



## The Village Birders

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September 2011

### An Unusual Experiment in Bird Behavior

In May of this year I participated in a pelagic trip that departed from Ponce Inlet on Florida's Atlantic Coast. The word "pelagic" refers to the open ocean and, in this context, to the birds that live in that habitat, coming onshore only to breed. This particular trip was a grueling search of the Gulf Stream, departing in the dark for a 17 hour trek that extended 100 miles offshore.

Twenty miles out, as the light grew brighter, I was impressed by the number of perching birds that were migrating over the ocean. Tired and looking for a place to land, they would circle at length before deciding that our boat was not a safe haven. Those that were identifiable were mostly warblers. I identified four warbler species: Blackpoll, American Redstart, Cape May and Wilson's.

Over the years Michael Brothers, the trip organizer, has wondered whether he could encourage this type of bird to land on the boat by bringing some greenery on board. When I saw him carrying a cheap plastic tree onto the boat and securing it to the upper deck I wondered if he had spent too much time under the tropical sun.

Guess what? Shortly after sunrise, and after circling for some time, a female Blackpoll Warbler landed in the faux ficus and stayed for ten minutes. She was clearly looking for something to eat, which of course wasn't to be had. We stopped the boat and photographed the bird at length. When we resumed our eastward course the compass in her little brain told her that we were no longer doing her a favor and she immediately flew off, heading west. A female Redstart also landed in the tree but stayed only 15 seconds.



Blackpoll Warbler in cloth-leaved tree

For me this episode was a lesson in "thinking outside the box" – always keeping oneself open to a new idea and willing to experiment to test the concept.

Paul Nistico

### Early Summer Birds on the Gaspé

Little Pine Siskin  
Very special and trusting  
Thanks for the visit  
Now, take your song, fly away  
Safely among tree and sky

Coniferous woodlands and thickets of birch and alder trees define much of the Gaspé here in northeastern Quebec, just the perfect neighborhood for a friendly little bird that goes by the handle of Pine Siskin. He is rather drab or plain next to his birdfeeder buddies such as Gold and Purple Finches that boast bright yellow and black contrasts and red velvet apparel respectively. The brightest color this brown-streaked bird projects is the concealed beauty of a yellow stripe under his wings and tail areas. Nevertheless, this little denizen with his chattering and buzz-like sounds makes the heart grow warm.

Yesterday as I approached a hanging tube feeder of Niger seed this feathered friend turned his head back and forth seemingly listening to my greeting. I moved so close I could almost touch him. Is his approachability because he really doesn't understand danger when dealing with mankind? Has he just not met enough folk to be more cautious? Nevertheless, how splendidly wonderful it is to have such a seemingly respectful and welcoming friend from the birding world in one's own yard.

Last year I reported to the *Gaspé Spec* a successful hatching and fledging of a nest full of baby bluebirds. That's right, bluebirds on the Gaspé. Well, a pair once again found its way to our home in Port Daniel West and as of the end of June four periwinkle eggs graced the nest. Also it is encouraging to know that several other nesting boxes are being used by several families of Tree Swallows and one of House Sparrows.

Kathleen and Heather Dow's barn is host to quick-flying Barn Swallows. The ocean cliff below Ken and Evelyn Assel's home is the site of breeding Bank Swallows and various gulls. Robins build their mud-smoothed abode in a front yard spruce tree. Numerous Ruby-throated Hummingbirds make spirited trips to sugar filled liquid feeders, returning to elusive thimble-sized nests.

At the historical home of Lois and Carl Hayes a nearby utility pole hole, made by a Northern Flicker, now serves to house American Kestrels. On the Port Daniel Point, Alice and Rod Hayes are happy when they hear the distinctive song of White-throated Sparrows

*Continued on next page*

## Gaspé *continued from first page*

calling "Oh Canada, Canada, Canada." Red-breasted Nuthatches are feeding and nesting nearby in wooded areas along with numerous warblers and other song birds. Alice had a scary encounter while walking with my wife Patty when a Ruffed Grouse, defending her little chicks, flew directly at her, knocking her to the soft cedar bog ground. Hey, we all know how protective mothers are in guarding their young.

In closing on a softer note, here at our summer maison, beautiful lilac bushes from Annie Duguay's original stock with their delectable aroma join the colors from bleeding-heart plants in welcoming the birds during these early summer days of hope and joy.

John A. Affleck

## The Passing of the Bird House

The Club has five or six opportunities each year to bring a speaker to the club meeting. Each speaker receives a stipend of \$50.00. In order to replace this money in the club coffers, and not raise dues, we pass the bluebird house at our monthly meeting. Sometimes the bird house contains less than \$50.00, sometimes more. If there is more the club president and the executive board will determine how those funds are used: the annual picnic, publication of Cheep Talk, or additional funds given to the speaker. In these days of high gas prices, it would be nice to reimburse our speakers who travel to us a few bucks for their gas tank.

So when the bird house passes you please help fill it.

## October Events

Meet at Wal-Mart on 466 at 7:00am on Friday, October 14 for the first walk of the season. Paul Nistico will lead us on the Bolen Bluff Trail at Paynes Prairie.

The first monthly meeting of the fall season will be Saturday, October 22, and will feature speaker Dr. Robert H. Stamps, Professor of Environmental Horticulture with the University of Florida. Bob was co-editor and co-author of "*Common Native Plants of Central Florida*" and he will speak on Landscaping Your Yard for Birds.

The Calendar of Events for October 2011 to January 2012 is included in this issue on page 3. Please save this calendar for future reference.

### Cheep Talk

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The Village Birders  
The Villages, FL  
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## Summer Birding Reports

**Barb Gay** and daughter **Beth Sharlow** enjoyed a fast paced birding trip to Alaska. The group spotted 160 species and Barb added 51 lifers to her list, including her target bird the Northern Horned Owl. Beth celebrated her 500<sup>th</sup> bird with the sighting of the Horned Puffin. The weather was warm and sunny (22 hours of it). They joined the 30% of visitors who actually get to see Mt. McKinley.

Late in May **Jim Dinsmore** decided to spend a little time watching for the Least Bittern on Lake Sumter. "I stationed myself along the multipurpose path just south of the county annex ..... In about 45 minutes I saw just over 20 species of birds including two Least Bittern, five Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, two Osprey (foraging unsuccessfully over the lake), a Black-necked Stilt, and three Sandhill Cranes. The bittern flushed from almost straight in front of me and briefly flew low over the marsh before dropping out of sight. The cranes were the most interesting. They were a family group with two adults and a young bird that was about 90% of the size of the adults. The adults were carefully



Possibly the same family taken earlier in the year by John Affleck

herding the young bird through the marsh and at first seemed reluctant to cross in front of me, even though they were easily 50-75 yards away. They disappeared to my left but a few minutes later I caught some motion on my left and found the three up along the fence ..... and moving toward me. I stood still and, to my amazement, the three passed just in front of me, not five feet away. Pretty neat, and a nice ending to a good morning."

While birding in Sumter County in July **Alice Horst** found a Bald Eagle nest on private property near Nichols Cemetery on CR 246. She reported it to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation and it was recorded as a new potential nest site. Alice is now the designated Bald Eagle nest watcher for the site.

**John Affleck** reports that "At my feeder we were treated to a rare visitor up here, a White-winged Dove. It stayed around for three days. A couple of the top birders in Gaspé paid visits and both groups saw the bird. The last time one was seen was ten years ago on Gaspé Coast."

**Lyn Comans** noted a feature article in the July 29 issue of USA TODAY which listed the best places in each state to experience nature. The best place named for Florida was Circle Bar B, a venue which many of us have visited and would enthusiastically endorse for that honor.

# THE VILLAGE BIRDERS

## Calendar of Events

October 2011 – January 2012

Meeting date, day, time and place for all trips and meetings are indicated in the left hand columns:

**B** - Belk's parking lot at the lower end, close to Burger King (our traditional meeting place)

**P** - Paradise Recreation Center

**WM** - Walmart parking lot on CR466, garden end, close to Perkins Restaurant

**SPECIAL EVENTS** (*members only*) are announced 30 days prior to the date of the event and reservations are accepted on a first-come basis. Check the website for any last minute changes: [www.villagebirders.org](http://www.villagebirders.org)

<u>Date/Day</u>	<u>Meeting Time - Place</u>	<u>Trip Location</u>	<u>Walk Leader</u>	<u>Walk/Drive &amp; Estimated Time</u>
<b>October</b>				
14 Friday	7:00 am – WM	Paynes Prairie/ Bolen Bluff Trail	Paul Nistico	W – Half Day+ (L)
22 Saturday	9:00 am - P	<b>REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING</b>		<b>2 Hours</b>
		<b>Dr. Robert H. Stamps - Landscaping Your Yard for Birds</b>		
28 Friday	7:30 am - B	Carney Island	Jim Dinsmore	W – 3 Hours
<b>November</b>				
3 Thursday	7:00 am - WM	Cedar Key	Barb Gay	W/D – All Day (L)
11 Friday	7:30 am - W	Emeralda Marsh/Wood Duck Dr.	Linda Felker	W – 3 Hours
17 Thursday	7:15 am - B	Ponce Inlet	Jim Dinsmore	W/D – All Day (L)
24 Thursday		<b>Happy Thanksgiving</b>		
26 Saturday	9:00 am – P	<b>REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING</b>		<b>2 Hours</b>
		<b>Carol McCorkie: Visit with a Bald Eagle</b>		
<b>December</b>				
1 Thursday	7:30 am - B	<b>Special Event/Ocklawaha Prairie</b>	Steve Norton	W/D – Half Day (L)
9 Friday	7:30 am - B	Seminole State Forest	Paul Nistico	W/D – Half Day (L)
16 Friday	TBA	Christmas Bird Count (Ocklawaha/Emeralda Marsh)		
21 Wednesday		<b>Happy Chanukah</b>		
25 Sunday		<b>Merry Christmas</b>		
<b>January</b>				
1 Sunday		<b>Happy New Year</b>		
3 Tuesday	TBA	SW Marion County Christmas Bird Count		
6 Friday	8:00 am - B	Bird the Villages	Linda Felker	W/D – 3 Hours
12 Thursday	6:00 am - B	Merritt Island N.W.R.	Barb Gay	D – All Day (PL)
21 Saturday	7:15 am – B	Zellwood Reclamation Area	Barb Gay	D – All Day (PL)
28 Saturday	9:00 am – P	<b>REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING</b>		<b>2 Hours</b>
		<b>Norm Lantz - Funny You Should Ask - Q &amp; A with Norm</b>		

**NOTES:** Optional stop for Picnic (PL) or Lunch (L) at a location on or near the walk

**PLEASE SAVE THIS CALENDAR FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**

## More Birding News

While visiting her son in South Miami in July **Alice Horst** took photos of Red-masked Parakeets in the back yard. They found a dead one that apparently had flown into his sliding glass door. She posted the photo on BRDBRAIN and received a request to forward the bird to the Archbold Biological Station in Highlands County, FL. There are no known specimens of Red-masked Parakeets nesting in Florida so tests will be done to positively identify the specimen.



In early June **Jim Dinsmore** stopped at the pond along Belvedere Blvd. opposite the Bonnybrook pool/mail station. "The water level is low with lots of exposed mud. Besides an assortment of wading birds, I saw several Killdeer including one half-grown young bird and an adult Black-necked Stilt ..... As I walked back to my car, I heard a bird singing repeatedly in the large live oak on the NW side of the pond across the road from the parking lot. I didn't recognize the song, vaguely like a House Finch but not quite right. I wondered if it might be an Orchard Oriole ..... but couldn't find the bird in the tree. After a few minutes a female Orchard Oriole carrying a food item flew into the NW side of the tree and disappeared into a clump of leaves. Eventually she flew away and, after I crossed the street and viewed from near the pond's shoreline, I could see the nest. .... Never did see the singing bird, almost certainly a male Orchard Oriole, ..... this is perhaps two miles north of the Lake Miona Rec Center where **Paul Nistico** found an Orchard Oriole nest a few years ago...."

A group from The Villages, which included **Al Rousch** and **Alice Horst**, drove 17 hours from The Villages to Magee Marsh/Crane Creek in northwest Ohio for The Biggest Week in American Birding. Alice wrote "We spent most of our time on the



**Bay-breasted Warbler**

boardwalk at Magee Marsh because that is where the trees are dripping with warblers in breeding plumage at eye level. NO warbler neck for us! Al and his friends would get to the boardwalk at 7:00 (am, that is) and when we showed up later he would inform us about all the species they had seen 'while we slept.' After getting a good warbler-fix in the morning we would either picnic or have lunch at a local diner. Then we would either go back to the boardwalk or go to Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, just west of Magee Marsh, which covers 5000 acres, has a beautiful visitors' center, and has trails on dikes and through wooded areas. In 2002 'Birders World' readers voted Ottawa Refuge as one of their 15 top spots to go birding.

"We 'girls' stayed in a cottage at Maumee Bay State Park which also had excellent birding possibilities. Our group count this year was 113 total species for the five days of birding. We had 28 species of warblers including Mourning and Connecticut seen by all of us, and the Kirtland's seen by Al and Marcy. Judy FINALLY saw her Canada that eluded her last year, and she saw him over and over."

**Cheep Talk**  
**310 San Marino Dr.**  
**The Villages FL 32159**

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**