

“The Voice of Conservation in Central Florida”



OASis

Orange Audubon Society
A Chapter of National and Florida Audubon Societies



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This Month's Program:

Thursday, January 15, 2015, 7:00 p.m.

Building Communities that Conserve Wetlands by Rebecca Means

Rebecca Means is a conservation biologist for the Coastal Plains Institute and co-founder of Remote Footprints, a nonprofit organization that uses experiential outdoor learning and scientific exploration to inspire individuals and families to appreciate biodiversity and remote areas.

Rebecca has worked to rebuild populations of the striped newt, a locally extinct salamander in the wetlands of the Apalachicola National Forest. Her program, Building Communities that



Volunteers learning about ephemeral wetlands and the striped newt. Photo: Rebecca Means

Conserve Wetlands, allows members of the local community to experience species restoration first hand. Citizens learn, not only about the newt and its ephemeral wetlands habitat, but about the gopher tortoise and red-cockaded woodpecker, importance of fire, and the longleaf pine forest.

We hope you will join us on January 15th at 7 p.m. as Rebecca shares photos, video, and stories about this exciting effort. See box at right for directions.

Susan Ledlow, Programs Co-Chair

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip, Saturday, January 17, 2015

The January Orange Audubon Society field trip will be to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, a 140,000-acre refuge known for its wintering water fowl and wading birds, including Roseate Sponbills.



Blue-winged Teal. Photo: Mary Keim

Although this is primarily a driving field trip along Black Point Wildlife Drive, we will walk about 1 mile. For more information about the property see: www.fws.gov/merrittisland.

Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot of Parrish Park on SR402 in Titusville. Bring lunch, drink and birding gear (spotting scopes are helpful) and \$5/carload refuge entrance fee. Dress with wind across the marsh in mind. No registration is required. Please join us. If you have questions about the trip, contact us at rsmhk@gmail.com.

Mary Keim and Randy Snyder,
Field Trip Committee

Orange Audubon Society programs are free and no reservations are necessary. Programs are the 3rd Thursday of each month (September–June) and all but June start at 7:00 p.m. in the Camellia Room at Harry P. Leu Gardens
1920 North Forest Ave., Orlando, FL 32803
For map and directions, visit:
www.leugardens.org/plan/directions/

Christmas Bird Counts Contribute to Citizen Science

The longest-running citizen science survey in the world is the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count, now in its 115th year. According to Wes Biggs, compiler for the Zellwood/Mt. Dora Christmas Bird Count, “Documenting bird populations from year to year really is the only way we can detect long-term trends. The weather on the day of the count varies from year to year, and the number and skill level of participants vary. But having this consistent long term data is a powerful conservation tool. Plus we have a lot of fun out there.” The Zellwood/Mt. Dora Christmas Bird Count, which covers the area north of Lake Apopka, has the highest number of species of any inland Christmas Bird Count in the country. The 2014 count found 161 species, according to Biggs. The only species new to the count was the Groove-billed Ani. This unusual Mexican and Central American relative of the cuckoo and roadrunner is normally seen in the U.S. only in pasturelands and open country of southern Texas but has been seen this winter in the Duda Farms area.

Dr. Frank Chapman, founder of *Bird-Lore*, which evolved into *Audubon* magazine, originated the Audubon Christmas Bird Count in 1900 as an alternative to the holiday “side hunt,” in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds. Each year, the Audubon Christmas Bird Count mobilizes over 70,000 volunteer bird counters in more than 2,400 locations across the Western Hemisphere. The Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) utilizes the power of volunteers to track the health of bird populations at a scale that professional scientists alone could never accomplish.

The first Central Florida CBC was the Orlando CBC, as reported by OAS Board members Mary Keim and Randy Snyder, who first participated in the 1970s and early 1980s. With that CBC now discontinued, the longest running is the Econlockhatchee CBC starting in 1982. In 1987 the Mt.Dora CBC began, with involvement of the Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society. The organizers moved that circle to Emerald Marsh in 1995, and the Zellwood/Mt. Dora area was split off as a separate count. In 1995 the Wekiva CBC also began.

Each individual count is performed in a count circle with a diameter of 15 miles. Typically 30 to 50 volunteers, including a compiler to coordinate the process, count in each circle. The volunteers break up into small parties and follow assigned routes, which change little from year to year, counting every bird they see. While the goal of these counts is tallying a representative sample of birds on the count day, the natural competitive spirit of birders drives them to do the most thorough job possible. The growing combined pool of contributed sightings helps researchers understand birds in a way that Chapman could never have conceived back in 1900.

This year, thanks in part to Orange Audubon Society’s (OAS) publicity here in the *OASis*, quite a few new participants joined the count. It was a great experience, reported OAS board members and new CBC participants Larry Martin and Danny Raleigh. The quarterly report, *American Birds*, and other information on the CBCs, including information in Spanish, is available online at <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>.

The purpose and dedication of Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is to promote public understanding of, and an interest in, wildlife and the environment that supports it. OAS’ education programs foster the recognition of the tangible and intangible values in the remaining natural areas of Florida and the world, and our responsibility for the conservation of the Earth’s natural ecosystems and the services that they provide for the health of the planet.

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The *OASis* Newsletter is published monthly from September through June and is sent to all members of the Orange Audubon Society.

Deborah Green, OAS President

OAS Co-sponsors 15th Annual Orlando Wetlands Festival

The 15th annual Orlando Wetlands Festival will be held on February 21, 2015 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Ft. Christmas Historical Park (1300 N. Ft. Christmas Rd.). While parking and vendors will be at Ft. Christmas Historical Park, tour buses and shuttles will take visitors to nearby Orlando Wetlands Park. The City of Orlando, Orange County Parks and Recreation and Orange Audubon Society (OAS) sponsor the event. OAS members lead nature and photography hikes as well as nature bus tours through Orlando Wetlands Park (OWP). OAS will also be selling nature-inspired merchandise including t-shirts, tote bags, signs and mugs.



American Alligator Photo: Mary Keim

OAS needs volunteers! To lead bird watching hikes, please contact Randy [rssmhk@gmail.com or (407) 851-5416]. For OAS' kids' art table, outreach table and/or to sell merchandise, please contact Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 644-0796. Thanks!

Randy Snyder, OAS-OWP Liaison

Get sharp for spring: Update your optics



Birders with roof prism binoculars. Photo: Joyce Stefancic

Allan Jahner provided an informative talk on binoculars at the December Orange Audubon Society program. Allan with his wife Janey run the Wild Birds Unlimited in Winter Springs. Allan began with the obvious "the more you spend, the better they are." In addition it is "crucial to get fog proof and waterproof binoculars."

The most common binoculars (bins) for birders are 8 x 42. The number 8 refers to the power, or how many times the image is enlarged (magnification); and 42 refers to the diameter of the objective lens that controls how much light is available for viewing. When you divide the second number by the first number, the larger the result, the more light that can pass



through. An 8 x 42 lets in the most light of the common configurations and is best for looking at fast-moving birds. If you have a steady hand, you may prefer a 10 x 42 for the greater magnification. Hunters, or those who enjoy birding in low light but seek greater magnification, may prefer a 10 x 50 with a larger objective lens "to get as much light as possible."

Roof prism binoculars are becoming increasingly popular, used by most of the birders in the above photo. These have the eyepiece and objective lenses positioned in a straight line. Birders appreciate the streamlined shape and durability of this arrangement. The traditional porro prism bins, shown to the right, are "bulky and hard to hold steady" and may feel quite heavy after a few hours of birding. They are less expensive than the newer model roof prisms, however, and could fit your budget better. Most good binoculars have a diopter feature that allows you to adjust the lenses for differences in your eyes. And they come with instructions on how to adjust the eyepieces. Many bins today also have close focus, should you want to look at butterflies! Allan recommends the twist-up eyecups rather than the fold-down style that easily becomes brittle in Florida's humidity.

New buyers should go to a store to try the binoculars rather than purchasing online, he said. I have purchased two pairs over the years from Wild Birds Unlimited, located at Red Bug Road and Tuskawilla Road, and found their advice to be extremely helpful. Other local companies selling optics that have been great partners to Orange Audubon Society are Colonial Photo & Hobby and Mosquito Creek Outdoors. Take the time, do your research, and find some binoculars to enhance your birding!

Linda Carpenter, Publicity Committee Member

January 4 and February 1, 2015 Birds of Prey Identification Classes

Bob Sanders is leading two more field trips to enhance a birder's ability to identify birds of prey using a holistic approach and further the appreciation of these fascinating raptors. Field trips are at the Lake Apopka Restoration Area on Sundays: January 4 and February 1, 2015. You can attend single or multiple days and no early registration is required. Cost each day is \$5 for Orange Audubon Society members and \$10 for non-members. Meet at the Lust Rd. gate (turn west onto Lust Rd. off CR437). Field trip is 7:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m. If you have questions, contact Bob at (407) 454-0542.

January 18, 2015 'Workday' at Genius Drive Nature Preserve

A 2-hour Workday is planned on Sunday, January 18, 9-11 a.m. at the Genius Drive Nature Preserve in Winter Park. Volunteers bring their favorite gardening gloves and tools to help with weeding and mulching to 'spruce up' the restored cedar grove near Lake Mizell. Please contact Teresa: (407) 644-0796 or mwilliams@cfl.rr.com if you can help. Further details provided when you sign up.



Lake Apopka Wildlife Festival & Birdapalooza, February 7, 2015

The Lake Apopka Wildlife Festival & Birdapalooza—celebrating Lake Apopka and its North Shore (a Globally Important Birding Area)—is only in its third year, but is becoming a major event. Interest in ecotourism around the North Shore is growing, and this festival is a chance to demonstrate that to local businesses and officials. The event is at Orange County's Magnolia Park on Saturday, February 7th from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is FREE.

There are first-come, first-served bus tours of the North Shore, in areas of the St. Johns River Water Management District lands normally closed to the public, and for-a-fee boat rides on Lake Apopka. There will be guided nature hikes along the lake, a tree giveaway, lots of nature-oriented information, music and other entertainment, several kids' activities, and merchandise and food sales. Check out the list of participating exhibitors at the website www.birdapalooza.com/.

As a co-sponsor of the event, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) contributes numerous volunteers rather than money; therefore, your chapter needs lots of us to help. Additionally, help is still needed with OAS' own nature-oriented t-shirt, tote bags, sign and mug sales and our outreach and conservation issues space; we'll even offer a kids' art/nature collage activity if we have enough volunteers. Please contact Loretta at LNS-oas@att.net or (407) 886-2925 or Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 644-0796. Don't hesitate; save the date, but please volunteer now. Thanks. Magnolia Park is located at 2929 S. Binion Road, Apopka, 32703.

Loretta Satterthwaite, OAS Birdapalooza

Audubon Academy is February 28, 2015 in Apopka: Learn How to Help OAS and the Environment

Have you been approached to serve your chapter (Orange Audubon Society – OAS) by joining a committee and/or joining our Board of Directors? Would you like to join a committee or the board? Do you hesitate to do so because you don't know what is expected or how to do what is expected? Audubon Academy, an Audubon leadership training program to help boost the confidence and knowledge of current or potential chapter leaders, is just around the corner. This year's Academy will be a one-day event on February 28th at the University of Florida's Mid-Florida Research & Education Center, 2725 Binion Rd. Apopka, FL 32703-8504 . This program is planned and presented by chapters for chapters and will include Audubon members from the Central Florida and other regions. Costs are kept low to encourage participation and OAS' board has budgeted funding to reimburse several members for registration. Please call (407) 886-2925 if you have questions.

Bob Stamps, Audubon Florida Chapters' Committee Chair and Academy Co-coordinator

27th Annual Chertok Photo Contest

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) announces its 2015 (27th Annual) Kit and Sidney Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest. The theme is Florida Native Nature. There are three separate competition categories: Youth—for photographers who are 17 years of age or younger by the May deadline; Novice—for new and less experienced photo hobbyists; and Advanced Amateur/Professional—for experienced photographers who have practiced and honed their skills over time. The deadline for entries is May 21, 2015 (postmarked by date).

The contest was designed to promote interest and concern for preserving the native fauna and flora of Florida and encourage nature photography and enjoyment and appreciation of the natural world. Eligible photos may not include humans or human artifacts, and to enhance your knowledge of Florida's native species, images may not include introduced plant or animal species—subject matter must be native to Florida.

Also, at your option the Chertok contest committee will pre-screen photos submitted by April 16, 2015 (postmarked by date) for a free DO OVER if any such entries are disqualified in the pre-screening. Complete contest details will appear in next month's *OASis*. Meantime, start taking your Florida native nature photos. Contact Teresa if you have questions: mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 644-0796.

Photo Tip from Jack Rogers



Flower Power. Photo: Jack Rogers

A good image is more than a sharp photo of a pretty flower, says award-winning bird and nature photographer Jack Rogers. This photo of the common fall wildflower Burrmarigold, also called Smooth Beggarticks (*Bidens laevis*)—a Florida native—is improved by having perfect light with no shadows. You can achieve this effect by putting the sun directly behind you so that light evenly illuminates the subject. The flower's off center position improves the composition and the dark green, out of focus background isolates it as the subject.

Orange Audubon Society again thanks Jack for leading a fund-raising photo workshop at Orlando Wetlands Park last November and sharing another photo tip to enhance your nature photography skills.

Teresa Williams, Chertok Photo Contest Committee Chair

California Condor Back from the Brink

Following my graduation from Wake Forest University in 2012, I was fortunate to find an internship with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to monitor the largest bird in North America: the California Condor. Thanks in part to the efforts of environmental organizations, this species has returned from the brink of extinction—from 22 birds in 1982 to over 400 birds today.

Half of all condors in existence are kept in captive breeding programs to assist in recovery efforts. Part of my duties included monitoring condors that had been raised in captivity and kept in a large pen on the wildlife refuge to acclimatize them to their environment. I'd record behavioral observations of the birds kept in the enclosure, and often free-flying condors would perch on the edge of the pen during the day. Condors are very gregarious birds, and it seemed that they just wanted to be sociable; this familiarization to the free-flying flock was essential for the captive birds when it came time for their release. Attached to the side of the pen was a trap that could be baited with carrion, and twice a year a massive effort was made to trap the whole flock to conduct health checks on the birds. Birds caught in the trap were offered a chance to "escape" to the pen, and from there the FWS technicians could easily restrain the birds for their health checks.

Since condors eat dead animals (some killed by gunfire) and gunshot contains lead, lead poisoning continues to plague the free-flying condors. A fragment of lead the size of a fingernail clipping will kill a healthy adult condor. Timely testing, however, ensures that the condors can be taken to receive chelation and have the lead flushed from their system.

Those condors that pass their exam are released to continue roaming the mountains and plains of southern California. To ensure that the flock had a clean source of food, I was often tasked with driving to nearby dairy farms to collect still-born calves that had not been given injections or inoculations. This source of meat was free from any chemical contaminants that might negatively affect the birds. These carcasses were staked at feeding sites so that individual birds could be monitored from blinds.

In addition to keeping track of condors by visual references (each condor has a numbered wing tag), each condor is given a radio tag that can be picked up by telemetry devices. As an intern I was also tasked with recording all of the signals that could be heard from special vantage points on the refuges. The condor monitoring crew kept track of the whereabouts of their birds with the visual and signal data brought in each day, with a focus on breeding pairs. Condors that live past five years of age have reached breeding age, and condor pairs search for appropriate nest cavities in the canyons and cliffs near the refuges to raise their young. I would hike to many observation points to observe the nest cavities for hours, recording all events and behavioral observations. Over the course of the summer, the parents incubated their single egg and cared for the nestling, only one raised each season. A nestling grows fast, and the fluffy down gives way to the black feathers of a juvenile bird that allows for the first flights of a fledgling to be made.

This work is ongoing and will last until enough free-flying condors are able to sustain their own numbers by breeding in the wild without the assistance of humans. Condors have been released in the Grand Canyon, southern California, Baja California, and central California (in Big Sur and Pinnacles National Park). I spent a year in California working with condors in the plains and ridges of southern California in addition to the mountains and redwood forests of Big Sur. With our continued commitment to their survival, condors may one day be seen soaring over the Rocky Mountains of the American West and beyond!



Danny Raleigh with California Condor

Danny Raleigh, OAS Board member

Birds and Wolves and A Blimey Brit—the Florida Panhandle Beckons

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is planning another overnight Panhandle trip May 1–3, 2015 with guided birding and the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to interact with magnificent North American wolves at the Seacrest Wolf Preserve (Seacrest). We highly encourage you to reserve your spot now. Three college graduations that weekend in Tallahassee have greatly increased the demand and cost of lodging, but a limited number of reasonably-priced rooms near St. Marks are reserved for OAS. There are also numerous campsites near St. Marks and primitive camping is available at Seacrest.

We will meet Friday for early afternoon birding at Birdsong Nature Center, Thomasville, GA. On Saturday Andy Wraithmell of Wings Over Florida/Great Florida Birding Trail will be our guide to St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. This 70,000 acre refuge, established in 1931, includes coastal marshes, islands, tidal creeks and estuaries of seven north Florida rivers, provides wintering habitat for migratory birds and is home to diverse plant and animal life. Spring migrants will still be coming through, and breeding season will be starting.

On Sunday we will enjoy a private, hands-on tour of Seacrest, a nonprofit organization dedicated to conservation and preservation of wolves through education. The weekend field trip fee is \$60 for OAS members/\$75 for nonmembers and covers admission to Birdsong and Seacrest plus picnic lunches on Saturday and Sunday. Cost for Sunday-only tour of Seacrest and a picnic lunch is \$35 OAS member/\$45 nonmember.

Contact Teresa to register with OAS and receive lodging details: mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 644-0796 or howl with regret for missing this unique opportunity for birding with blimey Andy and an unforgettable encounter with wolves and smaller mammals at Seacrest: <http://seacrestwolfpreserve.org/>.

Teresa Williams, Treasurer/Trip Organizer



Above: St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.

Below: Teresa Williams gets up close and personal with one of Seacrest's wolves.

Conservation update

Deseret Ranch/North Ranch Sector Plan, 133,000 acres in Osceola County, would be the largest development ever proposed in Florida and abuts significant portions of Orange and Brevard counties. Members from four Audubon chapters (Kissimmee Valley, Oklawaha Valley, Orange, and Seminole), along with Audubon Florida's Charles Lee and representatives from Sierra Club, St. Johns River Keeper, Florida Native Plant Society, and League of Women Voters have contributed input at two meetings with representatives of Deseret (the applicant) and Osceola County staff. We have succeeded in having Deseret ask the county to delay the transmittal of the Sector Plan until the conservation community and Deseret vet issues (conservation lands, wildlife corridors, roads, etc.). Additionally, the Osceola County commissioners have agreed to fund reviews by three independent biologists/ecologists of the critical conservation lands that need to be protected.

The Orange Audubon Society (OAS) Conservation Committee is working on this and quite a few other urgent issues. Please join the committee or join OAS' Central Florida Conservation Network if you're unlikely to be able to attend meetings but could write letters or emails. Contact me at rhs-oas@att.net or (407) 886-2925 to discuss working more with Orange Audubon Society to protect our local environment. Thank you in advance.

Bob Stamps, OAS Conservation Chair

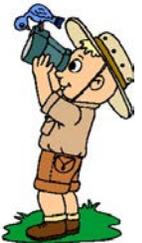
Welcome New and Returning Members

Welcome or welcome back to these new or returning members: Angela Balistreri, Skeater Bechstein, Ann Bennett, Jocelyn Bew, Linda Brentzel, Leisa Buccieri, Nancy Clark, Tracey Coryell, Kathy Cothorn, Jill Danzl, Janet Dawkins, Gemma Dehnbostel, Monica Drouillard, Robert Dutton, Jim Erickson, Dykes Everett, Linda Ewing, Lawrence Faison, Keegan Felder, Dione Fetner, Ariel Figueroa, Catherine Filipello, Ann Flick, Leonard Fowkes, Ryan Fowler, Kristen Garcia, Melissa Gonzalez, Jose Gonzalez, Sheila Green, Kenny Grow, Laurie Hayden, Jasper Hilley, Sylvia Hollabaugh, Nancy Hosfeld, Beverly Hughes, Bill Johnson, Danielle Kessinger, Margaret Khor, Kelly Kirk, Cathren Koehlert, Helen Layton-Lum, Frank Leonard, Louann Luhrs, Karen Lynch, Joanna Mansfield-Duquette, David Marano, Carol Milman, Marson Nance, Beverly Norris, M. Paul, Merl Pelletier, Elaine Pennington, Bernice Perkins, Myra Reeves, John Rendle, H. Roy, David Sharp, Debra Sirkin, Rebecca Smith, Sharon Smith, Robert & Mary Stasie, Robert and Leann Streeper, Cherilyn Taylor, Gail Taylor, Terri Thompson, Katherine Vaquerizo, William Vaughn, Laney Way, Tamara Webster, Joan Wechsler, Hilarie Weiland, Sheila Whitman, Dana Willhoit, Jane Williams, and Tarita Wixon.

Thanks for joining Audubon, and we look forward to seeing you at upcoming programs and events!

Youth Field Trip on March 14, 2015 at Central Winds Park

On March 14th Orange Audubon Society board member Brook Rohman will lead a Youth Field Trip to Central Winds Park in Winter Springs near Lake Jesup. This leisurely walking field trip starts at 8:30 a.m. and lasts about two hours. Cost: FREE. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Wear comfortable shoes and bring water and bug spray. Spring migrants will be arriving and Central Winds Park is a great birding spot. The natural world is a fascinating playground for kids of all ages. If there are children in your life who would like to attend, please contact Brook at brookrohman@gmail.com or (407) 921-8008. We will not only have fun, but also engage young people to carry on conservation efforts when we no longer can!



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Calendar of Events

Birds of Prey Identification Classes: Lake Apopka Restoration Area

Sundays: January 4 and February 1, 2015, 7:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m. Meet at Lust Road entrance.

Contact Bob at (407) 454-0542

January Program: Ephemeral Wetlands and Rare Amphibians—Rebecca Means

January 15, 2015, 7:00 p.m., Harry P. Leu Gardens, Camelia Room

Genius Drive Work Day

January 18, 2015. Contact Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 644-0796

Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Titusville

January 21–26, 2015

Lake Apopka Wildlife Festival & Birdapalooza, Magnolia Park, Apopka

February 7, 2015. Contact Loretta at LNS-oas@att.net or (407) 886-2925 or Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 644-0796

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 13–16, 2015. www.birdsource.org/gbbc

February Program: Radar Birding 101—Angel and Mariel Abreu

February 19, 2015, 7:00 p.m., Harry P. Leu Gardens, Camelia Room

Orlando Wetlands Festival, Ft. Christmas Park, Christmas

February 21, 2015. Contact Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 644-0796