

The Pelican

Volume 71- Number 2, Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon February, 2025

For wildlife & people since 1923



Calling All Halifax River Audubon Members

In place of the usual President's Message this month, I urge you to look over the programs that are listed in this newsletter for February and March. We need volunteers! We need participants! We need you!

Our annual Great Backyard Bird Count is February 15. The Museum of Arts and Sciences is celebrating the fabulous Audubon exhibit on February 22. On March 8 we are hosting a seminar, building on the "PlantsFor Birds" initiative - "Your Yard Matters".

So, read through the newsletter. The details for each event is listed below. Come join us as we host information tables, lead walks in Central Park, facilitate a seminar and more.

I want to hear from you! president@halifaxriveras.org

Joan Tague

Calendar & Events

With all of the events surrounding the Audubon exhibit at the Museum of Arts and Sciences, field trips will be shown on our website. Also check Meet Up for updates.

Halifax River Audubon(HRA) and The Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center(OBEDC) are teaming up to present a free, fun outdoor community event in Central Park - The Great Backyard Bird Count.

The Backyard Count is just that - people everywhere go outside and count the birds in their local yards and parks and report the results in the eBird database. A count will be conducted in Central Park.

In addition, we are taking this opportunity to celebrate birds with a bird party of sorts at the OBEDC. There will be games, challenges with prizes, information booths, viewing stations throughout the park, guided walks and more.

***We need volunteers for this event. We will have 2 tents/ areas depending on weather. We will have our information tent and an activities tent. Activities will include a fun project to create a bird friendly window, "Feather Quest" to learn about feathers, our egg and nest match and more. We will also have our "Bird Board" - a picture collection of the species that we see in the park that day. The information tent will sell Bird Window kits, T-shirts and coloring books along with vintage books and more. In the park, we will have observation stations at some of the prettiest and birdiest overlooks.**



Bird Bash at the Museum of Arts and Sciences

February 22nd, 2025 11:00 AM to 3:30 PM

Mark your calendars and migrate to the Museum of Arts & Sciences on Saturday, February 22 | 11:00AM - 3:30PM for a day of feathered fun and learning for bird enthusiasts of all levels! Meet local Volusia County Audubon Society chapters, and discover more through hands-on avian-themed activities. Don't miss the Bird Bash speaker program in the Root Hall Auditorium featuring guest speakers: Melissa Lammers | Board Member of Audubon Florida, and Joan Tague | President of Halifax River Audubon. Followed by a talk and book signing with author, illustrator, and American ornithologist, David Sibley.

11:00 - 12:00pm Melissa Lammers - "Plant It and They Will Come"

12:00 - 1:00pm Joan Tague - "There's This Thing About Birds..."

1:30pm - 2:30pm David Sibley - "What It's Like to Be a Bird"
(This talk is sponsored by Jill Simpkins)

2:30pm - 2:45pm Q&A

2:45pm - 3:30pm Book Signing

This event is free for members; \$10 for non-members plus the purchase of general Museum admission. Advanced registration recommended.

Register for Bird Bash: [Bird Bash Registration](#)

For general Museum admission, call 386-255-0285 or purchase [online here](#).

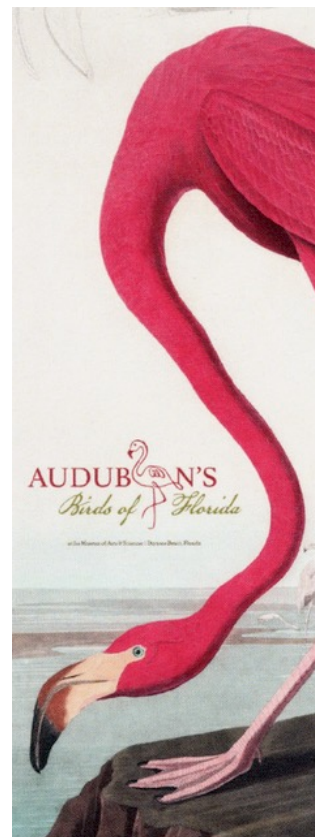
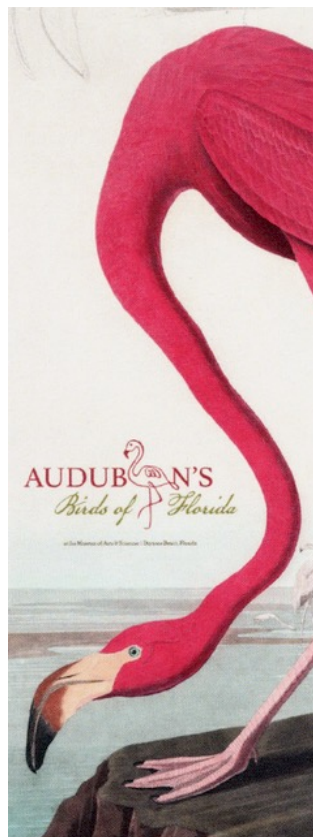
Note: Member discount applied at checkout.

Presentation Descriptions

David Sibley | Join us in the Root Family Auditorium at MOAS for a talk with author, David Sibley, on his book "What It's Like to Be a Bird." In this edition of the bestselling work written and illustrated by David Allen Sibley, readers will find a unique treasure trove of fascinating facts about birds, paired with more than 300 full-color illustrations—some life-size! This unique, large-format book is designed to appeal to both casual birdwatchers and dedicated enthusiasts. The extraordinary world of birds is brought to life on the page.

Author Bio: David Allen Sibley is the author and illustrator of the series of successful guides to nature that bear his name, including the New York Times bestseller *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. He has contributed art and articles to *Smithsonian*, *Science*, *The Wilson Journal of Ornithology*, *Birding*, *BirdWatching*, and *North American Birds*, and wrote an illustrated a syndicated column for *The New York Times*. He is the recipient of the Roger Tory Peterson Award for Lifetime Achievement from the American Birding Association and the Linnaean Society of New York's Eisenmann Medal. He lives in Deerfield, MA.

This event is made possible by the Simpsons Family Foundation.



Joan Tague | "There's This Thing About Birds..." - Everyone has a bird story. You don't have to be a serious "birder" to be intrigued by our feathered friends. We all watch them. They inevitably do something that captures our attention. They can be beautiful, subtle, poetic. They can be raucous, unexplainable, hilarious. We humans have spent a millennium trying to grasp the essence of birds. We continue to do that every day in big and small ways. In this presentation, Joan will share stories from neighbors, fellow birders, scientists, explorers and artists that touch on our relationship with these creatures. Each of these experiences may have posed a question, queued a sense of wonder, sparked inspiration, set the direction of a lifetime or just left the observer laughing. Let's go "birding"!

Melissa Lammers | "Plant It and They Will Come" - Birds need our help. Learn how you can support them right in your own backyard. Since 1970, we've lost almost 3 billion birds, almost 30%, in North America! The main cause is loss of habitat. In the case of habitat lost to development, we make things worse by how we landscape. We remove all the native vegetation that provided shelter and food for birds and other wildlife, and we replace it with grass and plants that do not contribute to the food chain. Fortunately, anyone with space for a garden can be part of the solution. Come learn how!

Location: Museum of Arts & Sciences 352 S. Nova Road
Daytona Beach FL 32114 .

Phone: 3862550285

Website: <https://www.moas.org>

Our North American songbirds are disappearing at an alarming rate - almost 3 billion birds in the last 50 years. Much of this decline is due to habitat loss. At Audubon, we feel a sense of urgency to do what we can to turn this around so we're hosting a first-ever workshop about why and how to replace habitat right in your own yard. Be sure to take advantage of this unique opportunity to learn from native-gardening-for-wildlife experts because *Your Yard Matters!*

Saturday March 8, 2025 - 10AM to 2PM
Anderson-Price Memorial Building,
42 North Beach Street, Ormond Beach, FL

Your Yard Matters

A How-To Workshop for Native Gardening & Wildlife

- **Why Plant Florida Natives - the urgent need for biodiversity** - Cynthia Bennington, PhD, Plant Ecology, Stetson University
- **From the Ground Up- Planning and Prepping Your Garden** - Dee Hackett, certified Florida Master Gardener, member of Florida Native Plant Society - Pawpaw Chapter and Halifax River Audubon
- **Setting the Table- Right Plant, Right Place** - Katie Tripp, PhD, owner Natural Beauty Native Florida Landscapes, LLC.
- **Maintaining Your Habitat** - Leslie Nixon, certified Florida Master Gardener, member of Florida Native Plant Society - Pawpaw Chapter and Halifax River Audubon.

A native garden tour and plant sale will follow.



Admission \$10.00 in advance
Breakfast, lunch and more provided with admission.
Event tickets available at EventBrite
<https://tinyurl.com/HRASeminar>



Additional funding and support provided by:



Conservation Notes

On January 11th, under cloudy skies and with 60 degrees feeling much cooler thanks to a strong northerly wind, around 100 people gathered under a tent in the yard of the Apollo Beach Headquarters at Canaveral National Seashore. They were there to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Seashore and to listen as the Mayor of New Smyrna Beach, Fred Cleveland, read an official proclamation. And to hear Clay Henderson give a rousing speech outlining the history of the Seashore while honoring its many sponsors and friends.

Doris "Doc" Leeper was a guiding force. Living at Eldora (now on the National Register of Historic Places) she had long experienced the beauty of the place and recorded it in her award winning art work. She prevailed on Congressmen, Bill Chappell (D) and Lou Frey (R), to sponsor a bill establishing the Spessard Holland National Seashore. Holland had been Senator and Governor of Florida and apparently the thinking was that the bill had a better chance of passing if it honored a former senator. Fortunately the sentiments changed and favored retaining the historic name, Canaveral. That name and Mosquito Lagoon/Inlet appear on some of the earliest maps of America. Cape Canaveral, translated as "Place of the Cane Bearers", was named by Spanish Cape explorer Francisco Gordillo after he was shot by an Ais arrow made of cane. Cape Canaveral has also been roughly translated as "Point of Reeds" or "Point of Canes".

Many people were instrumental in the establishment of the park, over a long time. Rupert Longstreet, founder of Halifax River Bird Club in 1923, was also President of the Florida Audubon Society in the 1920's and raised dimes from schoolchildren to purchase Turtle Mound. There was no state park system yet, so he gave the mound to the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, which owned Royal Palm Hammock in what became Everglades National Park.

Allan Cruickshank of the National Audubon Society put this area on the map as a premier birding destination. He convinced NASA to protect the buffer lands it didn't need for launch facilities as Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.

It almost didn't happen. Fearful that a national park adjacent to Kennedy Space Center would hamper future space efforts, both the Department of the Interior and the Department of Defense asked that the bill be vetoed. Their objections were outlined on the bill when it went to President Gerald Ford's desk for his signature. He struck through each of the objections and wrote "No" beside each. Then signed the bill on January 3rd, 1975. President Ford is the only president we've ever had who had once served as a national park ranger. He spent a college summer as a seasonal ranger in Yellowstone.

We are the beneficiaries of the years spent by folks like Doc Leeper, Rupert Longstreet, Allen Cruickshank and others to preserve what is now the longest stretch of undeveloped beach along Florida's Atlantic coastline. We thank them.

David Hartarove

Ray Scory

I received the following email in mid January: "Advancing age has kindly advised me to quiet down - to put aside activities that I have long cherished and with birding taking the biggest hit. My last monthly column, authored in the December 2024 issue, is my last column written under the banner, "Everyday Birding". I have enjoyed and cherished the opportunity given to me by the Board of the Halifax River Audubon and Editor, David Hartgrove so many years ago. I fade away with love in my heart, joy and adventure in my memory. and respect and admiration for the Halifax River Audubon and the birders who make it a tremendously rich and vital asset to Florida.

Thank you so very, very much."

Ray Scory

Regular readers of the Pelican certainly know his name. His beautiful prose has graced the pages of our newsletter since the November, 2001 issue. He wrote about doing the Big Sit at the Port Orange Bridge. Being held the second weekend in October, it coincided with Biketober Fest. Ray wrote, "I helped a heavily tattooed young lady locate nine species for her life list in about fifteen minutes. She was thrilled. Upon departing she said, I know I don't look like a birder, but I just love looking at them. I replied, Everyone looks like a birder."

Ten years later he again wrote about the Big Sit, this time with the late John Carr, during a major coastal storm. He has enthralled us with his eloquent descriptions of the sights he sees when out walking and from his back yard. On January 9th, Ray celebrated his 90th birthday. He's decided to cut back on some of his commitments, including writing a monthly column for the Pelican. We wish him a long and happy life.

David Hartgrove



Red Knot # X7J

Red Knot photo from one of Ray's articles for the Pelican from March, 2014.

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

Plant a Tree!

This year, Florida's Arbor Day was January 17, 2025. In case you missed it, don't despair - here in Central Florida you can plant a tree anytime of the year. That said, winter tends to be the best season for planting trees since the cool months allow time for the roots to take hold before warm weather stimulates the visible above ground growth.

Locally native trees, of course, are the best choice for the environment and for your avian friends. Flatwoods plum (*Prunus umbellata*) is a small native tree that can fit into almost any home landscape. Maturing quickly to about 20' tall and 12' wide, it produces a magnificent display of white flowers attractive to pollinators in the spring, followed by small juicy fruit prized by birds in the summer. It also hosts several caterpillars - more food for birds. This little plum tree prefers full or part-sun and tolerates moderate drought, but it does not like exposure to direct salt spray. It is deciduous and also somewhat thorny; the latter characteristic grants the tree the additional benefit of bird cover.

If you like your fruit tart, then by all means eat a flatwoods plum. If you don't like to pucker your mouth, turn some plums into a sweet jelly and enjoy it on your toast.

Chickasaw plum (*P. angustifolia*), a cousin of flatwoods plum, has sweeter tasting fruit. However, this tree is notorious for suckering - sending up many little shoots that can form a large thicket. A thicket has its advantages: it breaks the wind, prevents erosion, and forms excellent bird habitat. If you have room for such an munificent tree, choose the Chickasaw plum. For those of us with more contained yards, the flatwoods plum is ideal.

When choosing any tree to plant, younger trees (in 3-10 gallon pots) get established quicker and grow faster than older/larger ones. Place the tree in a spot where its the full size of its crown and the extent of its roots (at least 2 x the crown size) will not be inhibited. See this [UF document](#) for more information on planting trees.

Florida celebrates Arbor Day in January, but National Arbor Day occurs in April since most of the other states have to wait until spring for the ground to thaw - another reason to live in the Sunshine State! Make the most of it by planting a beautiful, bird-friendly native tree like flatwoods plum.

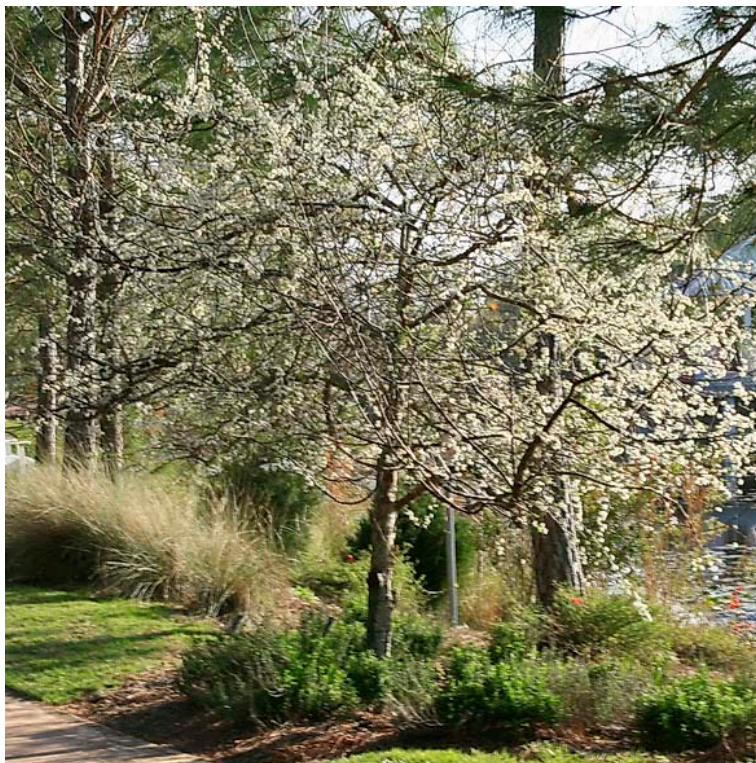
Leslie Nixon

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From The Quotable Birder

"He carried his childhood like a hurt warm bird held next to his middle-aged breast."

Herbert Gold, *The Age of Happy Problems*



Flatwoods plum (*Prunus umbellata*) Photo by Shirley Denton

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Bonaparte's Gulls at Memorial Park, Port Orange

Photo by Bob Kellogg

Bonaparte's Gulls are regular winter visitors to Florida. Named for Charles Lucien Bonaparte, a nephew of Napoleon. These are almost our smallest gull. Only the Little Gull is smaller and it's almost never seen in Florida. You can see the petite size of the bird's bill. Much smaller than on the far more common Laughing Gull. Bonaparte's Gulls feed very much like terns, in that they plunge dive onto small fish. They've also been observed engaging in kleptoparasitism, the stealing of food from other birds. Something Bald Eagles are known to do with Ospreys.

David Hartgrove

Space Coast Review

I had not thought about the Space Coast Birding Festival this year. I had a small medical issue and I wasn't sure how it would affect my schedule. I was so busy already. And then through a cascading pile of events and commitments, I was offered an "opportunity" to man an information booth at the festival for the Museum of Arts and Sciences. So for 4 days I worked the trade show floor. I was glad that I did.

First, I had the pleasure of working the booth with a great crew. Denise White, Ellen Tate, David Hartgrove and myself represented HRA. Joyce Cassidy, Margo Wenzel and Liz and Robert Meredith stepped up for Southeast Volusia Audubon. Orange Audubon board member Alan Shapiro helped too, adding a new dimension to this all purpose booth. He addressed the new nature center project for Lake Apopka and had the artwork to discuss it.

I was unable to attend a field trip. For the first two days that did not bother me. Low temperatures and gale force winds were not appealing. But the weather improved and the folks stopping at the booth after treks throughout Central Florida had a lot to report. I was able, however, to attend a couple of the keynotes and day sessions. Here are a couple of my observations:

Dr. Jerry Lorenz, Audubon Florida's Director of Research is about to retire after compiling a daunting list of projects and studies in Florida Bay. Then he lead a February 2024 Flamingo survey. That may have changed his life a bit - it certainly got him a lot of outside attention. In his talk, he reviewed the survey results and speculated on the future of Flamingos in North America. Take away - we are hopefully watching the Everglades flock this spring.

Kenn Kaufman's presentation centered around his new book, "The Birds That Audubon Missed". I bought the book last Fall and have read it twice. I had an opportunity to chat a bit with Kenn while he signed my book. Great presentation - read the book.

I went to an eBird presentation. Will Johnson is the eBird reviewer for Brevard, Volusia and Indian River County. This was eBird 2.0. He briefly touched on data entry and the services that most people use, like checklists and hot spot data. Then he took us into the "Science" heading. I was intrigued. I ran home to my computer to get my most pressing questions answered. Lesser Scaup spend only 42 days in the Indian River Lagoon. That group represents 14% of the population. Cool, huh? I have committed to be a better eBirder.

We talked to hundreds of people, made great contacts, connected with friends, old and new. I learned so much in those conversations. Right Whales, Eastern Screech Owls, photography tips for the image impaired (desperately needed), Audubon projects, the best chocolate. If I was taking a poll on the best bird seen by most of the participants - it was Painted Bunting, hands down. I am looking forward to next year.

Joan Tague



The Audubon booth Photo by Richard Fasse

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THE PELICAN

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PO Box 166
Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166

Email: editor@halifaxriveras.org

Web: <http://www.halifaxriveras.org>

Halifax River Audubon

forbirds@halifaxriveras.org

Meets monthly September through May

President: Joan Tague

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