

The Pelican

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For wildlife & people since 1923



The President's Column

Wow...as I write this I can hardly fathom that it was only 10 days ago when the Florida Department of Environmental Protection announced a plan called "The Great Outdoors Initiative". "The initiative will work to expand public access, increase outdoor activities and provide new lodging options across Florida's state parks — reinforcing the state's dedication to conservation, the outdoor recreation economy and a high quality of life for Floridians," the department said in a news release.

"Quality of Life" in this proposal was defined as adding golf courses, large lodges, pickleball courts and more to several of "our" state parks. The response from the public was overwhelming.

I am not going to recount all that has transpired since that announcement - meetings scheduled and cancelled, large public protests organized, etc. All of that news is available online. I want to review what I learned so far from this still unresolved issue. 1. The passion and resolve of our Florida community is astounding. The response to the gentrification of the state parks that we love was swift and powerful. It was bipartisan. It was inspiring. 2. When things go viral, they go real viral. Reliable sources sometimes overstate issues and results. I found that going to the original sources to review statements was necessary. Case in point - many claims were made that officials were against the proposal, when they really were only commenting on the process of rushing through opportunities for public comment. 3. One line in the mountain of press releases and emails stood out to me - why don't we legislate this threat away? This isn't the first attempt to "develop" the parks. Why do we have to do this every 5 or 10 years? Why do people think it is okay to suggest this? Why do they get heard?

I get missives periodically from Florida Audubon and National Audubon. I subscribe to a variety of climate and environmental newsletters. Very often I am asked to act. They ask that I contact a government official or my representatives on a variety of issues that are meaningful to me. Like anyone else, late at night, I might be too tired to summon the passion and resolve to scribble a few lines or dial in to a comment line. But it is so important to remind everyone that we are part of a bigger force that cares about these things.

An estimated 400 people lined up along A-1A in St Augustine on Sunday in oppressive heat with signs and silly hats and

outfits to register and publicize their support for a state park system that offers a natural experience for the visitors. I wish I had been there. For inspiration I added a great picture of the gathering to the photos pinned on my congested office bulletin board.

I resolve to keep marching for birds, the environment and the planet. I resolve to pay attention and respond to issues as presented. I will look for opportunities to pro-actively support legislation.

I hope you will too. I suggest that you subscribe to one or several of [Florida Audubon's e-newsletters](#) if you don't already. Stay committed. Act. Keep it coming!

Joan Tague

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Calendar & Events

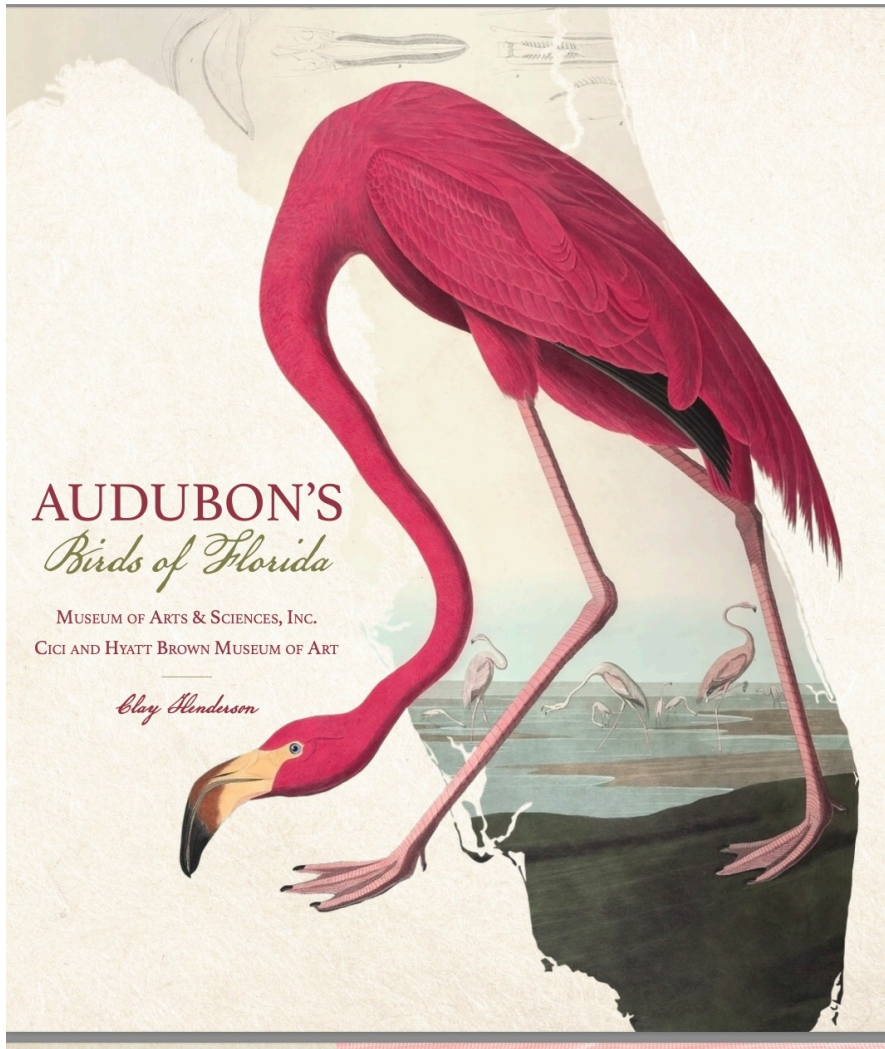
The board will be discussing field trips at our meeting on Sept. 2nd. Check the website for our soon to be updated field trips. In the meantime, check out other events below and on the next page.

Saturday, September 21st, Coastal Cleanup- Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail is a sponsor of this international event. Meet up at the High Bridge Park boat ramp at 8:00 am to participate in this event. [Register here](#). Bring water, sunscreen, gloves and those handy grabbers if you have them.

Saturday, October 19th, MIWA Annual Meeting and Dinner- MIWA is the support group for Merritt Island NWR. The meeting and dinner will be held at Field Manor, 750 Field Manor Dr, Merritt Island, FL 32953. [Tickets](#) are 40.00 per person and include buffet-style dinner, coffee/tea service, and dessert. Doors open at 3:30pm and there will be a cash bar. Silent auction item viewing starts at 4pm, and dinner will be served at 4:30pm. This is one of our chapter's most important partners. We need to support them.

Saturday, September 21st, Audubon Birds of Florida- The Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art opens an exhibit of paintings done by John James Audubon while he was in Florida in 1831 and 1832. The exhibit runs until March 2nd, 2015. See more information on this on the next page.

Audubon Assembly is coming. Look for more information on the following pages.



To the left are two images. The top one is the cover of the book written by Clay Henderson that accompanies the exhibit that opens at the Cici & Hyatt Brown Museum of Art on Saturday, September 21st. The book is a well written examination of Audubon's methods and his adventures while in our state way back in 1831 and 1832. It also contains updated identification and nomenclature of the birds included in it. For instance, one bird shown in the original is identified as a Green Shank. The bird is actually a Greater Yellowlegs. The error is attributable to the engravers back in London. There apparently was some confusion as to what Audubon called the bird. The London engravers, not being familiar with American birds, settled on a name they were familiar with and that looked similar.

Below it is an invitation to a fund raising event to be held at the Museum on Saturday, October 5th. It will be sponsored by the Marjorie Kennan Rawlings Society.

Our chapter has been deeply involved in the organization of this exhibit and we hope you'll all come to see it at some point. Special events have been planned around attending the exhibit by the Merritt Island Wildlife Association and many other organizations. Don't miss this opportunity to see these beautiful works of art while you can.

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Audubon Assembly Is Coming Soon

Audubon Assembly, the Audubon Florida annual meeting, will be held here in Daytona Beach this year. Registration is now open for the event, which will run from November 7th through the 9th at the Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront. There will be field trips, learning sessions and more.



Dr. Paul Gray, seen here in a photo by Sidney Walsh², will be a keynote speaker on the history of Audubon in Florida. You won't want miss this exciting event.

Conservation Notes

By now you must have heard of the idiotic plan announced by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to ruin 9 of our beloved state parks with new “enhancements.” The original plan would have destroyed just over 1,000 acres of Jonathan Dickinson State Park in Martin County by adding 3 golf courses. Anastasia State Park, in St Augustine would get a 350 room resort hotel and pickleball courts. Other parks in the panhandle would also get a resort hotel, pickleball courts, disc golf courses, etc. The avalanche of complaints began immediately and grew so loud, so fast that the company behind the golf courses withdrew their proposal last week.

FDEP, with barely a week’s notice, had scheduled listening sessions near all nine locations. They were scheduled for just one hour with no question and answer session for state officials. Just before we go to press the governor’s office announced that the plan, “will go back to the drawing board.” This whole idea carries the stench of the worst kind of cronyism. Our combined voices made them see the light. However, the Governor says they’ll revisit the plan next year. We’ll be watching.

Maybe the deception they employed back in June gave them confidence they could slip the much bigger travesty mentioned above by us now. In June the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund voted to declare 324 acres of Withlacoochee State Forest in Hernando County surplus and no longer needed. They then agreed to swap this public land for 861 acres of timber lands in Levy County. Why would they do this? So they could give the forest land to private developers to expand their adjacent golf course. There was no public notice of this meeting nor of the sleazy deal to be approved there. Fortunately there’s one last hurdle for this plan. It has to be approved by the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC), a 10 member board that we hope will quash this plan quickly. Again, stay tuned. We’ve written them too.

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Finally we have the U S Fish & Wildlife Service proposing to shoot up to 400,000 Barred Owls over the next 30 years in order to protect another owl species. The Northern Spotted Owl is an endangered species whose only nesting habitat is old growth forest in the Pacific Northwest. This habitat itself is in danger from logging. Back in the 1980’s the presence of the Northern Spotted Owl meant that old growth forest was now Critical Habitat. So no more logging there. In the meantime Barred Owls were naturally expanding their range westward into Northern Spotted Owl country. They began out competing them for nesting and feeding, since they’re slightly larger. Under the Endangered Species Act the USF&WS was bound to take protective measures. However, this isn’t logging or mining doing the damage. This is natural selection doing what it’s supposed to do. This is a hard question with no easy answers. Old growth forests are at stake, in addition to the owls.

David Hartgrove

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 the program’s inception. Donations from members fund this program. 45.00 dollars will cover the cost for one classroom. Any amount will be greatly appreciated. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Please specify on your check memo that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you!



You Really Should Buy A Duck Stamp

The Northern Pintail on this year’s Duck Stamp is a gorgeous bird in real life. We see lots of them at Merritt island every year. Ninety-eight cents of every dollar spent on Duck Stamps goes to preserve and maintain our national wildlife refuges. As birders we use the refuge system often when we go on field trips. Buying a Duck Stamp grants you access to every national wildlife refuge in the system. The website says that they’re available at post offices but I’ve never found one there yet. They are available at the Merritt Island visitor center or you can order them online. A word on that, it looks to be a labor intensive process. Here’s the [link](#).

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

Flights in Animated Suspension

Jane called loud and excited, "Ray, come here quick. Look out the window. "Hurry." It was happening again. Another first time, eye-popping Nature's spectacle in our backyard. A swirling cloud of winged insects (termite alates) swarming out of the ground to form a new colony, were being chased by dragonflies, Tree Swallows, and Yellow-rumped Warblers. All flying like hummingbirds in contained and frenzied flight. It reminded me of an aerial dog fight in an old World War II B&W movie.

I rushed out into the backyard. I had to be a part of this phenomena. I had to feel the energy. Insects were shooting out from a few holes in the ground, like water gushing from a fire hose. I stood in the middle of this chaotic whirlwind feeling like the giant ape "King Kong" on the Empire State building surrounded by deadly forces. The action was so fast that I could only ID an individual in a split second of concentration - barely seeing a single diagnostic characteristic.

The speed was incredible. The moment was incredible. I stood quiet in the center of the turmoil. How could I observe if I took part in the frenzy?

I saw Yellow-rumped Warblers whizzing by so fast that they could be mistaken for Tree Swallows - wings swept back in blinding reality. And dragonflies playing high speed helicopters flying at supersonic speeds. I observed (a word much too slow for the action going about me) one dragonfly of yellow to amber-brown body with clear wings sped by me at waist level. My snap ID was the ocean traveling "Wandering Glider" dragonfly; in our backyard. Wow!

I felt like I was in another dimension. One I had never occupied before. While I was in the immense swirling action, I felt out of place. A solitary figure watching a science fiction reality. I felt strange standing alone in my backyard yet experiencing this other world reality. So different. No noise from this aerial display. Quiet. Not a sound did I hear. No road noise. No birds singing or wind whistling through the trees. No noise from the flying spinning mass. Just me standing there experiencing a singular moment in time.

From the multitude of behaviors most noticeable that morning was the overwhelming ability of the dragonfly to snag tiny insects in flight. The dragonflies were much more agile and quicker than their companion bird species. A team effort focused on near invisible prey. Insect prey of incredibly tiny size and supersonic speed. A display of force and slick evasion.

The next morning I went back to the spot of the drama on our lawn. It appears that a buried tree stump knocked down by a hurricane had rotted and was the home of the developing insects, until they worked themselves up through the ground at the time Jane looked out the window.

I am so glad Jane drew me to the window to witness an

astonishing phenomena of Nature. Quite a showcase of wonderment. In our backyard - never to be repeated again.

WOW! I'm exhausted.

Ray Scory



Wandering Glider - Preparing for takeoff. Sheer beauty and alerted energy on display - well worth the photographic effort.

Photo by Ray Scory

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Thought For the Month

In these times when prominent people in politics, social media, etc. seem hell bent on destroying civil discourse in this country it's refreshing to look back at the words of those who have come before us and left behind little gems like this.

"This is the true joy in life, being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one. Being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it what I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I got hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

George Bernard Shaw

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

Partridge Pea

Partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*) is a wonderful native wildflower, delightful to look at and generous to wildlife. Humans and pollinators alike cherish its striking yellow flowers that bloom all summer and into fall. Caterpillars of six butterfly species feast on its leaves. In the autumn, birds and small mammals fight over its large seed pods. No wildlife friendly yard should be without several.

Partridge Pea is also wonderfully carefree to grow. Water your new plant for a couple of weeks, then set it free. All it needs to flourish is a minimum of 3-4 hours of sun per day and dry, well-drained soil. It will mature quickly to 2-3' tall by 2' wide and produce copious flowers and seeds. Right now, in September, you may see them still flowering around our natural areas, even on the back of sand dunes.

As an annual plant, partridge pea moves on to the other world in the winter. But have no fear - as a native plant it will set its seed and disperse them before it passes, leading the way for the next generation to appear in the spring. The lifecycle of partridge P is a good example of one of the benefits of native annuals over those purchased from a big box nursery. The natives will propagate themselves in your landscape, whereas the non-native annuals usually do not, forcing you to return to the chain store each year to buy more.

The reseeding of native annuals is usually a good thing, but some are overly generous with their wealth, spreading it in more places than you might like. Partridge P is one of those generous plants, but its little wayward seedlings are easy to snatch up and toss in the compost bin. We native plant fans rarely mind exuberant reseederers.

Leslie Nixon



Partridge Pea Photo by Marjorie Shropshire, FNPS



Red-eyed Vireo

Photo by Peter May

Red-eyed Vireo is one of the most common birds in our nation's forests. It can also be very difficult to find. Feeding at the tops of tall trees, its repetitive songs can be heard as it calls from deep in the vegetation. Patience and luck rewards the careful observer.

Editor

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