

The Pelican

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For wildlife & people since 1923



The President's Column

Howdy, Partner - revisited

Remember the evaluation we received in elementary school: "Works/plays well with others"? Five words that very simply summarized a large and important box of life and social skills. Cooperation, good listening habits, enthusiasm, creativity, motivation, inspiration, altruism, generosity, humility, strong communication ability, empathy...those are just a few of the qualities that jump to my mind when thinking of classroom and playground heroes. The best groups that I was associated with exemplified these qualities - many clusters of friends and co-workers that had shared purposes and goals. During my life I enjoyed wonderful esprit de corps while pursuing scout merit badges, building a music repertoire, meeting sales goals and managing complex projects and finally to pursuing birds both in the field and intellectually.

During the last year we have turned to several partners, both new and wonderfully reliable, to achieve some of our goals here at Halifax River Audubon. I have enjoyed making new friendships, creating new bonds and seeking new opportunities to educate and inform folks. I want to list a few of them quickly, and then talk about some new relationships we want to explore going forward.

The most prominent partnerships in the past year have been with the Following:

The [Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society](#). We table at each others events and we are planning a Native Plant Workshop in March that will focus on actually implementing a garden.

The [Museum of Arts and Sciences](#). The wonderful exhibit of Audubon prints and the our participation programming coming in January and February. Please check the [Museum schedule](#).

The [Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center](#). This will continue to be the home for our Great Backyard Bird Count in February and spring and fall morning walks through the park. Watch for additional programming, including birding workshops and more.

Tomoka State Park- We have had successful Owl Prowls - check our calendar for the next prowl and birding workshops at this site. We are welcome to continue offering bird-centric programming here. We have only begun to explore the trails.

Continued on the next page

Calendar & Events

Happy New Year Everyone!

Friday, January 3rd, Merritt Island NWR- Join David Hartgrove for the first of 2 trips to this winter birding Mecca. We will meet at 7:00 am at Target in Port Orange, 1771 Dunlawton Avenue, behind Panera Bread. Bring lunch. For those who wish to meet us down there we'll stop at Parrish Park on the east side of the Max Brewer Bridge at 8:00 am. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.

Saturday, January 4th, Merritt Island NWR- Join David Hartgrove for this, our second trip to this birding hot spot. We will meet at 7:00 am at Target in Port Orange, 1771 Dunlawton Avenue, behind Panera Bread. Bring lunch. For those who wish to meet us down there we'll stop at Parrish Park on the east side of the Max Brewer Bridge at 8:00 am. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.

The trip will be a leaders choice and may include Blackpoint Wildlife Drive and other locations. We will go where the birds lead us. Be prepared for a longer walk or two if we decide to explore areas not open to automobiles. Wear comfortable shoes and pack all of the essentials - snacks, lunch, hat, bug spray. If you wish to carpool, make sure to meet us in Port Orange.

Friday, January 10th- Audubon's Birds of Florida/ MOAS Presentation and Book Signing with Clay Henderson. From 5:00 to 7:00 pm, come to the Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art for a special evening for art and nature enthusiasts alike, featuring an exhibit talk and guided tour with Clay Henderson, President Emeritus of the Florida Audubon Society. Clay's companion book for this special exhibit is an excellent resource. Here's a link to the [MOAS webpage](#). It's free for members.

Saturday, January 11th, Tomoka State Park Owl Prowl- This is a ticketed event raising funds for both Halifax River Audubon and Friends of Tomoka Basin State Parks Tickets: \$20.00 Member discount \$5.00. Enter Promo Code HRATSP when you've signed into EventBrite. Here's a link to our [webpage](#) for the event. We hope to see you there.

Who else is in our “schoolyard”? Our sister chapters offer terrific programming and complementary field trips. If you have not been on a field trip lately, you have missed a chance to meet Audubon members from other chapters. We share MeetUp resources with these chapters so they are easy to find if you follow our schedule on [MeetUp](#). [Southeast Volusia Audubon](#) and the [West Volusia Audubon Society](#).

If you are not aware of this recent piece of news, there is official staffing now at Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge. This refuge falls under the overall management of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. The [Merritt Island Wildlife Association](#), the support group for MINWR, has extended programming to Lake Woodruff. We plan on offering workshops and more at the now available classroom facility.

Finally - check out the wonderful offering at the [Lyonia Environmental Center](#). It’s a bit of a ride for many of us, but the exhibits and programs are exceptional and then you go outside and greet Scrub Jays. They have programs that may surprise you, like night sky programs. I strongly recommend the casual guided walks through the preserve.

Joan Tague

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Conservation Notes

Over the past decade we’ve heard several times that this election was the most important in our lifetime. For those of us who care about the environment that statement rings true. The incoming administration has signaled, in no uncertain terms, that they see environmental regulations as an anathema, to be wiped off the books as soon as possible. Having a stacked Supreme Court that has also signaled their willingness to wreck environmental regulations means we’re in for some turbulent years. One of their first targets will be the National Environmental Policy Act. Signed into law on New Year’s Day, 1970, by President Richard Nixon it requires federal agencies to consider the environmental, social, and economic impacts of their proposed actions before making decisions.

The other landmark environmental policy initiatives, like the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and especially the Endangered Species Act will be eliminated if the clowns being nominated to head these programs are allowed to do so. Our voices, in the form of letters to Congress and others, will be raised in opposition. I hope we’re successful.

It’s not all doom and gloom on the environmental front. On December 17, the Florida Cabinet approved the purchase of land and conservation easements to protect 85,778 acres of Florida’s most important wildlife habitats and rural ranch lands for \$318,386,613. These conservation lands cover 134 square miles, or 2.5 times the size of the City of Miami, and constitute the largest increment of conservation land and easement purchases ever proposed on a single Cabinet agenda. A big win for our state’s environment. *David Hartgrove*

AUDUBON'S
Birds of Florida
Book Signing
with Clay Henderson

January 10, 2025
5:00-7:00pm
at the Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art

Learn more about the book from the author himself as well as stories from his experiences birding. Enjoy the opportunity to have a signed copy of his book.

Book purchases are separate. Event is free for MOAS members and \$15.00 for non-members.

Purchase admission in advance online at [MOAS.org](#) or by calling the Museum at 386.2550285.

352 S. Nova Road, Daytona Beach, FL 32114
386.255.0285 | [www.moas.org](#)

MOAS
MUSEUM OF ARTS & SCIENCES

This is an event you don't want to miss.



January 22nd through the 26th is the [Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival](#). This is the premier birding festival in Florida and an excellent opportunity to learn about birds and to enjoy the company of other birders. Every manufacturer of birding optics will be represented and this is a great time to upgrade your binoculars and other optics.

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More At the Museum Of Arts and Sciences

Saturday, January 18th, at 1:00 pm, Film maker, Todd McGrain, will give a presentation on his book and film, “Lost Birds”. An examination of the extinction of 5 species. Here’s a link to all the [information](#).

On Saturday, February 1st, at 1:00 pm, David Hartgrove will present a program about “Birding The Dry Tortugas”. Here’s a link to all the [information](#).

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

New Year Gateway

Here we are again. At the Gateway to a New Year. At a new, fresh beginning. New hopes, new aspirations and dreams; new goals and adventures. We have been here before. We know what to expect. So we push forward, anyways - content in knowing something wonderful is going to happen, because we are out with the birds and they never fail to impress us.

Like the time, as an experienced middle aged birdwatcher, I was quietly walking a trail through a wood peninsular jutting out into a Connecticut coastal wetland. My mind closed to all human thoughts except those created by the winds that stir over Long Island Sound and the sea birds that beckon to their lead.

Stepping out from the quiet of the forested path, I flushed high into the air a surprised American Bittern. I, too, eye-popping surprised, sprang up as high as the Bittern. When we both returned to the ground, we shook ourselves back to reality. The bittern hastily flew off. I took a deep breath and continued to exam my surroundings more diligently.

Another time as a young birdwatcher of 12 years, I approached a brilliant Scarlet Tanager resting on a green, prickly hedge leading to my family home. I cautiously moved closer to the tanager. It did not move - looked exhausted. It was Summer migration time. I reached out, touched the bird: mouth dropping awe; Sparks - my Spark Bird. I ran into my house, grabbed my camera, flew back to the exhausted bird. Made my first bird photograph. WOW! What a moment.

Two defining moments. So many years apart, but each as memorable as the other. One through the eyes of a young boy; the other through the eyes of a more experienced middle-age birdwatcher.

Late this afternoon, with this column still fresh in my mind, but yet not finished, I maneuvered to our screened back porch for a satisfying recharge. And there they were, on the other side of the pond - after a three year absence. The Odd Couple, The Snowy Egret and the Tricolored Heron. Together. Buddies. Racing around the edge of the pond: herky jerky, stop and go action, heads pounding into the water, splashing - feeding, energetic, alive, beautiful. "Where were you guys the past three years? Glad to have you back. We missed you."

This last water bird experience completed the trinity of my most memorable bird watching experiences spread over a lifetime.

These experiences are what keep the fires burning.

Ray Scory



Scarlett Tanager. My very first photo I ever made of a bird. Photographed in the year 1948 at the front yard of my family home in Waterbury, CT with an Argus C3 35mm Camera, and for me- Bird Watching officially began.



The Odd Couple. This Snowy Egret and Tricolored Heron circled our pond everyday for two years and then disappeared three years ago never to be seen here again by either me or Jane until this month. They are back again and heartily welcomed.

Photos by Ray Scory

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From The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

Here's a link to a video of [Torrent Ducks](#). Once you watch you'll see why these ducks have that name. They seem to thrive in water that appears extremely dangerous.

Then there's this story about [Great Gray Owls](#) and how they're perfectly adapted for hunting in deep snow. The Cornell Lab is an excellent resource and if you're not a member, you should be. They developed eBird, the [Great Backyard Bird Count](#), [Project Feeder Watch](#) and the [Merlin Bird Identification App](#). They fund numerous graduate students as they research a wide variety of topics related to birds and their environment. Here's the [link](#).

Once again, a word from our resident plant expert, Leslie Nixon.

More Dead Plants for Birds

I hope it's not too late. You didn't rake up the dead leaves and cut off your spent flower stalks already, did you? If you postpone cleaning up your yard until late winter you can help feed your avian friends. By leaving these dead plant parts in place through the cold months you provide winter dens for insects so when spring comes they can emerge in a big way to achieve (arguably) their highest calling: being food for baby birds.

"Leave the Leaves" ([overwintering habitat](#)) is an initiative created by the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation that encourages homeowners to leave their fallen deciduous leaves alone. It is primarily aimed at northerners, but we do have a few deciduous trees here in Central Florida, including live oaks that shed their leaves when the new buds sprout in early spring. Many species of invertebrates (from butterflies to spiders to worms) spend the winter in one of their life stages sequestered in the leaf litter, a warm and protected hiding place. Rather than rake (or worse, blow) the leaves and bag them up for the landfill, consider leaving them in place or relocating them to your islands where they can do their job nurturing future bird food. Plus, dead leaves are free mulch and free organic fertilizer.

The Xerces Society also asks homeowners to "Save the Stems" (see link above). Saving the senesced flower stalks obviously helps the many songbirds that need seeds for sustenance. A less obvious reason to save the stems is that many beneficial insects make their winter homes in hollow or pithy flower stems. These insects rely on dead plant parts to continue their lifecycles and produce the next generation of bird food. Come spring, cut the stalks at various heights and tuck the cut stems around the plant or in your brush pile. Don't throw the dead stems in your yard waste - insects will search them out even if they are on the ground, looking for their very own tiny home. Some attractive stem-nesting plants are goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*), bee balm (*Monarda punctata*), and dune sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*), all of which have been discussed previously in this space.

You now have permission to leave your dead plant parts hanging around through the winter. Leave the leaves and save the stems to ensure you have plenty of baby bird food come spring.

Leslie Nixon

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From The Quotable Birder

"The Parrot holds its food for prim consumption as daintily as any debutante, with a predilection for pot roast, hashed brown potatoes, duck skin, butter, hoisin sauce, sesame seed oil and human thumb."

Alexander Theroux, "I Sing The Parrot!"

Reader's Digest



Golden Rod seeds, prized by American Goldfinches



A Brown Thrasher digging for insects in mulch. Photos by Leslie Nixon.

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Loggerhead Shrike, found by Bob and Catherine Kellogg while scouting for the Ponce Inlet CBC Photo by Bob Kellogg

Christmas Bird Counts, 2024

I did 5 CBC's this year. In the order they were done: West Volusia, Zellwood/Mt. Dora, Flagler, Daytona Beach and Ponce Inlet. Each was a unique experience, though I've done each of them multiple times in the past.

West Volusia I did with Betty Butcher, a long time chapter member. We met at a gas station on the east side of DeLand and drove to Clark Bay Road. It's on the east side of the count circle and is mostly pine plantation for two thirds of its length. So you'd think we'd get Pine Warblers and Tufted Titmice. Not this year. We've had them every other time along this road. We did get Brown-headed Nuthatches. We ended the day with 47 species, missing regulars like Tufted Titmouse, Pine Warbler and Carolina Chickadee.

Zellwood/Mt. Dora I ended up doing by myself. Last year Karina Jimenez, an Audubon Florida staff member, did her first CBC with me, She even wrote a short piece about her experience that's on page 31 in the current issue of Audubon Magazine. This year her two little ones came down with the flu, and then she did too.

Flagler. This one I did with Paul Rebmann, Joerg Kessler, a birder from Wisconsin who's been with me before and Lisa Goodwin. Lisa is from Cape Cod and was doing her first CBC. We had a good day but missed several species we usually see at the Rainbow Ranch. Like birding the landfill, it's a place with its own ripe aroma.

Daytona Beach. My thanks to the stalwart team leaders, without whom this count would be impossible: Ken & Patsy Hunter, Joan Tague, Harry Robinson, Kim Ramos, Peggy Yokubonus, Ellen Tate and this year, Michael Brothers. Michael covered Tomoka State Park and found 13 Clapper rails, 7 Sora and a late in the season Cape May Warbler. Samantha Houser, a BCC graduate student in environmental studies with Dr. Cho, did her first CBC with our team. She had to leave after half the day but learned a lot.

Finally came the Ponce Inlet count. It's always last in the 3 counts done here in Volusia County. Thanks to a permit from Jennifer Winters, Protected Species Activity Manager for the County, we were able to once again drive the conservation zone on the beach. We found 300 Red Knots. These medium sized shorebirds travel from the Arctic Circle to Tierra Del Fuego and back every year. A round trip of about 28,000 miles. Twenty years ago their population numbers began a precipitous drop and there was a very robust banding program. The birds caught were fitted with small, plastic leg flags that each had unique number/letter codes allowing for identification of individuals. One, number 053, Paul Rebmann photographed in 2013 on the beach in Daytona Beach Shores. I found the same bird again in 2017 at Merritt Island NWR. We saw only one banded bird yesterday and its leg flag was so bleached out from the sun that it was impossible to read. CBC's are a great experience. Plan to join us next CBC season.

David Hartgrove



This Ash-throated Flycatcher has been hanging around Deland near Peter May's home. *Photo by Peter May*

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