

The Pelican

Volume 70- Number 8, Newsletter of Halifax
River Audubon August, 2024

For wildlife & people since 1923



The President's Column

Community

Two publications from the American Birding Association arrived in my mailbox this month. The first was *North American Birds: A Journal of Ornithological Record*. A close shot of an American Flamingo graced the cover and inside the magazine was a detailed account of the phenomena that captivated the birding community since Hurricane Idalia blew through the States. Flamingos were all over the place! They are still here! Will they remain? Great little article.

The second magazine was the bi-monthly *Birding* issue. Instead of the usual gorgeous bird image, the cover featured a collage of 100 individuals interviewed by Noah Strycker, who describes himself as "Bird Nerd, author, photographer, artist, polar guide, Birding Associate Editor." This image stopped me in my tracks.

The birder side of me kicked in - how many of those faces could I identify? Many - quickly I knew 20 right off the bat. When I opened the magazine, I found a key to the image and discovered familiar names that I matched to the faces. More....

More what? Who were these people? Several are dear friends, others are brilliant mentors, some have been valued teachers and instructors, others have led adventures and guided tours that remain as some of my my most cherished memories. They have challenged me mentally and physically. I have walked boardwalks or chatted over lunch while sharing local bird information and experiences in the field. I have sat in classrooms as they challenged me to broaden my understanding of the natural world around me. Their books fill my shelves. I play Wingspan.

Noah writes a quick editorial letter in the issue describing what will follow in the magazine. On that page there is a picture of Noah with one of his, dare I say, heroes: Paul Hess. I assisted Paul Hess, retired editor at the ABA, one of my heroes, for years in the publication of our local bird club magazine in Pittsburgh. The picture was taken in a small farm restaurant on a miserable day in Martin, Ohio by another friend of mine. I was at that same table eating some delicious pie but savoring the conversation. What a wonderful moment that was in my birding career.

The next word that popped into my head was: Community. This is a community defined by its love of birds. From hard-core listers to homemakers, teenagers to nonagenarians, interns to

retirees, ornithologists to artists, conservationists to authors: this is my tribe. The collective face of this group is becoming more diverse and internationally widespread. Women are represented and appreciated. Sensible hats are worn.

My community is not limited to this specific list of 100 people. There are so many more people that should be interviewed in the weeks, months, years ahead. There are those of us, the everyday birders, native gardeners, field trip leaders, volunteers, advocates, who may never be singled out for our accomplishments, but without us the community might collapse. What I have always liked about this neighborhood is the we are all appreciated for our contributions.

You are part of this wonderful "tribe". I have met many of you on bird walks, field trips and Audubon events. You have welcomed me at bird clubs and Audubon Chapters all over the US. You have guided me when you volunteered during my travels and enthusiastically commended me for my efforts when I returned the favor. You might only be an acquaintance, but you will always be a friend.

Can't wait until we get together in the Fall!

Joan Tague

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Calendar & Events

It's August, the last month of our annual summer hiatus. Next month we'll be back to having field trips and monthly meetings. There are still things to do though.

Friday, August 2nd Gopher Tortoises- If you have kids or grandkids, are you're looking for a fun, free activity for them? The Merritt Island Wildlife Association presents Gopher Tortoise Education Day at the Sandler Education Center at Merritt Island NWR, 9:00 am to 11:00 am. It's located on SR3 between the Haulover Canal Bridge and SR 406. The Florida Wildlife Hospital will be on hand with ambassador animals to delight kids of all ages. They need donated items. Click this link to see the list and bring what you can.

Audubon Assembly (November 7th - 10th) is coming and this year it's right here in Daytona Beach. We, along with our sister chapters, Southeast Volusia Audubon Society and West Volusia Audubon Society, will be the host chapters. Click this link to register. There's a lot to do and you can help out. Watch this space and our website for updates on special activities.

Conservation Notes

Yesterday, as I write this, Audubon's Eagle Watch program had its end of season get together via Zoom. The data has been compiled from over 1400 nests around the state. And these are just the ones we know about. Pretty good numbers for a bird that 60 years ago showed just 460 nests in the entire country. That's perhaps the best example that I know of of the efficacy of the Endangered Species Act. Because of it, DDT was banned in the United States; benefitting not only Bald Eagles but all of the rest of the predators in the aquatic food chain. Like Ospreys, Brown Pelicans and others.

Enacted by Congress, the ESA was introduced in Congress by Rep. John Dingell (D-MI) and Senator Harrison Williams, (D-NJ). It passed unanimously in the Senate and 355 to 4 in the House. President Richard Nixon signed it into law on December 28th, 1973. Are you able, in your wildest dreams, to imagine this happening today? Our Congress and Senate are so roiled by divisive politics that nothing with this much common sense would have a prayer of passage. We get what we vote for.



This is what the new Orange Audubon Nature Center will look like upon its completion late next year. This will be located at the entrance to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. They're going to need help, especially with funding. Here's a [link](#) to their donations page.

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From the Friends of Canaveral National Seashore we learn:

As of July 1st it's illegal to release balloons in our state. HB 321 was passed by the Legislature making the intentional release of balloons a misdemeanor. Scientists estimate that 33 billion pounds of plastic wash into the ocean yearly. That equates to about two garbage trucks worth of plastic entering the ocean every minute. Is it any wonder that birds are dying in record numbers after having ingested floating plastic particles?

Canaveral National Seashore is 24 miles long. The northern half is located in Volusia County and is called the Apollo section. The southern 12 miles are in Brevard County and are referred to as Playa Linda. Sea turtle nesting is monitored on both ends of the seashore. So far this year there have been 3481 nests recorded: 3229 Loggerhead nests, 225 Green nests, 26 Leatherback nests and one Kemp's Ridley, the rarest of all sea turtle species. And through the Florida Shorebird Alliance Wilson's Plover nests are monitored too. So far, and their nesting season is about over, 54 Wilson's Plover nests have been recorded. It's been a good year down there.

David Hartgrove

Native Plant Walk, Shop, & Learn Event

Saturday August 24th, 2024
Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center
601 Division Ave. Ormond Beach




Event Schedule

- 8:30AM Native Plant Walk on EDC Grounds
- 9AM-Noon Native Plant Sale
- 10AM Be Floridian Now Program in the EDC Classroom







Port Orange photographer, Ted Johnson, was honored recently by having BIRDS, BIRDS, BIRDS, a private Facebook page, select his photo of Brown Pelicans for their cover page.



Brown Pelicans at the Port Orange Bridge

Photo by Ted Johnson

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Bob Kellogg was out looking for subjects to photograph at Memorial Park, in Port Orange. He found these two very distinguished looking Wood Storks chilling out on the railing of the fishing dock. There are several theories as to why they developed their pink feet.

Once again, another in our continuing series, *Everyday Birding*, by Ray Scory.

A Circus Came to Town

The circus came to town today. A show of extreme vitality and purpose. The main attraction - four performers of top-notch showmanship, energy and entertainment. Thrilling to watch. The world class performers - a Black Vulture, a Red-tailed Hawk, a Northern Mockingbird and two Marsh Rabbits, which gave a contrasting performance from the others. They came to our yard without an announcement. Jane and I were enjoying a peaceful luncheon sitting next to our bay window overlooking our quiet backyard, and then - a shadowy blur streaked passed the window whizzing to a height out of sight. Totally unexpected.

I grabbed my camera, cautiously moved outside and painstakingly followed the trunk of our pine tree to its top. There, among a tangle of branches, perched a large black bird. I was able to get off a few photos before another large bird entered the tree and they both flew off in a united curving sweep upward toward soft, white, billowy cumulus clouds framed by a deep blue coastal sky. There they joined two other large black birds gracefully circling at 5000 feet high. I later identified all four circling birds as Black Vultures by the white patch on the tip of each wing. My photos, also, revealed a very short tail. Thus confirming my identification. The Turkey Vulture has a much longer tail and lacks the white wing tips. I had just witnessed a heavenly display of grace and harmony befitting the talents of any living creature on Earth.

As I was about to enter my house the noise of rapid wing beats startled me, forcing me to look up. The noise came from one squawking and very aggressive Northern Mockingbird attacking a very stoic Red-tailed Hawk. The hawk flew to the edge of our roof, landed, and settled onto the roof as the mockingbird continued its relentless attack - dive bombing, flying around the hawk, squawking relentlessly, pounding into its back, acting maniacally belligerent. The hawk did not budge, did not attempt to ward off the attack - just did not fight back. Eventually, as if bored, he lifted from the roof and flew off, seemingly unperturbed, as the mocking bird continued its attack. Unbelievable.

Throughout all this excitement, the two Marsh Rabbits continued to chomp on the roots of our St. Augustine grass as they have for the past five years. Totally in their own little world, enjoying their grassy meal, yet always alert to dangers from anywhere, but seemingly oblivious to the show above. Fifteen minutes of excitement, a lifetime to remember.

Quite a birding event as the show travels on to the beat of Nature's calling

Ray Scory



On my rooftop, a Northern Mockingbird mounts relentless attacks on a bored Red-tailed Hawk. On and on it goes - screeching, bashing maniacal flights around the hawk. The hawk does not respond. Eventually it flies off the roof seemingly unruffled.

Photo by Ray Scory

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Welcome to Our New and Renewing Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and renewing members: David Baker, Lilli Bassham, R. Beauton, Lorna Beck, Rob Bird, Mary Anne Bishop, Susan Blank, Joyce Cassidy, Laura Devlin, Julie Dugan, Donna Elms, Richard Fasse, Patrick Forestell, Barbara Gehlbach, Judith Grillo, Nancy Heins, Jeannie Heyman, Lauren & Greg Huot, Julie G. Johnson, Catherine & Robert Kellogg, Marsha Klamcke, Elena LeClaire, Kathryn Linden, Patricia Matthews, Linda McQuaig, Sharon Mock, Tom Moran, Suze Peace, Elza Phillips, Virginia Phillips, Lynn Prine, Carol Roberts, Joan Tague, Joan Wackowski, Kevin Wall, Marion Whelton and Holly Zwart-Duryea. We look forward to seeing you when our meetings and field trips resume in September.

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Juvenile Florida Scrub-Jay *Photo by Jim Rogers*

Once again, an article from our plant expert, Leslie Nixon.

Your Lawn Can Be Bird-Friendly

If you don't have a lawn - good for you! Ignore the column today.

If you do have one, you should know that lawns are typically wildlife wastelands; they supply no food nor any kind of suitable habitat for animals. A perfect lawn can also harm animals because if they are not poisoned by chemicals, they are mauled by the mower. However, if you reduce your turfgrass maintenance and refrain from keeping up with the Joneses, you can return your lawn to ecological sanity. Here's how:

First, eliminate insecticides. Most insecticides are non-selective, meaning they kill any bug that comes into contact with them, including bees, ladybeetles, and caterpillars. Biologists often state that only 1% of bugs are truly pests. Let bugs live. They feed birds.

Second, eliminate herbicides. Let non-invasive weeds live. Let them flower. They feed pollinators. Pollinators feed birds.

Third, mow less. Studies have shown that mowing every two weeks, instead of weekly, can increase the presence of bees and butterflies and reduce insect pests. If this is too radical for you (or your HOA), experiment with conformity in your front yard while being a rebel with a cause in your side and back yards, freeing them from the mower for a couple of weeks at a time.

Fourth, increase diversity. Banning herbicides helps by allowing weeds to survive, but you can also add so-called weeds to your lawn by digging up small patches of grass and replacing them with bird-friendly, mower-friendly wildflowers. Two natives easy to add are sunshine mimosa (*Mimosa strigillosa*) and frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*). Both are creeping groundcovers that will spread and flower in the grass. They don't mind being mowed or walked on. Sunshine mimosa is the pink powder puff plant visible on road medians and it is a favorite of bees. Frogfruit, aka fog fruit or matchstick plant, may already be growing in your lawn. Its small flowers resemble matchsticks and attract pollinators, while its leaves feed caterpillars of the common buckeye, phaon crescent, and white peacock butterflies. Alternatively, both of these groundcovers can be used by themselves to replace a portion of your turfgrass.

When you also avoid fertilization and reduce the frequency of irrigation, you will have what is known as a Freedom Lawn - a lawn free of polluting chemicals and wasteful inputs, a lawn that is willing to rejoin the ecosystem. Reduce maintenance and give your wallet a break to bring life back to your lawn.

NOTE: The Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society is having a plant sale at the OB Environmental Discovery Center on Saturday, August 24, from 9 am to noon.

Leslie Nixon



A young gopher tortoise in a "lawn" of frogfruit and sunshine mimosa.

Photo by Amy Spies

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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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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.