



This Month's Program: October 15, 2020

The UCF Purple Martin Project: Early Lessons From an Undergraduate Research Program by Anna Forsman



Dr. Anna Forsman and students with Purple Martin houses. *Photo courtesy UCF.* Purple Martins at Orlando Wetlands Park, March 2018. *Photo: Mary Keim*

Have you ever seen a Purple Martin or heard their chattering song? There is a good chance that you have, even if you didn't know it at the time. Purple Martins are North America's largest swallows. They breed across much of the United States and then migrate southward to winter in Brazil.

As of spring 2020, University of Central Florida (UCF) has become a hotspot for seeing Purple Martins in action! With the help of enthusiastic UCF students, biologist Anna Forsman has established the UCF Purple Martin Project, which supplies over 140 nesting gourds for these fascinating birds. In this program for Orange Audubon Society, Dr. Forsman will talk about the history of the special relationship that Purple Martins have developed with humans in North America and how scientists and citizens continue to interact with these birds to promote their conservation and greater understanding of their biology and ecology. She will explain how her lab is using genomic techniques (and bird poop) to figure out what types of insects the martins are eating and to characterize the microbial communities living in the guts of these swallows. Join us for Purple Martin Time! Go to OAS' YouTube channel on October 15th, 7 p.m. to see this fascinating program.

Terry Piper, Programs 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.

Programs are normally held at Harry P. Leu Gardens.

However, they will be held virtually until further notice due to COVID-19 health precautions.



Fall Bird Walks at Mead Botanical Garden October 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31, 2020

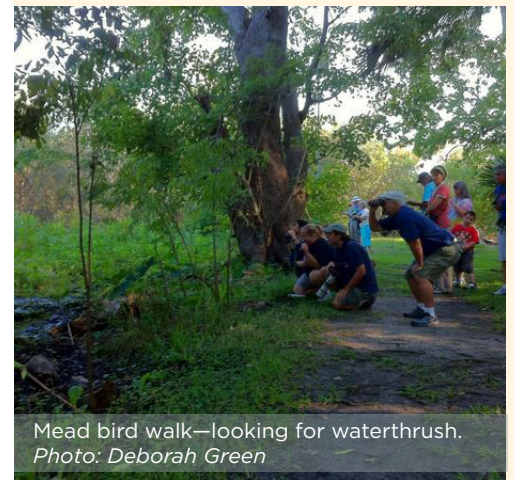
To celebrate fall migration, Orange Audubon Society will host bird walks at Mead Botanical Garden on Saturdays, October 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31, 2020. Each walk is led by an experienced birding leader.

We plan to have smaller numbers than in the past and require masks, due to COVID-19 precautions. The walks are free but pre-registration is needed.

The walks start at 8:00 a.m. and last 2 to 3 hours, with a slow pace and lots of stopping to look at birds. We will meet in the parking lot at Mead Botanical Garden, 1500 S. Denning Drive, Winter Park.

To register, contact me at (407) 647-5834 or lmartin5@msn.com.

Larry Martin, OAS-Mead Liaison



Mead bird walk—looking for waterthrush. *Photo: Deborah Green*

Bird Chats with OAS

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) has initiated a fun weekly "bird chat" on Zoom each Thursday at 7 p.m. (except the 3rd Thursday which is OAS' regular program night). Identification of mystery birds, discussion of new arrivals, and a topic of the week make up each chat. Register [at this link](#) and join the conversation. Past bird chats are archived on [OAS' YouTube channel](#).

Vote!

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) strongly encourages everyone to exercise your right to VOTE. The



deadline in Florida to register to vote in the November election is October 5th. If you are already registered, will you make sure your friends and family members are too? Voter registration groups, like the League of Women Voters, are not doing in-person voter registration in this COVID-19 era, but [online registration now works well.](#)

As a 501(c)(3) organization, OAS cannot and does not endorse any political candidate, nor can OAS direct you to any group that does so. A candidate's fitness for office should be judged on a variety of qualifications. You may learn where candidates stand on various issues from their websites and from candidate interviews that you can read thoroughly to see if their positions on issues align with yours.

Please start early and do your research; then mark your sample ballot, which you will receive in the mail (Orange County ballots will be mailed October 13th) or can download from the Supervisors of Elections website. Finally, be sure to vote!!

Note that Vote by Mail is a smart option, as you can drop off your ballot at early voting sites in most counties or at the Supervisor of Elections on election day. Deadline to request a Vote by Mail Ballot is October 24th. See the Supervisor of Elections website for your county for details (below).

Also there are 6 Florida Constitutional Amendments on the ballot. See the [League of Women Voters' nonpartisan analysis of these amendments](#) before filling in your ballot.

[Orange County Supervisor of Elections website](#)

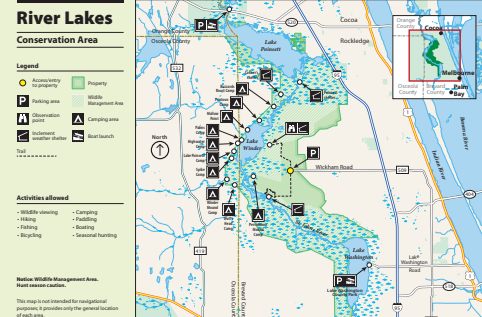
[Seminole County Supervisor of Elections website](#)

[Lake County Supervisor of Elections website](#)

[Osceola County Supervisor of Elections website](#)

Osceola/Brevard Connector

The Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX) held an Environmental Advisory Group meeting for input on the proposed Osceola/Brevard County Connectors Highway Expansion. The meeting was attended by Audubon Florida's Charles Lee, OAS's Susan Thome-Barrett, and representatives from the Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, Florida Trails Association, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, as well as CFX and project contractors. With large scale construction expected in the northern part of Deseret Ranch, those representatives were also in attendance. New freeway construction is being considered from Osceola County to Viera in Brevard County.



River Lakes Conservation Area map from St. Johns River Water Management District.

Between the Deseret Ranch area and the coast is the St. Johns River Water Management District's River Lakes Conservation Area—an important source of water for the coastal communities, a wetlands supporting both wildlife and filtration for maintaining water quality, an essential floodplain area and an area used for recreational activities. Audubon emphasized minimizing intrusion into River Lakes using a co-location strategy. Any new fee-for-use roadway should be along existing SR192. Audubon supports no new roadways to transect this pristine area. No new additional information on construction plans has been released.

Defending Rooftop Solar

By Susan Glickman, Southern Alliance for Solar Energy Florida Director. On September 17, the Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) held a workshop to discuss (cont. next page)



Orange Audubon Society (OAS) mission: To promote public understanding of, and an interest in, wildlife and the environment that supports it; 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.

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The OAS^{is} (Orange Audubon Society information source) newsletter is published monthly, September–June, and posted on the OAS website. A link announcing new issues is e-mailed to subscribers.

Never miss out on OAS happenings. Add or update your email address by contacting newsletter@orangeaudubonfl.org.

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Defending Rooftop Solar, cont.

the future of a policy known as solar net metering, which ensures that Floridians who power their home and business with rooftop solar receive full, fair retail credit from their electric utility for the excess energy they generate and send to the electricity grid.

The Commissioners had an option on the table to initiate a rulemaking process that would limit or even eliminate solar net metering in Florida. However, clean energy advocates like yourself mobilized and, together with our allies, we helped send a record number 16,000 comments to the PSC with a clear message: Floridians support rooftop solar, and want to protect it, not restrict it.

We are pleased to report that the Commissioners did not vote to start a rulemaking process to change Florida's cornerstone rooftop solar development policy at this time. See ['Solar Cavalry Turns Out to Defend Net Metering'](#)

The threat to solar net metering may be averted for now, but rest assured we will continue to closely monitor the issue and will be ready to act quickly if, and when, necessary. If that time comes, we'll again call on solar supporters like you to raise your voice in defense of rooftop solar. We thank those of you who took action by emailing the PSC, writing letters to the editors of your local newspapers, calling your Commissioners, and sharing your stories with us on why net metering must be protected.

P.S. The PSC will continue to collect comments on net metering until October 8. [Click here](#) to have your voice heard.

Conservation Committee

New OAS Conservation Chair Susan Thome-Barrett can use your help. Now with Zoom it is not necessary to meet in person. Will you join the committee and help monitor issues and frame and implement calls to action? Or let her know that you will simply write letters when needed by joining the OAS Central Florida Conservation Network. Contact Susan at 2904susan@gmail.com or (407) 690-4725.



Above, *The Eagle Eye* – Bald Eagle 2017 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest, Honorable Mention Winner, Advanced Category. Photo: Robert Van Mierop. Below, Bald Eagle in nest, March 2015, Orlando Wetlands Park. Photo: Mary Keim

October 4, 2020 Last Chance to Join Audubon Florida's EagleWatch Program

EagleWatch season is now!

Is there an eagle nest near your home or office or would you just like to get involved in a great community science effort?

The Audubon EagleWatch Program is hosting several trainings around the state and an online training session from 2:00-4:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 4th.

If you've never attended a training, please visit [this link](#) for more details and to register to attend (space is limited so registration is required).

The EagleWatch program is always looking for new volunteers!

Contact me at (407) 644-0190 or eaglewatch@audubon.org for more information.

*Shawnlei Breeding,
EagleWatch Coordinator*

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive Ambassador Program

The Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD) is part of the Lake Apopka North Shore, a work site used Monday-Thursday by the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) for long-term lake restoration. In 2015, SJRWMD made LAWD available to the public on weekends and federal holidays (non-work days), and Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is now helping to manage public access to this wildlife-rich lake restoration area by recruiting, training and managing volunteers for the new LAWD Ambassador Program..

LAWD has become increasingly popular as local folks have discovered it as a place to enjoy nature from the comfort of one's vehicle.

To help relieve SJRWMD's burden so that LAWD might continue to be open to the public, OAS' LAWD ambassadors are on the drive every Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. helping to orient new visitors. Most volunteer for a 2 1/2 hour shift per month. We could use more help!! If you would consider joining our volunteer pool, please email volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org.



LAWD ambassadors at work. Photo: Bob Stamps

Beginners' Bird Watching Class

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is offering a Beginners' Bird Watching Class this month with OAS Vice President and Education Chair Kathy Rigling substituting for popular instructor Bob Sanders, who is unavailable for this class. Kathy will be assisted by Susan Thome-Barrett, Deborah Green and Angela Gan. The class is full, but will be offered again in the spring. Contact Teresa to be put on a notification list at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com.

Plants for Birds: Restoring the Little Things that Run the World, An Online Talk by Doug Tallamy

Some of us think that computers run the world, but entomologist Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home* and *Nature's Best Hope* shows us why insects, in particular caterpillars, are essential to maintaining the earth's biosphere and, of course, our dwindling bird populations. I had a chance to listen to this dynamic speaker through Audubon Florida's recent Zoom presentation.



Black-and-white Warbler, April 2020 Fort DeSoto Park. Photo: Sam Mitcham

More inspiring than gloomy, Tallamy walked us through what has been happening to our insect and bird populations—including the fragmentation of our natural areas and the ever-growing non-native "dead-scape" landscaping that is covering our private properties. He convincingly told us why it is essential, now more than ever, that we move away from our non-productive landscapes to include not just native plantings but "productive" native plantings.

According to the World Wildlife Federation, two-thirds of our wildlife has vanished since 1970. To save our wildlife, planting and maintaining landscapes that destroy the ecosystem are no longer an option, says Tallamy. But he left us with a plan that all of us can take part in.

He detailed steps to take to save our biosphere. First, shrink the lawn or what Tallamy calls a "dead-scape". He points out that lawns encompass 40 million acres. If half of that were converted to productive native plants, it would be larger than many of our national parks combined. He called this the "Homegrown National Park".

Native plantings will help bridge fragmented natural areas to better support our wildlife while providing important food sources and shelter for our birds and other wildlife. Natives in our yards give us the exposure to nature and plants that has been shown to be important to our health and mental well-being.

Second, add "keystone" native plants to our landscapes. Keystone plants are those 5% of native plants that host 75% of the caterpillars that support our birds. Native oaks are our #1 keystone trees (and those of us who participate in the Mead Botanical Garden bird walks know that the oaks are where the birds are). Native cherries and native willows are other productive trees. He referred us to Audubon's "[Plants for Birds](#)" and the [Florida Native Plant Society](#) for recommendations.

Third, reduce our night-time light pollution. We've all seen insects mesmerized by lights. Tallamy reports that research shows that constant light pollution causes significant reduction in our insect populations with exhaustion, collisions, dehydration and predation caused by these lights. He recommends using motion sensors so lights aren't on all the time and replacing white bulbs with yellow LED bulbs. Research shows the worst outdoor light is the mercury vapor light. Time to upgrade! We also know light pollution affects our migratory bird populations.

Fourth, reduce invasive plants to help prevent them from spreading into our native areas. He described in detail how invasive plants are mostly not eaten by our native insects and can move in to choke off our productive native plantings.

Initiated by Venice Audubon Society, the talk was attended LIVE by over 2,000 people. Here [is the link](#) to the program archived on Audubon Florida's YouTube channel.

Dr. Tallamy will be presenting for Orange Audubon at our February 18th monthly online program, and this is a presentation not to be missed. And you'll want to invite your neighbors and friends! *Susan Thome-Barrett*

Backyard Biodiversity Day Mead Botanical Garden October 17, 2020

Plants for Birds is an important initiative of Orange Audubon Society (OAS) as well as National Audubon Society. For the 6th year, OAS is teaming up with the Florida Native Plant Society and Mead Botanical Garden, Inc. to sponsor Backyard Biodiversity Day, an opportunity to buy native plants and learn more from the Tarflower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society and friends.



Backyard Biodiversity Day volunteer explaining about bird boxes. Photo: Deborah Green

This year's event takes place Saturday, October 17th from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at Mead Botanical Garden in Winter Park. Walks, talks, vendors, music and food trucks will make it a fun event. If you would like to help at OAS' event table, contact Deborah at volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org or 407-637-2525.

Bird Chat: Plants for Birds The Caterpillar Connection

To learn how caterpillars' feeding during the spring leafing-out of the deciduous forests has contributed to the migration of songbirds and about some "keystone" native plants for Central Florida, listen to Deborah Green's talk on Bird Chat, archived on YouTube, [at this link](#).

Upcoming Bird Chats

The October 1st Bird Chat (Thursday 7 p.m. on Zoom) will be on Chimney Swifts by Bruce Anderson, and Jennifer Coleman (see p. 6-7). The October 8th Bird Chat will be by Maria Zondervan on Creating Habitat for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers at Hal Scott Regional Preserve. Register [at this link](#) and join the conversation. After registering you will be sent the Bird Chat link each week.

In case you missed it...

Cultivating the Wild: Bartram's Travels

For its September program, Orange Audubon Society enjoyed a documentary about a group of people influenced and inspired by William Bartram's writings on his Travels throughout the southeastern coastal plain. Robert Wilson's bird photography added to the beauty of this film. Eric Breitenbach shared his experiences as director.

Interviewed for the film were Philip Juras, a talented plein-air painter of the fire-dependent longleaf pine ecosystem; Wayne Hartley of Save the Manatees sharing his experiences with manatees at Blue Springs; Clemson University wildlife biology professor and birder Drew Lanham who lamented the almost-certain loss of the Bachman's Warbler due to habitat loss; author Janisse Ray who shared her experiences living a close-to-nature rural life; and James Holland who documented sources of pollution as Altamaha River Riverkeeper in order to protect water quality.

Bartram was described as having the mind of a scientist and the heart of a poet. His writings—inspiring generations of readers—inspire viewers of this film too. It will be shown on PBS in early 2021.

Terry Piper



Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge trip September 26th. Photo: Kathy Rigling

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

We had a beautiful day on our first Limited Edition Field Trip of the season. The Ruddy Turnstones were handsome in their post-breeding plumage and active on the shoreline with some feeding Wood Storks. With social distancing, part of our group traveled to the Visitor Center and found White-eyed Vireos, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, a young Bald Eagle,

Tufted Titmouse, Familiar But Fascinating

When a cheeky Tufted Titmouse hammered my patio door, I rushed to inspect the source of the racket. Perched on a molding, wings fluttering wildly, and undeterred by my presence, it pecked repeatedly at the glass. Was it an immature bird testing its stout bill? A demand for seeds in that location near the hummingbird feeder? Or playful curiosity? I didn't know what to think.

Common and widespread year-round in the Eastern U.S., these birds visit my backyard often. I watch them attack the feeder every morning, grab a sunflower seed and dart into the trees. I admire their plucky behavior, adorable pointed crest, large black eye, and black forehead patch over a short, stout bill. These beautiful birds have a soft silvery gray above, white below and pale peach-colored wash on the flanks. The size of a sparrow, they appear larger because of their big head and eye, thick neck and full bodies. Very vocal songbirds, they sing a clear *peter, peter* whistle. This species was the first one my grandson could identify, calling them "chuffed chit mice."

Acrobatic foragers, Tufted Titmice often hang upside down or sideways to investigate magnolia seed cones.

When they find large seeds like these on a tree, or at a feeder, they hold the seed with their feet and hammer it open with their bills. In fall and winter they hoard shelled seeds in bark crevices. And they always choose the largest seeds they can when foraging!

In addition to seeds, nuts and berries, the Tufted Titmouse eats insects such as caterpillars, beetles, ants, wasps, stinkbugs, and treehoppers, as well as spiders and snails. Although they nest in cavities, they can't excavate them and therefore use natural holes and old nest holes made by several woodpecker species, including the Pileated Woodpecker and Northern Flicker. They also will nest in artificial structures like nest boxes, fence posts, and metal pipes.

Titmice use damp leaves, moss and grasses to build a cup-shaped nest, and then line the cup with soft material such as hair, fur, wool and cotton. Sometimes they pluck hairs from living mammals. Naturalists have discovered raccoon, opossum, dog, squirrel, rabbit, horse, cow, cat, mouse, woodchuck and even HUMAN HAIR in titmice nests. Ouch!

The Tufted Titmouse is not a conservation concern. The world population of the species is eight million, and their population increased between 1966 and 2015. Furthermore their range has expanded northward over the last half century. The growing popularity of backyard feeders may be one of the reasons. Almost one hundred percent live in the U.S.

My feeder would not be as exciting without the jaunty titmouse. Its presence seems to draw other species to share the bounty. I adore the Tufted Titmouse. You can find them in deciduous and evergreen woodlands, orchards, parks, and your back yard for year-round entertainment. You can't miss! And you will be enchanted, as I am, with this fascinating species.

Linda Carpenter



Tufted Titmouse. Photo: Mary Keim

a Black-and-white Warbler and an American Redstart. Larry's group went on to Black Point Drive where there were no shorebirds but they got to observe a Green Heron at close range and Snowy Egret feeding on minnows.

The groups met up at Oak Hammock Trail where we were treated to some early warblers including male and female Black-throated Blues, a Cape May Warbler and a mystery warbler yet to be determined. *Kathy Rigling*

Saving Chimney Swifts - A Volunteer Rehabber's Story

Chimney Swifts leave Florida by October's end, heading mostly for the Upper Amazon Basin in South America to overwinter. Historically this species (*Chaetura pelagica*) nested in dead trees when the swifts returned to North America each spring. As old-growth forests disappeared, the swifts colonized masonry chimneys. During breeding, there is some sharing of chimneys for roosting, but only a single pair will build a nest in a particular chimney. During migration, swifts will roost in large numbers - often thousands of swifts in one chimney.



Chimney Swifts during migration swooping into an abandoned chimney in downtown Albany, Ga. October 10, 2011. Photo: Larry Gridley

A pair of Chimney Swifts and their young consume more than 12,000 flying insects daily. This species has experienced a greater than 70% decline over the last 50 years, with the rate of decline increasing. A shift in chimney design from masonry to metal, the demolition or capping of suitable chimneys, and decreased availability of insects due to widespread use of pesticides are causes of this decline.

The Genius Drive Nature Preserve in Winter Park has a swift flock that has now grown by seven thanks to the efforts of Jennifer Coleman (and husband Mike), volunteers for [The Haven for Injured and Orphaned Wildlife](#) in Altamonte Springs. Owned by the Elizabeth Morse Genius Foundation, this largely undeveloped 48-acre property is located between Lakes Barry, Virginia and Mizell (with no public access). The following, from Jennifer Coleman, is the story of the

rehab and release of juvenile swifts at the Genius Preserve.

"As a volunteer for the Haven, I have taken orphaned Chimney Swifts home for several years. The babies start hatching in June and the season is over by mid-August. It is important to get them ready for release by early September so they can prepare for migration in October. People find them in their fireplaces after their nests have come unglued from the inside of the chimney; they take them to the Haven. The whole process of raising swifts from hatching to release takes about 4-5 weeks.

Hatchlings, sometimes called "pinkies," need the warmth of a heating pad beneath a tissue "nest." They get 1/50th of a teaspoon of formula per meal every 30-45 minutes. I put the dropper in their mouths and hope they don't drown. It's tough when they don't open their mouths to accept the feeding dropper. It seems to take three hands to get that first drink into their beaks. Mary Jane Isner from the Haven is a seasoned baby bird 'force-feeder' and is always able to teach a bird how to be hand fed. Prying open their minuscule beaks takes the dexterity and gentleness of folding a tiny paper crane.



Chimney Swift juveniles clinging to t-shirt wall. Photo: Jennifer Coleman

This year we learned that a quick blow of breath simulates the parent flying up to the nest and causes the feeding response—an open mouth chirping for food—so much easier!

In the wild when swifts get pin feathers, they exactly match their black spit-coated stick nest. If they weren't so small, this punk-rock look would be intimidating.

At my house nestling swifts climb out of their nest and cling to t-shirts hanging on the walls of a bin 24/7. Screening material is not recommended for swift enclosures because their tail spikes (barbs) go right through and it sheers off the feathers (barbules) as they grow. Swifts' eyes open and the first reaction to seeing your face is to hiss. It is fascinating to me that they are hardwired to expect a bird face.



Chimney Swift at Orlando Wetlands Park. Photo: Mary Keim

We use a timer on our watches to make sure they eat every hour from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. They eat more volume at this stage than later when they start to fledge. It apparently takes more energy to build a bird, than to fly one—probably a nod to the efficient fliers that swifts become. I am amazed at how fast an hour goes by and wonder at how parent birds don't get distracted and botch the feeding schedule without timers on their ankles.

The shower of my daughter's bathroom has been converted to "flight school." T-shirts cover towel racks and faucets. Moving the younger swifts in to watch and hear the older ones accelerates their development and makes them less imprinted on me. I keep a screened window cracked open for heat and humidity and to get the birds accustomed to sounds like lawn mowers and thunder.

After feathers emerge, they begin beating their wings while clutched to the wall to develop muscles before trying to fly. It is mesmerizing to see because they sometimes draft off each other and *(continued next page)*

Saving Chimney Swifts, *cont.*

line up like a mythical creature with many sets of wings. It is a contagious movement; when one starts beating, they all start beating.

One night I let them stay up past dark because one had feebly flown to the other side of the shower during the 8 p.m. feeding. I left the light on and hoped it found its way back to the “clump” – swifts are so social. Later when I checked, it landed on me like, “Hello, Mom!” Then a second one got the nerve to fly but didn’t reach the other side or me. When it started freaking, it flew to the window and clung to the masking tape I have put on the pane to prevent them crashing into the glass. Just then an owl smacked into the screen right by the swift. He bounced off and wasn’t hurt. He had been sitting in the tree outside the window and had watched the whole scene.

Releasing Chimney Swifts is exhilarating. Like crows, wild swifts gather around the newbies and help them survive. They will take the new young ones into their chimneys or roosts and do a herd feeding for all the chicks. Later the adults will teach them how to feed on the wing. Like bats, they eat flying insects exclusively. They lose any human imprinting quickly and are ready to migrate by mid-fall.

My story ends when the swifts are released. Theirs continues as down to the Amazon they will fly. Mary Jane Isner, the licensed rehabber, has taught me so much. Her patience with difficult birds rivals a saint’s. Karen Lynch, a licensed rehabber with The Ark Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation in St. Augustine, shared her formula recipe that keeps these birds alive and flourishing, showed me day-to-day care and inspired me with stories of how released birds do really well in the wild. The ‘Dr. Spock’ of Chimney Swift rearing and protection is “Rehabilitation and Conservation of Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*)” by Georgan Z. Kyle and Paul D. Kyle, [available on the web](#) from the [Chimney Swift Conservation Association](#), based in Austin, Texas.”

*Jennifer Coleman,
Rehab Volunteer, The Haven for
Injured and Orphaned Wildlife*

Postscript: The swifts were released at the Genius Drive Nature Preserve southern entrance. There, a cul-de-sac provides a broad vista for viewing the large number of swifts that use the Preserve and nearby area for staging before their long-distance migration.

During the second release of 3 birds, 50 or more swifts suddenly appeared, welcomed the juveniles into the flock, fed with them above the cul-de-sac and just as suddenly vanished into the Preserve.

For the past 14 years Orange Audubon Society (OAS) has conducted bird

surveys at the Genius Drive Nature Preserve; the surveys are led by Bruce Anderson, who grew up birding the area. OAS appreciates the Genius Foundation’s allowing access to the Preserve and the Rollins College Department of Environmental Studies for their help connecting all parties.

OAS’ annual Northwest Florida Panhandle Birding trip this program year will be April 29–May 2, 2021. The trip will include a stop at Wakulla Springs, [a known swift stopover](#).

Teresa Williams



Clockwise, left to right: Chimney Swift. Photo: Jeff O’Connell. Barn Swallow. Photo: Joyce Stefancic. Barn and Bank Swallows on wire. Photo: Kathy Rigling. Tree Swallow. Photo: Susan Kirby.

Swifts and Swallows

Swifts and swallows – both avian aerialists – may look similar, but they’re not related at all. Swifts are more closely related to hummingbirds and swallows to songbirds. Through convergent evolution they’ve developed some of the same physical traits to exploit the bug-eating niche.

Roger Tory Peterson called swifts “cigars with wings.” If the bird’s wings are uniformly long, skinny, and fluttering, kind of like a bat—that’s a swift. If the wings are relatively thick near the body and then tapering—that’s a swallow.

Swifts fly in the upper part of the air column as they hunt; swallows pursue insects closer to the ground or water. Also, if the bird is perched on a nest box, power line, or branch, that’s a giveaway: only swallows can sit upright.

The nests also are dramatically different. The swift’s nest is a hunk of sticks attached to the side of a vertical surface with their saliva. Swallows use either smeared-mud chambers (Barn and Cliff), a trunk cavity (Tree), or holes dug into dirt bluffs (Bank). The two most common swallows in our area are Barn Swallows—common throughout the summer—and Tree Swallows that winter here. By now most of the Barn Swallows have flown south, and the Tree Swallows are just beginning to arrive.

Sources: [National Audubon Society](#) and [Nature North](#).

**North Shore Birding Festival,
December 3-7, 2020**

Big news for the 5th annual North Shore Birding Festival! Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is holding in-person field trips and online keynotes, so it is a “hybrid festival.” The dates have changed to December 3-7, 2020.

OAS has booked the Wekiwa Springs State Park Youth Camp as a place to host some out-of-town trip leaders and to rent lodging to a few guests.

Having the Youth Camp will allow us to host a star-gazing program with Derek Demeter, Planetarium Director at Seminole State College! We will be able to listen for Whip-poor-wills and owls and the Birding by Kayak trip will be on the beautiful Wekiva River.

We still plan to explore the Lake Apopka North Shore and other Central Florida birding hotspots.

Trips will be limited to 10-12 people with 2 leaders, with masks and other current COVID-19 precautions. With smaller trips we are planning several trips to places we have gone in the last few years and quite a few new locations.

More information will appear in the next *OASis*, but if you are interested in knowing the new schedule, about new leaders, and when registration will start—to be sure to get in on the smaller trips—sign up for notifications [at this link](#). New information will also be posted on the North Shore Birding Festival [Facebook page](#) and [website](#).

*Deborah Green,
North Shore Birding Festival Committee Chair*

Apopka Swallow-tailed Kite Update

Apopka, a Swallow-tailed Kite with a transmitter affixed and monitored by the Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) in Gainesville, has quite a history ([see the May 2018 OASis p.6](#)). For the third year this kite spent spring and summer in Central Florida but did not nest. He then spent six weeks in the St. Johns River marshes and left Florida migrating south on August 9th. He flew south from the tip of the Everglades, SE over Islamorada and south over Cuba. He spent a dangerous 32 hours over open water flying SSW to Honduras. Once over land, he traveled quickly through Central America, over the Andes, through the Amazon and is now safe in Rondonia, Brazil where he has wintered the last 3 years. Thanks to [Gina Kent of ARCI](#) for these exciting reports.



OCTOBER/NOVEMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Chat, Chimney Swifts with Bruce Anderson

October 1, 2020
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

**Beginners' Bird Watching Class,
Orlando Wetlands Park and Lake Jesup**

October 3, 10 & 17, 2020
Contact Teresa at (407) 644-0796

Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walks, Winter Park

October 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31, 2020
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

Bird Chat, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers with Maria Zondervan

October 8, 2020
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

October 10, 2020
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

**Limited Edition Field Trip: Three Lakes Wildlife
Management Area, Kenansville**

October 11, 2020
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

**October Program: The UCF Purple Martin Project:
Early Lessons from an Undergraduate Research
Program - Anna Forsman**

October 15, 2020
Contact Terry at (321) 436-4932

**Backyard Biodiversity Day, Mead Botanical Garden,
Winter Park**

October 17, 2020
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

**Limited Edition Field Trip: Lake Apopka North
Shore, Clay Island**

November 14, 2020
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

**Bird Migration: Insights from Banding Studies-Jim
McGinty**

November 19, 2020
Contact Terry at (321) 436-4932

**Monthly Field Trip: Lighthouse Point Park, Ponce
Inlet**

November 21, 2020
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834