion Monaghan

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SEA WATCHES AT TOM RENICK COUNTY PARK, ORMOND-BY-THE-SEA

From January 1st, 2016 I have started a long term project to record the birds and the numbers involved that pass this park. All species even the humble House Sparrow that can be seen to the rear are included. My name is Harry Robinson and I live in DeLand. In England my specialty was sea watching but here I have "worked" inland for the last 18 years so now I have gone back to my roots.

There is a spreadsheet that is updated monthly and it will hopefully be available on the Halifax River Audubon web site. There will also be a monthly newsletter detailing the more interesting sightings. Both the newsletter and the spreadsheet can be "ordered" from me Harry Robinson at sirharrydeland@gmail.com.

You are welcome to join me at the park on Friday, Saturday or Sunday mornings (sunrise to noon or later). I may also be there on Wednesdays. Unlike say a field trip to Merritt Island where you can share a spotting scope, that does not work with sea watching. The birds are in view for such a short time that sharing a scope is not a viable possibility. If you do not have a scope you will still see many of the more interesting species but perhaps not all. My hope is that the number of sea watchers in Volusia County will grow.

Harry Robinson (386-943-8342)

With our state legislature in session the possibilities for all sorts of chicanery and double dealing are too vast to contemplate. It's started already of course. Hydraulic fracturing, commonly known as "fracking" has been used in our country's push to increase oil and natural gas supplies. All across the country the results have been disastrous for thousands. Permanently contaminated ground water supplies and ruined landscapes are just two consequences of this destructive method of drilling. Twenty-seven of the state's sixty-seven counties have passed bans on fracking. Their citizens approached county administrators with results of research that convinced local officials that the practice was too damaging to our state's fragile ecosystem. Riding in to rescue the oil companies are Rep. Ray Rodrigues, (R) from Estero and Senator Garrett Richter, (R) from Naples. Among their constituents is the Barron Collier Companies. They want to drill fracking wells in the Naples area. They and various other oil companies have donated over 440,000.00 to major Republican legislators since the last election. Garrett's bill, SB 318, is racing through committees in the Senate. Rodrigues' bill, HB 191 already passed the House. Both prohibit local governments from interfering with fracking operations in their jurisdictions. While they do call for a study of possible negative effects from fracking, it appears this is nothing more than feel good legislation to calm the public's outrage while the oil companies get exactly what they want. Regardless of the damage they'll do to our water, tourism industry and quality of life. Yet further evidence that we have the best Legislature money can buy. I believe our last hope of stopping this madness is an appeal to Governor Scott. Call him at 850-488-7146 and leave a message requesting the he veto any bill that authorizes fracking in our state.

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While doing the Ponce Inlet Christmas Bird Count I found a Red Knot with a lime green leg flag, number 647. I reported the band to the band re-sighting [website](#) and got back a report that the bird was banded on 4/21/15 in South Carolina by Billy Dukes, of the South Carolina Dept. of Natural Resources. The bird is believed to be 3 years old. Making an annual round trip migration of roughly 28,000 miles between its Arctic breeding grounds and Tierra Del Fuego, in southern Chile, this bird and all Red Knots face a tremendous challenge. Keep an eye out if you're at the beach. Sometimes these bird will allow you to approach close enough to read these leg flags without a scope. Not all of the flags are lime green. The flag's color indicates where the bird was banded. Prior to 2003 birds banded in the US got dark green flags. A blue flag shows the bird was banded in Brazil; orange is for Argentina and red is for Chile. Over the years I've seen both red and orange flags. I haven't seen one from Brazil yet.

* * *

The 19th Great Backyard Bird Count is just 2 weeks away and you can make a contribution to this important citizen science project. Here's a link to the [GBBC](#) website. It's full of information and links on how to get started, tips for identifying birds and much more. A cooperative effort by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Audubon and Bird Studies Canada, the count offers people who may not be able to get out and about as often as they'd like a chance to make a valuable contribution to the bird knowledge database. And it's a lot of fun.

Harry Robinson, whose first column in the Pelican is to the left, is one of the most experienced birders in Florida. His self published "Bird Migration - A Florida Study" runs nearly 400 pages and documents 5 years of data he collected while working for the St Johns River Water Management District at Lake Apopka. No one knows that place and its bird life like Harry. Welcome aboard Harry! We're glad to have you.

David Hartgrove

Welcome To Our New & Returning Members

We offer a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Beth Bartholomew, Deborah Benoit, Elaine Carlini-Davis, Carolyn Goodrich, Shelly Green, Beverly Greist, Henry Guy, Reid Hughes, Charlie Latta, Frederick Lloyd, Joyce Parks, Kristen Richards, Lauren Slade, Elizabeth Smith, Jeanette Stewart, James Sweeney, Alyce Switzer, Judy Travis, Nicole Triantafello, Helen Tucci, Wilma Wagoner and Martha Wirkutis. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on one of our excellent field trips.

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

Dunlawton Bridge Field Trip, Port Orange, FL

Fog clung to the surface of a rippling Halifax River. The rain came, sometimes in wind driven sheets, other times in a soft, light drizzle. All this cloaked in a dark overcast sky. Then a more brisk wind pushed aside the menacing clouds to reveal azure blue strips of an emerging clear sky. The sun appeared bright and fresh, sparsely surrounded by puffy white clouds. All perfect ingredients for a wonderful 2.5 hours birding at the Dunlawton Bridge with eleven excited Halifax River Audubon friends.

I have birded the bridge for the past 15 years, leading trips, participating in Christmas Bird Counts, The Big Sit, other surveys, and by myself. Each time in its own way the bridge has gifted me with a wealth of pleasure and surprises. I like to tell people, "...any time of the day, any day in the week, any week in the month, any month of the year and under any weather conditions. I can count at least 25 species if not more in 1.5 hours of birding at the bridge.

I submitted this challenge to the eleven birders during our Halifax River Audubon field trip to the bridge on Sunday, December 16th. They accepted the challenge in good-natured gusto and by the 1.5 hours limit we had identified 31 different species of birds. Thankfully, also, my Dunlawton Bridge bird species pronouncement held true for another trip to the bridge. I salute the skill of the participating birders. My pronouncement stands unblemished.

Some notable bird species that graced our avian table this day were four American White Pelicans, one each Palm and Yellow-rumped warblers, black-bellied Plovers, a dancing Reddish Egret, Caspian and Royal Terns, Tree Swallows and Red-breasted Mergansers gracefully looping up and down the river in synchronized fashion.

Continued in the next column.



American White Pelicans, gulls, etc. photo by Ray Scory

Shortly after the field trip terminated, I lazed around hoping to see some late arrivals coming to the river and mud flats. It was not to be. However, holding to the nature of most field trips, the unexpected happened. A brilliant sun setting to the west created a monster rainbow out over a fog laden ocean. A perfect backdrop for this phenomenal display of Nature. A flawless rainbow arching in a dramatic half circle with each point seemingly anchored to the beach. Breathtaking in the sheer impact of saturated color. Awesome.



Rainbow, looking northeast from the bridge, photo by Ray Scory.

Closing out the field trip spectacular, my son, John, and I watched hundreds of White Ibis glide into Rookery Island just south of the Dunlawton Bridge. A calming dusk gradually changed into a politely mysterious night. I opened the door to my pickup, climbed in and drove home.

Ray Scory

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That's Not Any House Sparrow I've Ever Seen!



Pin-tailed Whydah, photo by Paul Rebmann

This male Pin-tailed Whydah, (*Vidua macroura*), in non breeding plumage, showed up in Ponce Inlet recently while our local Native Plant Society chapter was having a plant walk. Popular cage birds, they have been seen in the area before and a breeding population exists in southern California. Like Brown-headed Cowbirds, they're nest parasites. Laying their eggs in the nests of other birds and flying off to have the host bird raise their young. Native to Africa, they are not established in Florida... yet.

David Hartgrove

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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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