



### This Month's Program:

## December 17, 2015 Members' Favorite Wildlife Viewing Spots

Orange Audubon Society's December 17th program is *Members' Favorite Wildlife Viewing Spots*. Five-minute PowerPoint presentations with no more than 20 slides are still welcome, emailed by December 12th to allow us to put together the program. Even if you have no photos, there will be an opportunity for sharing about great places that you have visited this year. Email slides to [brookrohman@gmail.com](mailto:brookrohman@gmail.com) or call (407) 921-8008 if you have questions. Join us December 17th for holiday sharing among Audubon friends! Location and time details are in box below.

*Brook Rohman, Programs Co-chair*



Limpkin Chick. 1st Place, 2010 Chertok Photo Contest, Youth Category. Photo: Shaw Frederick

## Get Out Your Cameras! 28th Annual Chertok Photo Contest

*Florida Native Nature* is the theme of Orange Audubon Society's 28th Annual Kit and Sidney Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest. Eligible photos may not include humans, human artifacts or introduced plant or animal species. The deadline is now April 21, 2016 (postmarked by date). Participants will be notified of any ineligible entries and given the option to replace such images at no extra charge by May 19th. Winners will be announced at our June 16th program.

There are three competition categories: Youth—for photographers age 17 years or younger by May 19; Novice—for new and less experienced photo hobbyists; and Advanced Amateur/Professional—for experienced photographers who have practiced and honed their skills over time.

There are also bonus prizes for 1st through 3rd place winners photographed at Orange County Green PLACE properties (See next column). An optional online photo entry system is currently under development. So get outside with your camera and start shooting to capture Florida's amazing native nature! Contact me at (407) 644-0796 or [mwilliams@cfl.rr.com](mailto:mwilliams@cfl.rr.com) if you have questions.

*Teresa Williams, Photo Contest Chair*

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/](http://www.leugardens.org/plan/directions/)



## Citizen Science: Christmas Bird Counts

Instead of leading a field trip in December, Orange Audubon Society encourages you to participate in one or more Christmas Bird Counts conducted from December 17, 2015 to January 5, 2016.

The annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC), now in its 116th year, is the longest-running Citizen Science survey in the world. Each year the Audubon CBC mobilizes over 70,000 volunteer bird counters in more than 2,400 locations across the Western Hemisphere.

This effort tracks the health of bird populations at a scale that professional scientists alone could never accomplish.

Each CBC is performed by at least 10 volunteers in a count circle that is 15 miles in diameter. The volunteers are broken up into small parties and follow assigned routes counting every bird they see. The natural competitive spirit of birders drives them to do the most thorough job possible.

If you have never done a CBC, the compiler will group you with experienced birders.

A new CBC where the compiler is particularly eager for help is the Bay Lake CBC on Thursday, December 17th, covering Disney Property and the surrounding area. See page 8 for CBC dates and contact information.

For Florida results of the 2014–2015 CBC, see [this link](#).

## Green PLACE Photos

Orange Orange County (OC) Environmental Protection Division, in partnership with Orange Audubon Society, will provide bonus prizes for place winners of the 2016 Chertok photo contest if taken at OC Green PLACE properties. Green PLACE entries may also be included in OC's 2017 nature calendar. To see Green PLACE properties, click [here](#).

## Climate and the Tale of Two Petitions



Orange Audubon Society's board has voted to support the Solar Choice petition, joining other Audubon chapters, many other environmental groups, and the League of Women Voters. Click [here](#) for supporter list.

Those of us whose homes are too shady for solar, who have reduced our energy bills enough that solar doesn't make sense for us, or who can't afford solar right now although we have high bills and a sunny roof --- all of us will need our electric utility's grid to be maintained. Even those who have installed solar will probably not have a way to store the energy for use at night and cloudy days and will need the grid.

This is the argument that our electric utilities present: if people can buy electricity from whomever they want and no longer provide income to the utilities, maintaining the grid will be more expensive, energy rates will go up and low-income users in particular will suffer. Many do not buy this argument! Other states like New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, not known for sunshine, are expanding rooftop photovoltaic (PV) cells and panels. Why can't the Sunshine State? From Mississippi to Maine states have examined whether solar causes customers to pay more and have concluded that solar customers actually provide a net benefit to the utility's system. Solar is the fastest growing source of renewable energy in the U.S., as the costs to produce the PV cells and panels continue to decline.

### How other states have progressed

Renewable portfolio standards (RPS) are policies that require or encourage electricity producers to supply a minimum share of their electricity from renewable resources. Florida has never had a RPS, and renewable energy accounted for only 2.3% of Florida's total net electricity generation in 2014. Florida did have solar rebates for a short time, but as of November 2009 the rebates dried up.

One of the biggest developments in the residential PV market in the U.S. in the past few years has been systems

not owned but leased by homeowners. [As explained by the U.S. Energy Information Administration](#), homeowners can contract with a company—called a solar leasing company, solar finance company, or *third-party* ownership company—and with no money down have a PV system installed on their house or property. With leases, sometimes called power-purchase agreements (PPAs), companies own and maintain the solar panels and their customers sign long-term contracts to buy the power.

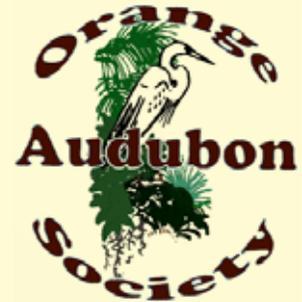
Under Florida law (Ch. 366), only utilities can sell power to retail customers. This effectively shuts down solar leasing, the no-money-down model that is rapidly growing elsewhere.

### Confusion as a tactic

There are two solar petitions out there right now. The dust had barely settled after the 2014 election when a coalition of environmental groups, called Floridians for Solar Choice, Inc., secured approval to collect signatures for a petition for the 2016 ballot. Entitled *Limits or Prevents Barriers to Local Solar Electricity Supply*, this ballot initiative does one thing: it removes the government-created barrier to customers' buying solar energy from third parties. If passed, homeowners would have the flexibility to enter into contracts with solar companies. Florida would be the 47th state to allow these power-purchase agreements (PPAs).

Floridians for Solar Choice wants landlords to be able to provide solar-generated power to tenants (that may not have their own roof space) and homeowners that do not have the financial resources for a solar system to have one installed at no upfront cost through a 3rd party lease or PPA.

The Solar Choice petition defines a 3rd party supplier as follows: "Local solar electricity supply is the non-utility supply of solar generated electricity from a facility rated up to 2 megawatts to customers at the same or contiguous property as the facility." Residential solar systems are typically sized from 3 to 8 kilowatts. The largest rooftop system in Florida is 1 megawatt in size, on the Orange County Convention Center. Residential and even commercial solar systems will fall well below this cap, but it allows for



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 (Orange Audubon Society Information Source) Newsletter is published monthly from September through June. The newsletter is posted on the OAS website, and a link is e-mailed to all OAS members.

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REGISTRATION NO. CH2330

## Tale of Two Petitions, Continued

technological innovations that one day may let customers generate 2 megawatts worth of solar power on their property. By its being limited to customers *at the same or contiguous property*, this amendment should not threaten utilities that much.

Floridians for Solar Choice, Inc. is funded by individuals and by the [Southern Alliance for Clean Energy Action Fund \(SACE Action Fund\)](#), and has made a good start in petition gathering, using volunteers.

Then in July 2015 another group, Consumers for *Smart Solar*, put forward a second solar petition entitled *Rights of Electricity Consumers Regarding Solar Energy Choice*. This amendment references rights we already have and is intended to maintain the status quo. By mimicking the original Solar Choice petition, the Smart Solar petition is designed to confuse the public.

### Follow the money

To do your own research on the two initiatives, go to the [Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, Initiatives / Amendments / Revisions](#). In the search field enter *Solar*; hit *Run Query* and both amendments will be displayed.

To find out where each initiative's funding comes from, click on the name of the supporting organization, *Floridians for Solar Choice, Inc.* Or *Consumers for Smart Solar*, which takes you to the *Committee Tracking System*. For each one, click on *Campaign Finance Activity*. Click the button *All Dates*, click *Run Query* and you will see all of the contributions for each petition.

Floridians for Solar Choice raised \$1.75 million in a little over 10 months since it was approved, while the Consumers for Smart Solar raised twice that, \$3.8 million, in just 3 1/2 months.

Both groups must secure 683,149 valid signatures to put the initiative on the ballot by about February, and with more than twice the funding, the second group has more resources to pay petition gatherers. They are already seen at festivals and farmers markets.

You can [print a Solar Choice petition](#), sign and mail it in.

Orange Audubon Society will have petitions at meetings, programs and outreach events between now and February. Thanks for helping move solar forward in the Sunshine State.

*Deborah Green, Climate Chair*

## Fracking Bills

In Audubon Florida's 2016 state policy priority on climate change there is a priority to oppose or restrict hydraulic fracturing that may harm water supplies.

There are 2 bills in the Florida legislature moving through committees to *allow* fracking in Florida: Senate Bill 318: Regulation of Oil and Gas Resources and House Bill 191: Regulation of Oil and Gas Resources. Both would take effect July 1, 2016 and *prevent cities and counties from prohibiting fracking*, even if they have already done so.

There is also a Senate Bill 166: Oil and Natural Gas Production or Recovery that seeks to ban fracking in the state, sponsored by our local Senator Darren Soto with co-introducers Dwight Bullard and Jeff Clemens. To read the complete bills, enter the bill number on the [FL legislative web site](#).

### How You Can Help Prevent Fracking

If anyone has experience from another state on the ill health effects from fracking, would you write a letter to the editor? We can edit letters if you like.

Sign the [MoveOn petition opposing fracking](#). This petition is emailed to The Florida State House, The Florida State Senate, and Governor Rick Scott. Please join the Facebook community "[Ban Fracking in Florida](#)" to stay informed.

Orange Audubon Society's Conservation Committee will monitor the legislative process and send letters to legislative committee members opposing Senate Bill 318 and House Bill 191 and supporting Senate Bill 166.

If you wish to help with this, contact me at [phylliscath814@gmail.com](mailto:phylliscath814@gmail.com) to be added to OAS' email list.

*Phyllis Hall, Conservation Committee*

## Amendment 1 Update

We need to convince legislators to get the [Florida Forever land buying program](#) back on track before parcels of land disappear to development.

The one-third of documentary stamp tax revenue specified by Amendment 1 for land acquisition and restoration has been redirected *to offset expenses formerly borne by general tax dollars such as salaries and general operating costs*.

A lawsuit was filed on June 23rd by Earthjustice on behalf of the Florida Wildlife Federation, St. Johns Riverkeeper, Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida, and the Sierra Club seeking an injunction to transfer the misspent revenues from agency budgets to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. On November 9th, Florida Defenders of the Environment filed a separate lawsuit seeking a declaration that the legislature broke the law by spending Amendment 1 money for undesignated purposes and seeking a court injunction against several state agencies to block them from spending the misappropriated funds. To check status of these suits, [click here](#).

## Our Parks in Peril

Governor Scott's *business-first* administration seems to have little appreciation for the public's love of its parks. According to 4th generation Florida resident and past OAS president Jim Thomas, state parks were never meant to be self-sustaining, yet they are nearly so, with 77% of operating costs generated by park fees.

Raising park entrance fees from the bargain rate of \$6 per carload to enter to help cover the shortfall would be an alternative the public may find more palatable than logging, grazing, and hunting proposed to bring in funds.

[Senate Bill 570](#), now moving through the Legislature, will *end fees altogether!* Then the parks will clearly be unsustainable and can be privatized. A [MoveOn.org petition](#) is a chance for you to object to this. The Facebook page [Florida Parks in Peril](#), organized by a dozen or so dedicated former park employees, can keep you up to date. If you are willing to make calls or send emails to legislators about this, let me know at [sabalpress@mac.com](mailto:sabalpress@mac.com). Thank you!

*Deborah Green*

## Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive Field Trip

Twenty-eight attended the Orange Audubon Society field trip to Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive on November 21st. At least 43 bird species were observed including Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, American Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Green Heron, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Sora, Belted Kingfisher, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Eastern Phoebe and Palm Warbler.

The most unusual find, a Brown Booby, was brought to our attention by a group of birders at the pump house.

Other animals seen were Common Green Darner, White Peacock, Viceroy, American Alligator babies and River Otter. Wildflowers in bloom included Climbing Aster, Elliott's Aster, Groundsel Tree, Burrmarigold and Spanish Needles.

The trip was photographed for publicity for the 2016 Birdapalooza event at Lake Apopka. Part of the photography was done from a drone, which was surprisingly quiet and unobtrusive. Watch for the coverage in early 2016. Thanks to the more experienced birders for helping the newer birders spot and identify birds.

Mary Keim, Field Trip Chair

## December Species Highlight: Black Skimmer

A single Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) was seen in the pond by the Historic Pumphouse on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive in November, which is why we are profiling this species.

Black Skimmers are unique large black and white birds, usually coastal, with a specialized bill they use for skimming the water. Their orange and black bill allows them to skim for small fish or crustaceans while in flight!

The lower mandible is longer than the upper, and both are so compressed that when looking at them straight-on the bill almost disappears. While skimming the water, the lower mandible is just under the surface. When a fish makes contact with the lower mandible, the upper mandible quickly closes down on it. They are only successful with this feeding mechanism when the water is calm.

Skimmers sometimes fly in groups and feed together, and can often be heard "yapping" in flight. These birds are colonial nesters, and generally roost in large groups. The first time I saw roosting Black Skimmers, I thought they had died! They roost with their heads flat on the ground and look very odd.

Their nests are just scrapes in the ground where the female lays 3-5 eggs. These nests are often disturbed by people parking or driving in their habitat or destroyed by flooding and predation. The Black Skimmer is on National Audubon's list of priority birds because of these threats. It has no federal listing status other than being protected under the U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act, but it is a State Species of Special Concern.

If you have not had the pleasure of seeing this beautiful and unique bird, get out with your binoculars to some of our coastal areas.

Brook Rohman



Black Skimmers Photo: Brad Rohman

## Other Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive Sightings

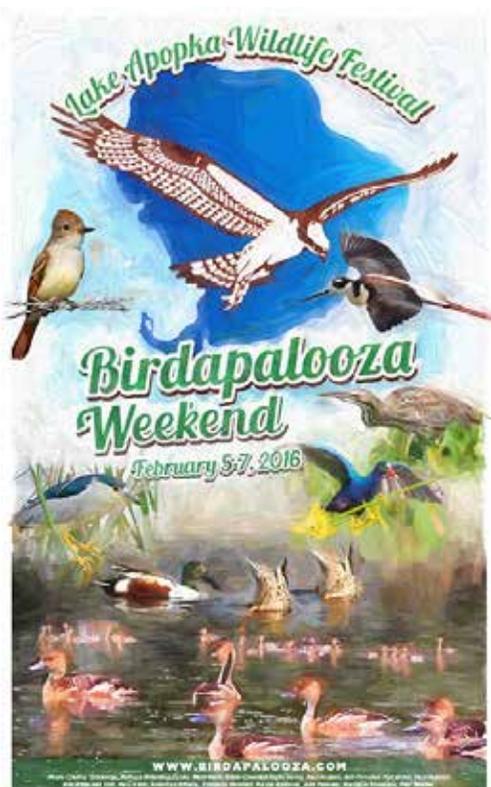
Other great recent sightings shared by Joyce Stefancic, Paul Hueber, Karen Hamblett, Brad and Brook Rohman, are a Tropical Kingbird, an Ash-throated Flycatcher, a Least Flycatcher, and an Eared Grebe. Plus winter ducks are coming in. See you out there!

## Birdapalooza Birding Festival, February 5-7, 2016

The Lake Apopka Wildlife Festival & Birdapalooza is now a weekend event, perfect for birders visiting Florida or local birders wanting to learn more from well-known, expert birding leaders. Orange Audubon Society (OAS) has organized a mini-Birding Festival for Friday, February 5th with three trips on the Lake Apopka North Shore. OAS' event is even listed on the [American Birding Association](#) birding festivals page!

You can sign up for the all-day trip or a combination of field trips. [Download the brochure](#) providing details about the field trips and leaders. A minimum donation to OAS' nature education center fund is requested as part of registration. The all-day trip is \$40 and half-day trips are \$20 each. Each trip has a limit of 30 participants.

To assure space is available, start registration by contacting Teresa at (407) 644-0796 or [mwilliams@cfl.rr.com](mailto:mwilliams@cfl.rr.com). You will receive instructions for making your donation online or by check. On Saturday February 6th, enjoy the free [Birdapalooza Festival](#), now in its 4th year, and on Sunday, February 7th find other unusual birds on your own, following sightings emailed to all registrants. Mark your calendars! Tell your family and friends and bring them with you!





Support Orange Audubon Society while you shop on Amazon! Amazon will donate a small amount—a half percent of the price of eligible purchases—to our chapter whenever you shop on AmazonSmile. Click here for a [direct link](#). Every little bit helps!

### Bad Water Bills

Two water bills, [HB 7005](#) and [SB 552](#), will be on the House and Senate Floor early in 2016. The Gainesville-based Florida Springs Council, of which Orange Audubon Society is a member, opposes the passage of both bills as they will not clean up springs. The bills provide taxpayer money to private companies for pollution and water use reduction actions they should be required to do with their own money. For updates, visit [Florida Springs Council](#).

### Seminole County Bear Issues

Orange Audubon Society has members who live in Seminole County west of I-4 where most of the bear-human encounters occur. We continue to support the most practical solution, bear-proof trash cans, while advocating for Florida Forever purchase of key properties in the Ocala-Wekiva Greenway.

### Join the Orange Audubon Society Central Florida Conservation Network

Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) Conservation Committee follows Central Florida conservation issues and takes action on behalf of OAS. We need many eyes and ears out there to learn about environmental threats before it is too late for action. Partners include the local Sierra Club chapter, League of Women Voters Natural Resources Committee, Friends of Lake Apopka, Friends of the Wekiva River and other groups.

Committee members will be joining other chapters in the Regional Conservation Committee meeting on January 10th.

If you wish to help on a slightly less active basis, please join the OAS Central Florida Conservation Network to be contacted when urgent matters require writing to legislators or agency heads. Please email Conservation Chair Rick Baird to be put on the OAS Central Florida Conservation Network list at [rbaird4@att.net](mailto:rbaird4@att.net). Thank you!

## Flamingo Quest! April 9-10, 2016 Exciting Event! Reserve Early to Secure Your Space!

American Flamingos were a rare sight in the wild in Florida for a century, despite being iconic symbols of our state *until nine years ago*. At that time the tall pink and black birds showed up on a South Florida Water Management District (District) property south of Lake Okeechobee. Since then they have been appearing annually in late March and disappearing in mid-May. Two flamingos with leg bands came from Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.



American Flamingos at STA-2. Photo: Reinhard Geisler

American Flamingos like mudflats and shallow brackish coastal or inland lakes. The long-legged wading birds seem to have found these habitats in a restricted property that is one of the District's Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) south of Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades Agricultural Area, designed to filter water flowing south to Florida Bay.

The location where they have been seen within the 15,500-acre STA-2 was kept secret until it was leaked last year. Fearing that unregulated visits would disturb the birds, the District asked Audubon Society of the Everglades to conduct weekend tours of the area. Last year these trips filled immediately and had a long waiting list. Orange Audubon Society (OAS) member Reinhard Geisler was fortunate enough to hear about the trips and took the photograph above.

OAS has booked Saturday, April 9, 2016 from noon to 4 p.m. for the 20-mile loop tour into STA-2. Please be aware that there is no guarantee that we will see flamingos, as they do move around. Fortunately, STA-2, which is managed for seasonal waterfowl and alligator hunts, has many other exciting birds at that time of year, more species reported than any of the other STAs.

To help us find great birds, OAS has booked David Simpson, one of Florida's top birders, who has extensive field experience in South Florida.

We will meet at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday April 9 at the entrance to STA-2. The trip from Orlando is approximately 3 1/2 hours. With a place to leave extra cars at the entrance, we will carpool into STA-2, four per car.

This can be a day-trip. However, April 9-10th is during spring migration, so the trip will include additional birding with David after we leave STA-2 Saturday at 4 p.m. through Sunday at 3 or 4 p.m. Possible locations for Saturday afternoon and Sunday birding are Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Spanish River Park, Snook Island Preserve, Green Cay Nature Center and Wetlands, and Wakodahatchee Wetlands, to be narrowed down based on reported sightings.

The weekend-trip cost is \$40 for Audubon members and \$55 for non Audubon members, covering trip leaders' time, contributions to Audubon of the Everglades and to OAS to assist our fund-raising toward a nature center. April 9th participation only will cost \$25 for Audubon members and \$40 for non Audubon members.

To register first contact Teresa at (407) 644-0796 or [mwilliams@cfl.rr.com](mailto:mwilliams@cfl.rr.com) to make sure space is available. Following her instructions, you can pay through the OAS website, via credit card or PayPal, or by check written out to Orange Audubon Society and mailed to P.O. Box 941142, Maitland, Florida 32794. Full payment is needed to reserve your spot.

You will be responsible for all meals and for booking your own hotel or campsite for Saturday night in the Boca Raton area. If requested by 10 or more registered participants, OAS can secure a discounted group hotel room rate.

OAS has 30 slots for entry definitely reserved with the possibility of adding additional participants, so early registration is recommended. This trip will fill up! Contact me at [sabalpress@mac.com](mailto:sabalpress@mac.com) or 407-637-2525 with non-registration questions. We hope you join us on this exciting tour! *Deborah Green*

## Bird-friendly Communities: Exemplary Yard Recognized

Orange Audubon Society board members Mary Keim and Randy Snyder wanted to attract wildlife to their home landscape, and what they ended up with was a beautiful native plant haven. Their landscape was recognized by the Florida Wildflower Foundation's [Wildflowers, Naturally!](#) program this May.

To attract birds, Mary and Randy chose plant species that drew insects, a concept that is a little foreign to most people, but is emphasized in Doug Tallamy's book [Bringing Nature Home](#). Insectivorous birds, like warblers and vireos, seek caterpillars.

Live oak, laurel oak, myrtle oak, black cherry, flatwoods plum, chickasaw plum, deerberry and hickory are species in Mary and Randy's yard that host caterpillars, which attract birds.

The couple have also planted native shrubs that produce fruit and seeds for birds and grow plants with red tubular flowers to attract hummingbirds. To draw butterflies, they planted nectar- and pollen-providing plants, as well as host plants for caterpillars. They chose species that did not require water after establishment and do not use fertilizer or insecticides.



Prairie Warbler visiting birdbath at Randy Snyder and Mary Keim's home. *Photo: Mary Keim*

Randy and Mary also have bird nest boxes. Their birdbaths have a long list of visitors with new birds showing up each year, including recently a Bay-breasted Warbler and Black-throated Green Warbler. An Indigo Bunting visited the couple's wax myrtle.

To see more photos from Randy and Mary's wildlife garden, [click here](#). And mark your calendar for Mary's presentation for Orange Audubon Society on March 17, 2016 on Planting for Wildlife.

*Deborah Green*



Mary Keim and Randy Snyder's home was on the Yards Tour last year. *Photo: Mary Keim*

## 2016 Florida Native Plant and Wildlife Friendly Yards Tour:

### Mark Your Calendar!

The 2nd Annual Florida Native Plant and Wildlife Friendly Yards Tour will take place April 16th and continues Orange Audubon Society's collaboration with the local Florida Native Plant Society chapters. This year's tour will be to homes and one commercial landscape from Winter Park into Seminole County. Please mark your calendars for April 16th from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m, since April is always a busy month.

If you participated on the tour last year and would like to help the organizers as a volunteer at one of the sites, please contact me at [sabalpress@mac.com](mailto:sabalpress@mac.com). Helpers and participating homeowners will have the opportunity for a free preview tour of all of the sites on April 2nd.

*Deborah Green*

## Lake Eola Fiesta in the Park—Thanks to Volunteers

Orange Audubon Society's annual participation in the Lake Eola Fiesta in the Park Arts and Crafts Festival on November 7th and 8th was more successful than ever in terms of nature merchandise sales and outreach.

Thanks to all the volunteers who made this event possible: Rick and Laurel Baird, Phyllis Hall, Cyndi and Michael Kay, Wayne Kennedy, Brent Mobley, John and Lori Parsons, Kathy Rigling, Loretta Satterthwaite, Bob Stamps and Dena Wild.

*Teresa Williams, Coordinator*

## In Case You Missed the Program.... Bird Watching Basics

Bird watching is the fastest growing hobby in the U.S., according to Jim Cox. And with 450 verified avian species in Florida, avid birders can spend most of their spare time searching for these elusive vertebrates, drawing them, photographing them, or simply enjoying their songs, behavior, and plumage.

At the November program, Cox, the director of the Stoddard Bird Lab at Tall Timbers Research Station in North Florida, noted the basics of bird watching. First you need a good pair of light-weight binoculars with the 7 x 35 or 8 x 40 power and a field guide. Cox prefers the *Peterson Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America*.



Next, practice eye-hand coordination by first finding the bird with the naked eye and then using your binoculars to focus. You can quickly enhance your skills by fitting a "little brown bird" into a family. There are 74 families and "you can learn a lot about birds" by implementing this tool.

Cox noted other important steps: investigate the context (habitat and time of year); note the size and overall shape, voice, behavior (very important), and specific color patterns.

Expert birders can often identify birds by their songs, which can take years of studying and listening. Cox recommends you first learn the songs of a small number of birds in your backyard. To practice you can download 140 Florida bird songs at [this link](#). Or get more information about birds and bird watching at [this link](#).

Once you can identify the 450 Florida (verified) species, you can move on to the 146 exotic species that have been reported in our state. Not to mention the 10,000 or so species worldwide.

Whatever the number of birds you list, just "continue birding," said Cox, "because birders tend to become conservationists." And we need you to help conserve all the wonderful natural habitat in Florida and the world.

*Linda Carpenter*

## Youth Field Trip

Orange Audubon Society's youth hike November 7th was lots of fun. We had nice looks at American Kestrel and Red-shouldered Hawk, among other birds, and saw many butterflies, frogs and cool bugs. The next scheduled Youth Field Trip is January 9th at Lake Lotus Park.

Brook Rohman, Education Committee



Youth Field Trip November 7th at Central Winds Park, led by Brook Rohman.  
Photo: Deborah Green

## A Birder's Guide to Everything

Do you have teenagers or will you have teenagers visiting over the holidays? *A Birder's Guide to Everything* (2013) is a film about a 15-year-old birding fanatic who thinks that he's made the birding discovery of a lifetime. On the eve of his father's remarriage, he escapes on a road trip with his best friends to solidify their place in birding history. It's a sweet coming-of-age story wrapped around birding. I recommend it as a fun family film to watch, available for rent via streaming video sites. Check your local library for the DVD, too.

Phyllis Hall

Thank you to all who have already donated in response to Orange Audubon Society's once-a-year Letter Appeal sent to you in September to request financial support.

If you have not already done so, we hope you will consider supporting your local Audubon chapter.

## Holiday viewing and reading:

### The Big Year Film and Book Review

Orange Audubon Society's January speaker is Greg Miller, one of the three birders depicted in the film, *The Big Year*, available in libraries and on streaming video sites. Those attending Greg Miller's January 21st program, kindly sponsored by [Wild Birds Unlimited](#) in Winter Springs, will enjoy it much more after seeing the movie or reading the book. This could be a great holiday family video to watch, and the book also is fascinating.

Birders and bird conservation advocates throughout the country were nervous as time neared for the October 2011 release of the movie. Would it portray birders in a good light or set us back more in our reputation as nerds? How can you make birding into a comedy? We need birding and bird conservation to appear in a good light to further our conservation efforts!

The movie bombed in the box office, but it is definitely fun to watch if you know something about birds. Friends and acquaintances who aren't birders reportedly learned a lot about birds they hadn't known.

The aim of a "Big Year" is to spot the greatest number of bird species on the North American continent within a single year. Winning this competition, which dates back to the 1900s, has no monetary reward just bragging rights. Many of us first heard about Big Years through *The Kingbird Highway*, Kenn Kaufman's hilarious account of his Big Year of 1973, when he was 18, dropped out of high school and hitchhiked his way across the country, to set a new record of 671 species.

Denver-based journalist and birder Mark Obmascik wrote *The Big Year* in 2004 and it was a nonfiction bestseller. Set in 1998, it describes the toughest competition ever, with three cutthroat birders wrangling for the lead. Obmascik infused it with fascinating information about bird migration and great birding locations.

The movie was "loosely based on the book," starring comedians Jack Black, Owen Wilson, and Steve Martin. With birders (primarily Greg Miller) as advisors, it was largely ornithologically accurate. Except, of course, the footage of the Greater Flamingo set in the mangroves. The real flamingos that visit Florida Bay feed in wide open water too shallow for a boat and elude most birders who try for them (But see our Flamingo Quest, p.5!).

It was fascinating to see the way that Attu Island in the Aleutians—the westernmost point of land relative to Alaska and the United States—is reachable by a small plane (once a week) and is set up for birders, with someone announcing unusual sightings over the loudspeaker.

The birder who finally won the 1998 Big Year with 755 species was continually thwarted in his quest to see the Arctic-inhabiting Snowy Owl. Some may remember how excited the Florida birding community was when a Snowy Owl showed up on a beach near Apalachicola in 1999 and another near Jacksonville in the winter of 2013-2014.

The movie portrayed a warbler fallout along the Texas coast. Songbirds migrating from their Central American wintering grounds to their North American forest breeding grounds have to fly across the Gulf of Mexico and when storms occur they may descend on the nearest land they can find. Many of us dream of catching such a fallout.

Check out this book and movie over the holidays, and be sure to put January 21st, 7 p.m. on your calendar to hear Greg Miller's talk for Orange Audubon.

Deborah Green



Actor Jack Black and Greg Miller  
Photo Courtesy Greg Miller.

## 16th Annual Orlando Wetlands Festival



The 16th Annual [Orlando Wetlands Festival](#) will be held on February 20th, 2016, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Ft. Christmas Historical Park (1300 N. Ft. Christmas Rd.). Parking and vendors will be at Ft. Christmas, and shuttles will take visitors to nearby Orlando Wetlands Park for bus tours, birding hikes, trail hikes, wildflower hikes, bird banding and hayrides. The City of Orlando, Orange County Parks and Recreation and Orange Audubon Society (OAS) co-sponsor the event. OAS members lead nature hikes as well as nature bus tours through Orlando Wetlands Park. OAS will be selling nature-inspired merchandise including t-shirts, tote bags, signs and mugs (bring cash, check or credit card).

OAS needs volunteers! To lead bird watching hikes or nature bus tours, please contact me at [rsmhk@gmail.com](mailto:rsmhk@gmail.com) or (407) 851-5416.

To help with merchandise sales, outreach and/or the kids' art activity, please contact Teresa at [mwilliams@cfl.rr.com](mailto:mwilliams@cfl.rr.com) or (407) 644-0796. No experience is necessary.

*Randy Snyder, OAS-Orlando Wetlands Park Liaison*

## Birds of Prey Identification Class, Lake Apopka

Orange Audubon Society will hold three Birds of Prey Identification Classes on the Lake Apopka North Shore on December 6, 2015, January 3 and February 14, 2016. Each class will be from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. You can attend single or multiple days. Cost for each day is \$5 (Audubon members) or \$10 (non-members).

Popular instructor Bob Sanders is an avid birder who for many years has taught raptor identification. Before moving to Central Florida, Bob was co-founder of the Chimney Rock Hawk Watch in Martinsville, New Jersey. No early registration is required. Bob can be reached at (407) 459-5617. Mark your calendars!



Red-tailed Hawk, Photo: Paul Hueber

## Best Wishes for a Safe and Peaceful Holiday Season!

### DECEMBER/JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Christmas Bird Counts:** Contact the compiler to participate.

- **Emeralda/Sunnyhill:** December 14, 2015  
Contact Peg Lindsay at [pegcondor@embarqmail.com](mailto:pegcondor@embarqmail.com)
- **Bay Lake:** December 17, 2015  
Contact John Thomton at [jthomton@hotmail.com](mailto:jthomton@hotmail.com)
- **Zellwood/Mt. Dora:** December 17, 2015  
Contact Wes Biggs at [birdsatfnt@bellsouth.net](mailto:birdsatfnt@bellsouth.net)
- **Wekiva River:** December 19, 2015  
Contact Jay Exum at [jay.exum@exumassoc.com](mailto:jay.exum@exumassoc.com)
- **Econlockhatchee:** December 26, 2015  
Contact Lorne Malo at [lornemalo@bellsouth.net](mailto:lornemalo@bellsouth.net)
- **Clermont:** January 1, 2016  
Contact John Thomton at [jthomton@hotmail.com](mailto:jthomton@hotmail.com)
- **Kissimmee Valley:** January 3, 2016  
Contact Jenny Welch at [mwelch@cfl.rr.com](mailto:mwelch@cfl.rr.com)

**Birds of Prey Identification Class,** Lake Apopka  
December 6, 2015, January 3 and February 14, 2016.  
Contact Bob at (407) 459-5617.

**December Program: Members' Favorite Wildlife Viewing Spots**

December 17, 2015  
Contact Brook at (407) 921-8008.

**Nehrling Ornithology Open House**

January 9, 2016, 9 a.m.  
Contact Dominique at [shimizu\\_wcs@yahoo.com](mailto:shimizu_wcs@yahoo.com).

**Youth Field Trip, Lake Lotus**

January 9, 2016, 9 a.m.  
Contact Brook at (407) 921-8008.

**January Monthly Program: The Big Year** by Greg Miller  
Sponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited, Winter Springs.  
January 21, 2016, 7 p.m.  
Contact Brook at (407) 921-8008.