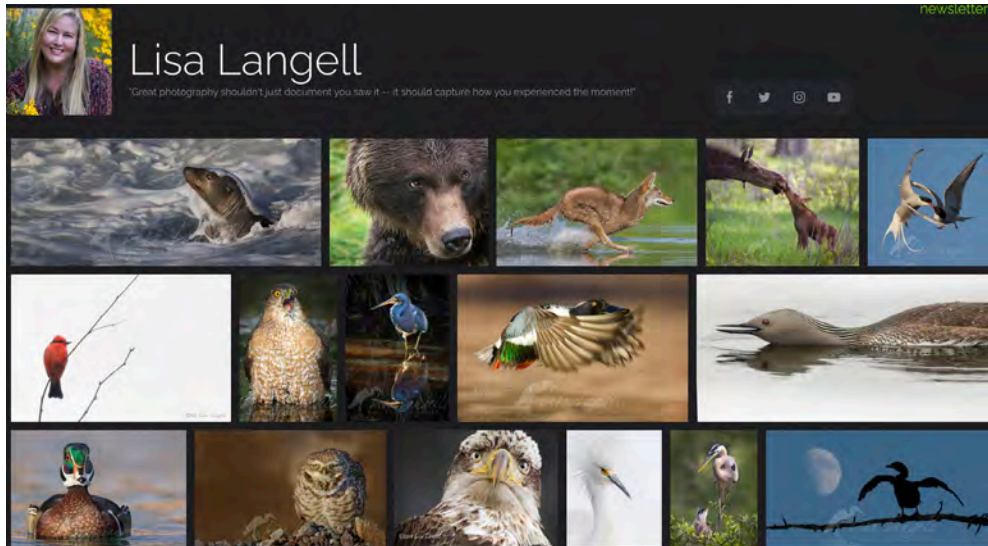




This Month's Program: December 17, 2020

Elements of an Excellent Nature Photo by Lisa Langell



The most important ingredient in an excellent photo is to “wow the audience,” says Lisa Langell, a full-time, award-winning photographer from Phoenix, Arizona. Lisa will present “Elements of an Excellent Nature Photo” for Orange Audubon Society’s (OAS) December 17th program. The program is a lead-in to the OAS 2021 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest, which has a deadline of April 15, 2021.

Lisa sits on the Board of Directors for the North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA). Entries in the Chertok contest must follow NANPA ethical standards. Lisa’s photography has appeared in numerous prestigious publications and galleries, and recently she wrote a feature article in *Outdoor Photographer* magazine. Lisa is also an ambassador for Tamron and FotoPro.

In this fun, interactive and educational session, you will learn:

- Compositions that hold the viewer’s attention
- How incorporating contrast matters
- Tips, exercises and live activities to help you recognize high-quality images
- How, why, and what you can do to create your own excellent photos!

You can see more of Lisa’s work at www.langellphotography.com.

On December 17th, 7 p.m. the program will be presented through Zoom with the link to be provided in the Mid-month Update and on the OAS website. The program will be posted on [OAS’ YouTube channel](#) for later viewing.

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.

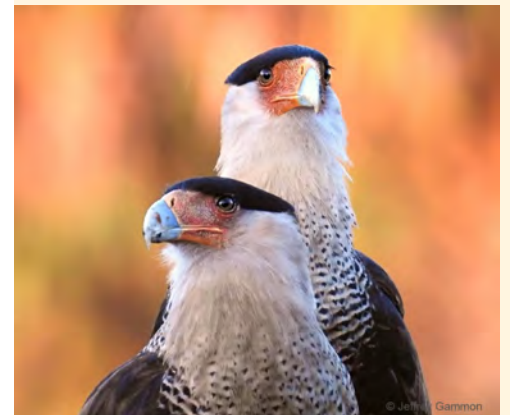


No December Monthly Field Trip Join a Christmas Bird Count

Instead of offering a field trip in December, Orange Audubon Society encourages you to participate in one or more Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) between Thursday, December 17th and Sunday, January 3rd. *Continued on p. 5*

North Shore Birding Festival Keynote December 3, 2020 by Dr. Joan Morrison

The Florida population of Crested Caracaras has its northern extent in Seminole and Volusia counties, and the North Shore Birding Festival (p.8) has a trip seeking these federally threatened raptors. Dr. Joan Morrison and her former student James Dwyer wrote the chapter on Crested Caracaras for Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s *The Birds of North America*. A caracara banded by James fifteen years ago was recently seen by local photographer Paul Eisenbrown. Dr. Morrison will inform us about these fascinating raptors on Thursday, December 3rd at 6:30 p.m. on YouTube Live. The program will be archived for later viewing. Here’s the link to [OAS’ YouTube channel](#). Join us!



Dapper Duo—Crested Caracara. 2020 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. Honorable Mention, Novice Category. Photo: Jeffrey Gammon.

Bird Chat with OAS

On December 10th the Bird Chat team will highlight waterfowl. If you have never attended this Zoom program, register [at this link](#).

Voices Still Needed to Save the Arctic

This is a critical moment for the north slope of Alaska, despite reduction in demand for oil through reduction of travel due to COVID-19. Undoing decades of federal protection, U.S. officials have moved to open more than 1.5 million acres of Alaska's [Arctic National Wildlife Refuge \(ANWR\)](#) to oil and gas drilling. At stake is a pristine wilderness that is home to polar bears, Arctic foxes, caribou and vast numbers of birds and other wildlife.

Drilling will subject the region to devastating oil spills and, by releasing fossil fuels now sequestered underground, it will contribute to greater emissions of CO2 and methane, increasing the climate crisis that is already threatening so many Arctic species.

National Audubon Society encourages us to write to the Alaska State Director of the Bureau of Land Management and mail your letters so they will arrive by December 17th. [Link to download template.](#)

So that you can write a good letter, here's a lot of background: ANWR is located on the northern coast of Alaska, about 100 miles east of Prudhoe Bay and the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR).



Northern Alaska National Wildlife Range (ANWR), Coastal Plain 1002 Area. Image: U.S. Energy Information Administration

The coastal plain, also known as Area 1002, covers 1.5 million acres and is about 8% of the total area of ANWR. Before drilling, the government needs to conduct seismic surveys to map the below ground geology of the coastal plain, which will inform energy developers of where, and how much, oil might be within the region. Seismic surveys concern conservationists, since the heavy equipment they require can damage the refuge's sensitive tundra for decades. After the Prudhoe Bay oilfields were



Pectoral Sandpipers and American Golden Plovers breed in the Arctic and migrate to South America stopping over in locations like the sod fields at the Lake Apopka North Shore. Above, Pectorals Sandpipers. Photo: Lynn Marie Folts. Below, American Golden Plover with resident Killdeer. Photo: Sam Mitcham

drilled in the 1980s, scientists were unable to identify the effects of oil development on shorebirds and their predators because there wasn't enough data collected beforehand.

For ANWR, biologists hoped to at least paint a thorough before-and-after picture, but COVID-19 has cancelled research this season. The pandemic has heightened the risk of traveling to remote areas with limited medical facilities. Researchers also do not want to unwittingly introduce COVID-19 to Alaska Indigenous communities that live near the refuge. UCF Kighthawk Audubon's own Brian Cammarano, a trip leader at the North Shore Birding Festival, was slated to be a part of a research team in Alaska tracking Hudsonian Godwits (in the sandpiper family). This small godwit breeds on grassy tundra in Alaska and Canada and winters in southern South America. During migration, it feeds in flooded fields, shallow marshy pools and on beaches and mudflats. Tracking devices attached to its legs help determine stopover points so that these places can be better conserved.

Losing the 2020 field season is a real setback, especially in light of the administration's *continued 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.

Orange Audubon Society
P.O. Box 941142
Maitland, FL 32794-1142
www.orangeaudubonfl.org

President and OASis Editor:
Deborah Green
info@orangeaudubonfl.org
(407) 637-2525

The OASis (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.

For other membership information, contact: Mike Daley
miked129e@gmail.com
(407) 417-7818

JOIN OAS' [MEETUP GROUP](#)
LIKE OAS' [FACEBOOK PAGE](#)

Orange Audubon Society, Inc. is a Florida not-for-profit organization, tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE, 1-800-435-7352, WITHIN THE STATE. FROM OUTSIDE OF FLORIDA CALL 1-850-410-3800. VISIT www.800helpfla.com FOR HELP. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. REGISTRATION NO. CH2330

continued from p. 2. unconscionable push to hand out the leases as quickly as possible.

The Arctic National Wildlife *Range* was established in 1960 to preserve unique wildlife, wilderness and recreational values. The Alaska Permanent Fund is a \$65 billion dollar fund managed by a state-owned corporation and fueled by oil and gas revenues. The fund was created in 1976 and by 1982 had begun giving an annual dividend (the PFD)—ranging from roughly \$1,000 to \$2,000—to every Alaskan who registered for it.

Because of this PFD, as well as the jobs created by the oil industry, many Alaskans—including Indigenous Peoples—support drilling.

In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) re-designated the Arctic National Wildlife Range as part of ANWR with part designated as wilderness, but Area 1002 of the coastal plain was not so designated.

The U.S. Department of the Interior and the Chamber of Commerce have been pushing for drilling in Area 1002 and have worked with the Alaska delegation—most prominently Senator Lisa Murkowski, whose father Frank Murkowski worked 20 years in the Senate toward this goal. This push for new oil production is to support the dying Trans Alaska Pipeline System.

Murkowski and the Alaska delegation lobbied to insert a controversial provision into the Trump administration's 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The provision mandated oil and gas leasing, development and production in ANWR's coastal plain. Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle have listened to environmentalists and advocates for the Indigenous Peoples to work to repeal that provision before it is too late. H.R. 1146, the Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act, passed the House with a 225-193 vote in late September 2019, but died in the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, chaired by Senator Murkowski.

Another important effort to prevent more Arctic drilling is to put pressure on banks. Banks continue to play a key role as major financiers of the coal, oil

and gas industry, effectively delaying the much needed transition from a fossil fuel-based to an efficiency- and renewable energy-based economy.

An effort by Sierra Club and a coalition of other environmental groups has pushed banks to pledge not to fund Arctic Drilling. Right now, Bank of America is the only major American bank that has not yet ruled out such funding. See more [about this effort here](#).

ANWR still carries scars from seismic testing conducted more than 30 years ago. And now, huge earthshaking vehicles could soon be driving over this fragile area of tundra 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for months, posing a serious threat to migratory bird habitats, denning polar bears, and the calving area for the Porcupine caribou herd, an essential subsistence resource for Indigenous Peoples of Alaska and Canada. Please tell the Bureau of Land Management you oppose seismic oil exploration on the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge. Here again is the [link](#). It may seem like the Arctic is far away but, as in the Amazon, upsetting balance there has global implications. Please write and mail a letter that will arrive by December 17th. Thank you!

Deborah Green

Orlando Energy Future

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is proud to be a member of the First 50 Coalition, a broad sustainability alliance founded in 2017, including the League of Women Voters of Orange County, Sierra Club, and FL SUN (Solar United Neighbors). The name First 50 refers to the first 50 mayors to make commitments to use 100% renewable energy at a time when the Trump administration announced a pullout of the Paris Climate Accord.

Thanks to notification from Raquel Fernandez, the full-time staffer employed by Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign to coordinate efforts of the First 50 Coalition, I learned that on November 17th the Orlando Utilities Commission (OUC) would present its Electric Integrated Resource Plan (EIRP) in a public workshop. I watched the four-hour EIRP workshop on Zoom and during the public comment period spoke on behalf of OAS on the importance of energy efficiency for

low income residents.

OUC is a municipally-owned public utility providing electric and water services to the citizens of Orlando, St. Cloud, and unincorporated Orange and Osceola counties. Established in 1923 by a special act of the Florida Legislature, OUC provides electric, water, chilled water and/or lighting services to 400,000 accounts. It is the second largest municipal utility in Florida and 14th largest municipal utility in the country. OUC is governed by a five-member commission that includes Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer. OUC's power is primarily produced at the OUC-owned Stanton Energy Center in east Orlando and includes a diverse fuel portfolio, with nearly 20 megawatts of solar energy, described in the [OUCRoadmap.com](#).

In part due to lobbying by the First 50 Coalition, OUC plans to transition the Stanton Energy Center's coal-fired generating units away from polluting coal. The EIRP stated that coal-fired generation will be significantly reduced no later than 2025 and eliminated no later than 2027.

The rub is that the EIRP states that both Stanton coal-fired units will be converted from coal to natural gas, with retirement of the converted units no later than 2040. The First 50 Coalition wants OUC to move directly to solar and other renewables, since natural gas is now produced through highly damaging fracking. Also, although natural gas produces less CO2 than coal it is still a fossil fuel and not sustainable, unless produced from biomass or some such process.

OUC now pledges to achieve Net Zero CO2 Emissions by 2050, a commitment that aligns with Mayor Dyer's 2017 aspirational proclamation to achieve 100% renewable energy generation for Orlando by 2050.

The EIRP guides how OUC generates and supplies electricity in a way that balances Affordability, Reliability, Resiliency and Sustainability. An Advisory Panel, with members appointed by the Commissioners, had a chance to rank these four attributes and Affordability floated to the top.

Affordability is a priority for low-income customers, but Sara Isaac, chair of the First 50 Coalition's energy *continued*

continued from p. 3. efficiency committee, points out that affordability must be measured by average utility bills and relative energy burden rather than the cost of an individual kilowatt hour. OUC should also ensure that traditionally marginalized neighborhoods benefit equally from the transition to renewable energy. My point in public comments was that energy efficiency programs should not just be good public relations but should make up a quantitative part of the energy portfolio. I cited the average 13% energy reduction result of OAS' and the City of Winter Park's 2015-7 [Low Income Energy Efficiency Program funded by a Toyota Together Green grant \(p. 3\)](#).

Regarding solar, OUC's main source of new energy, the utility is investing in energy storage to maintain reliability and resiliency. Officials pointed out that despite being called The Sunshine State, Florida experiences an average of 277 (nearly 76%) partly cloudy days per year and cannot rely on solar alone. They also stated that space to establish solar farms is a challenge. However, in public comments, participants stated that rooftops and other creative locations for solar need to be explored. In fact OUC has some creative efforts going on, including a [solar array at a closed landfill](#).

Instead of saying it commits to 100% renewable by a certain date, OUC now states that it is committed to *zero net carbon*. What is the difference? OUC says that by 2050, all of OUC's CO2 emissions will be offset by clean energy sources such as renewable energy, efficiency measures, electrification, wind-by-wire generation, carbon offsets, etc. Carbon offsets are credits from a project that reduces greenhouse gas emissions like tree planting or electric vehicle adoption. They are produced by one entity and sold and used by another entity to support emission reductions. A standard like the [Verified Carbon Standard \(VCS\)](#) makes sure the credits are valid.

It is exciting to be a part of a grassroots effort like this and I commend Mayor Dyer and OUC for listening to the First 50 Coalition and other citizen input. *Deborah Green*

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

"Just as biodiversity strengthens natural systems, the diversity of human experience strengthens our conservation efforts for the benefit of nature and all human beings."

So begins the first entry in Audubon's new *Equity, Diversity & Inclusion How-to-Guide* that was recently rolled out to all chapters. Webinars on the 48-page guidebook are being presented. To support this effort, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) has established an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Committee with Paula Duenas, Sonia Stephens and Susan Thome-Barrett serving as members.



Birding for Millennials and Others Trip at the January 2020 North Shore Birding Festival. Photo: Marah Green

Data shows the next generation will be more racially, ethnically and culturally diverse than their parents' or grandparents' generations. And the Audubon organization recognizes that the diverse variety of experiences, perspectives and skills will help contribute to the lasting protection and stewardship of birds and bird habitats. It wasn't always that way.

Historically bird conservation organizations have not engaged people of color, low-income individuals, and younger people. Early conservationists perpetuated and normalized the taking of indigenous lands, preventing ethnic minorities and low-income whites from owning, living on and harvesting from areas protected for wilderness. Regulations favored sportsmen over subsistence hunters.

John James Audubon himself was a slave owner who held white supremacist views in addition to being a naturalist, adventurer, artist and storyteller. For more information about the man who inspired a group of 18th century ladies to name their conservation organization after him, read "The Myth of John James Audubon" at [this link](#).

EDI is an acronym that encompasses

three separate, but deeply interrelated, concepts: equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Equity refers to internal culture and external outcomes. An equitable society is one in which an individual's race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, or other marker no longer predicts (in a statistical sense) one's life outcomes. For us, this means all individuals should have similar opportunities to access and benefit from a clean and healthy environment and that no group should bear disproportionate burden of the impacts from pollutants and land degradation.

Diversity refers to people. Equitable outcomes are only possible if decisions and systems are designed, approved, and implemented by the full spectrum of people impacted. Diversity is about who is in the room and that all identities and groups are represented: race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language and physical appearance.



Youth Photography and Birding Trip at the January 2020 North Shore Birding Festival. Photo: Tina Pruitt

Inclusion is about processes. Inclusive systems operate in a way that diverse individuals can participate fully in decision-making processes. Inclusion creates cultures and systems in which any individual or group is welcomed, respected, supported and valued. Inclusive spaces allow power to be shared across all groups in a meaningful way. And, it is noted, a truly inclusive group is necessarily diverse but a diverse group may or may not be inclusive.

OAS has committed to spending the time and effort to become more reflective of our community and allow us to tap into the diverse talent pool that is around us. If you would like to be a part of the committee or have ideas on how to maximize EDI in our chapter, contact us at info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Susan Thome-Barrett

Award Spotlights Orange Audubon Society for its Volunteer Work at Lake Apopka

The St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) has awarded Orange Audubon Society (OAS) the prestigious Bob Owens Award for Citizen Volunteer Service. We received the award for our conservation and public education work at Lake Apopka and on the Lake Apopka North Shore.



“We’re proud to celebrate Orange Audubon Society’s contributions to the community and its outstanding support for the District’s ongoing work to restore and protect Lake Apopka and the Lake Apopka North Shore,” said SJRWMD Executive Director Dr. Ann Shortelle. “The dedicated volunteers of this organization have vastly expanded the public’s awareness and appreciation of this natural area.”

Over the years, OAS members have been a driving force behind the resurgence of Lake Apopka’s popularity as a birding and wildlife viewing destination.

Among its many accomplishments, OAS volunteers are on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD) each Saturday and Sunday as Ambassadors, providing maps and information to visitors. OAS manages a [LAWD Facebook page](#) with over



One of the educational kiosks designed by OAS through grants from National Audubon Society. Photo: Jennifer Hew *Hew Photography*

13,000 followers and organizes the [North Shore Birding Festival](#), which in 2019 brought in visitors from 18 states, two Canadian provinces, and the UK. Other achievements include securing four rounds of grants from the National Audubon Society to develop educational kiosks for the North Shore, participating in bird, butterfly and dragonfly surveys there since January 2001, and continuing work to build a nature and environmental education center in the North Shore area.

OAS is thrilled to be recognized with the Bob Owens Award while working to protect such an amazing area. People really appreciate being able to get away from traffic and city noise and see so much wildlife on both the Lake Apopka Loop Trail and the Wildlife Drive.



Volunteers at the entrance to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. Photo: Jack Horton

The award was presented during the November 10th SJRWMD Governing Board meeting and accepted by Jack Horton, Loretta Satterthwaite, and Bob Stamps for OAS. The award is named for the late Bob Owens of Ormond Beach, a vocal supporter of environmental programs.

With the LAWD Ambassador Program and other projects, OAS can always use help. If you would like to help us, email volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org. Thank you. *Deborah Green*

Reducing Environmental Impact During the Holidays

Between Thanksgiving and New Year’s, landfill waste in the United States increases by an estimated 25 million tons of trash per week. A few eco-friendly swaps to consider this holiday season to benefit our planet and local communities:

Instead of wrapping presents in paper with glossy/shiny and glittery decorations — making them non-recyclable — opt for recyclable wrapping materials with re-usable fabric ribbon. Or wrap a present in a present! For example, gift seeds or a plant in a decorative pot.

When selecting gifts, support small, local and fair-trade businesses when possible. Etsy is a fun option for finding handmade gifts online. There are also tons of online options for making donations — on both local and global scales — in lieu of physical gifts.

Decorating our homes inside and out is a fun but energy intensive way to celebrate the holidays. When selecting decorative lights, choosing an LED option is more efficient and saves more energy than traditional incandescent bulbs. Using timers can also be an easy way to monitor electricity usage. Solar-powered decorative lighting is even available, eliminating energy use altogether. *Victoria Schwartz*

Christmas Bird Counts, cont.

The annual Audubon CBC, now in its 121st year, is the longest-running Community (Citizen) Science survey in the world and contributes to our knowledge of which species are doing well and which are in trouble. Over 70,000 volunteer bird counters in more than 2,400 locations across the Western Hemisphere track the health of bird populations on a scale that professional scientists alone could never accomplish. Each CBC is performed 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. For newcomers, the compiler will group you with experienced birders. See page 8 for CBC dates and contact information.

**Falcon Freeway-
A Big Year of Birding
on a Budget
A Book By Christian
Hagenlocher**

Have you ever dreamed of taking a year to chase birds throughout the US and Canada? Well if you are like me and can't actually currently undertake such an adventure, reading about someone's journey can be quite enjoyable.

Inspired by Kenn Kaufman and Roger Tory Peterson, Christian Hagenlocher decided to pursue his own Big Year in 2016 while in between courses in graduate school.

His twist: that he was going to attempt his Big Year on a budget and that he was also going to interview birders along the way.

He called his journey the EPIC Big Year because he wanted to *Engage* with the birding community (through interviews), *Preserve* bird habitat (through various projects that he participated with along the way), *Inspire* people to get outdoors and *Connect* people and birds using technology.

His story is light and entertaining. The chapters are mostly organized by location. I particularly enjoyed the section on Florida where he runs into some familiar people including Greg Miller of Wildside Nature Tours.

I also was fascinated to read about his time spent at Gambell, Alaska; he spent several weeks there and reading his descriptive narrative helps one to experience that landscape at least in a second hand viewpoint.

Christian did spend a lot of time sleeping in his car and eating gas station snacks in order to afford his year of birding — including air fare to his trips to Alaska; he even offers tips at the end of the book for birding on a budget.

Another nice feature of this book are the beautiful bird illustrations by Andrew Guttenberg which captures some of Christian's finds along his travels.

To learn more about Christian and his Birding project visit: <http://www.thebirdingproject.com>.

Kathy Rigling



Bald Eagles in nest monitored through EagleWatch. Photo: Jack Horton.

**Your Biggest Year Yet
Orlando Wetlands Park
January 2, 2020**

With masks and social distancing and Sherri Brown as our expert trip leader, join Orange Audubon Society on this fun field trip to make 2021 your biggest birding year yet. Time will be 8-11:30. Cost is for \$10 Audubon members, \$15 nonmembers. Limited to 10 participants. Everyone must register in advance Contact me at riglingk@aol.com or (407) 488-9559 to sign up.

Kathy Rigling

EagleWatch Report

Audubon Florida's EagleWatch is the only consistent, widespread nest monitoring effort in Florida and plays an important role in protecting nests by documenting new and relocated nest locations. EagleWatch volunteers, numbering more than 450, monitored and collected data on 852 nests across Florida — a growth of 15% from last years count of 740 nests. Nests are monitored in 65% of Florida's counties.

In addition, eight eaglets from 5 counties were banded and released. Six of the fledglings came from natural nests and two from nests on artificial structures. Since banding was initiated in 2017, the EagleWatch staff has banded and released 48 juvenile eagles.

EagleWatch started in 1992 in the Central Florida region with 22 volunteers. Today the program is statewide. Contact EagleWatch Program Manager Shawnlei Breeding at eaglewatch@audubon.org or (407) 644-0190.

Budding Photographers — Mark Your Calendars

Green PLACE Nature & Photography Hike

Co-leaders: Beth Jackson, Orange County naturalist, and Lee Ann Posavad, wildlife photographer. Ideal for youth, families, and others to get great tips on wildlife photography and learn about the easy-to-photograph plant and animal inhabitants of this Orange County Green PLACE property. FREE.

Location: Savage Christmas Creek Preserve, Christmas

Date/Time: Saturday, Feb 13, 2021; 9:00-11:30 a.m.

Sunrise Photo Shoot

Instructor: Milton Heiberg—(407) 658-4869

Registration: Teresa Williams—(407) 644-0796

Cost: \$60 members; \$75 non-members

Location: Orlando Wetlands Park, Christmas

Date/Time: Saturday, Feb 20, 2021; 6:00-10:00 a.m.

Class Limit: 12 participants

Youth & Family Photo Workshop

Instructor: Susan Kirby—(443) 994-9909

Registration: Teresa Williams—(407) 644-0796

Cost: \$5 members; \$15 non-members per adult;

Youth (10-17) FREE with registered adult

Location: Mead Botanical Garden, Winter Park

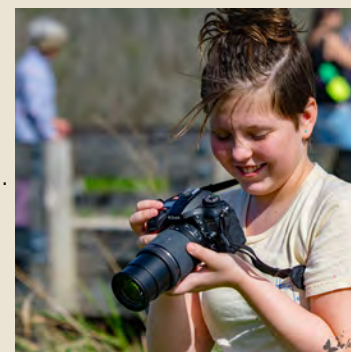
Date/Time: Saturday, Mar 13, 2021; 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Chertok Nature Photography Contest

Deadline to submit all entries: Apr 15, 2021

Deadline to replace disqualified entries: May 20, 2021

Awards: June 17, 2021—(407) 644-0796



Young photographer. Photo: Tina Pruitt

In case you missed it...

Gulf Coast Bird Banding

Jim McGinity gave an amazing talk on bird banding for Orange Audubon's November program. He has been banding for 20 years, first in Wisconsin and for the past 11 years on the Gulf Coast. He explained that he only recently began doing presentations on it because of his concerns over the loss of 2.9 billion birds over 50 years. After years banding at Hammock Park in Dunedin that is near his house and the school where he teaches, Jim has moved the station to Caledesi Island State Park—one of the barrier islands. He wants to know how migratory birds are using the Gulf Coast barrier islands, including how long they stay during migration. The terms in the literature are “fire escapes,” for places the birds use in emergencies, and “refueling stations,” where they stay to feed for awhile. This information can support conservation efforts in a habitat that is highly coveted for development. Watch the recording of his talk on YouTube at [this link](#).

Deborah Green



Purple Sandpiper. Photo: Sam Mitcham

Ponce Inlet Field Trip

On November 21st seven masked birders enjoyed Orange Audubon Society's field trip to Ponce Inlet. Sightings included Black Skimmers, Royal and Forster's Terns, Willets, Ring-billed and Laughing Gulls, Ruddy Turnstones and other shorebirds. The Purple Sandpiper on the jetty rocks was “a lifer” for many participants. Nesting in tundra of the high Arctic, Purple Sandpipers winter on rocky ocean coasts of northern North America and Europe and are rare this far south. If you need this lifer, check it out.

Larry Martin

American Kestrel, A species in peril?

A small, colorful raptor, the American Kestrel is North America's most common and widespread falcon. About nine inches long, the beautiful male has a slate-blue head and wings, a rufous back and tail, dark spots on its chest and dark bars on its back.



American Kestrel eating a Bananaquit on Orange Audubon Society's trip to Puerto Rico. Photo: Lorri Lilja

The duller female has rufous wings, a rufous back with dark bars and a rufous striped tail. Both sexes have distinctive, memorable dark vertical slashes on the sides of their white faces.

These birds like expansive farm fields, meadows, and grasslands where they can easily spot insects and small prey.

When driving through rural areas, I have seen them perched

on utility wires, telephone poles, hovering as they face into the wind, flapping and adjusting their tails to stay in place. Since they need trees or structures for nesting cavities, they also gravitate to pastures, parklands, towns and cities—habitats that have been modified by humans.

American Kestrels eat primarily insects, small rodents and birds, small snakes, lizards and frogs. Pouncing on their prey, they seize it with both feet and finish it off on the ground, carry it to a perch to eat, or hide it somewhere for later. Common prey include grasshoppers, beetles, dragonflies, scorpions and spiders, butterflies, mice, bats and small songbirds.



American Kestrel. Photo: Joyce Stefancic

Since they cannot construct their own nest cavities, these birds rely on old woodpecker holes, natural tree hollows, rock crevices and nooks in buildings and other structures. The male searches for nest cavities then shows his finds to the female who makes the final decision. American Kestrels will also use nest boxes. (Consider putting up one to attract a breeding pair!)

The life of a small raptor is not easy; they often become prey for larger raptors, rat snakes and corn snakes. And because of land and tree clearing practices, Kestrels are losing food sources and nesting cavities. Exposure to pesticides and other pollutants also has negatively affected reproduction—reducing clutch size and hatching success.

As a result of these significant environmental concerns, American Kestrel populations declined by 51 percent between 1966 and 2017. If current trends continue, American Kestrels will lose another 50 percent of their population by 2075.

How to find this spectacular raptor? Scan fence posts, utility lines and telephone poles—especially when driving into the country. You also may see American Kestrels harassing large raptors during migration or attacking hawks in their territories during breeding season. Listen for their shrill “killy, killy, killy” screams. And look for the patterned head with dark slashes on the white cheeks. What a splendid bird! So small, so colorful, so distinctive. Check it out! American Kestrels are here year around, common and not too difficult to find once you know what to look for. You will fall in love as I have with this petite wonder.

Linda Carpenter

North Shore Birding Festival, December 3-7, 2020

January 2021 would have been the 5th year that Orange Audubon Society held the North Shore Birding Festival, highlighting the St. Johns River Water Management District's Lake Apopka North Shore, an Important Bird Area. The formula for a birding festival is to combine people who want to learn with trip leaders who enjoy the chase for rare birds plus sharing with other people. Put those together in unique birding venues and you have something people flock to. The North Shore Birding Festival never had an Expo, where vendors of optics, tour companies, book sellers, and artists have displays, since our festival was traditionally timed to precede the Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival in Titusville, which has one of the best expos in the country. With COVID-19 around this fall, Orange Audubon did some soul-searching but decided there was the demand locally for what we offered. We moved the date up six weeks in order to secure the Wekiwa Springs State

Park Youth Camp as a place to house out-of-town trip leaders and some participants. This allowed us to hold night walks including a star walk led by the director of the planetarium at Seminole State College. When we rolled out registration in late October to a mailing list of past participants, within two weeks 40% of the trip slots were full. Many adjustments have had to be made involving precautions against spread of COVID-19, but we are on for this weekend with 42 trips over four days and nearly full attendance. People are craving nature opportunities.

As of press time there are still a few slots and new registrations will be accepted through December 2nd. Details and registration link are on the [website](#) and other information is on the [Facebook page](#). Despite all the difficulties of holding a festival during a COVID-19 pandemic, we are looking forward to a great time. See you out birding!

Deborah Green, North Shore Birding Festival Committee Chair



DECEMBER/JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Crested Caracara, North Shore Birding Festival Keynote by Dr. Joan Morrison

December 3, 2020
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

North Shore Birding Festival

December 3-7, 2020
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Bird Chat, Waterfowl with the Bird Chat Team

December 10, 2020
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

December 12, 2020
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Limited Edition Field Trip: Lake Jesup Conservation Area—Marl Bed Flats, Sanford

December 13, 2020
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Christmas Bird Counts: Contact the compiler to participate.

- **Zellwood/Mt. Dora:** December 17, 2020
Contact Gallus Quigley at gallusq@gmail.com
- **Bay Lake:** December 19, 2020
Contact John Thomson at jthomton@hotmail.com

- **Wekiva River:** December 19, 2020
Contact Jay Exum at jay.h.exum@gmail.com
- **Kissimmee Valley:** December 20, 2020
Contact Chris Newton at dexterdevon68@gmail.com
- **Econlockhatchee:** December 26, 2020
Contact Lorne Malo at lornemalo@bellsouth.net
- **Clermont:** January 3, 2021
Contact John Thomson at jthomton@hotmail.com

December Program: Elements of an Excellent Nature Photo by Lisa Langell

December 17, 2020
Contact Terry at (321) 436-4932

Your Biggest Year Yet Trip, Orlando Wetlands Park

January 2, 2021
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

January 9, 2021
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Limited Edition Field Trip: Fort DeSoto Park

January 10, 2021
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

Best Wishes for a Healthy, Happy Holiday Season!