



### This Month's Program: February 18, 2021

## Creating a Homegrown National Park by Doug Tallamy



Blue-headed Vireo with caterpillar.  
Photo: Sam Mitcham

In his 2020 book, *Nature's Best Hope*, University of Delaware entomology professor and best-selling author Doug Tallamy proposes that we create a "Homegrown National Park" through our home landscapes.

Our country has lost the habitat that birds need and bird populations have declined in the U.S and Canada by 2.9 billion over the past 50 years. Tallamy points out that 54% of the U.S. is now urban/suburban (41% is in agriculture and only 5% in parks). Our public preserves are clearly not enough to sustain biodiversity.

In specifying how we create this wildlife habitat out of our yards, he

details how you need native plants to support the native insects, particularly caterpillars, that birds feed on and feed to their young. He has studied trees in the Eastern United States that are best for hosting caterpillars and will share this information with us. Tallamy's call to action is not only to create native habitat in your own yard but to educate others on it and to convince your neighbors to join in. If you have never heard Tallamy speak, you may want to listen to the program presented in September by Audubon Florida and Venice Audubon [at this link](#).

This presentation — jointly sponsored by Orange Audubon Society, the Tarflower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, Seminole Audubon Society, and two anonymous Audubon members — will focus on the caterpillar connection, as well as the plants best for our Central Florida yards.

It will be aired on YouTube Live — search YouTube for Orange Audubon Society, on which channel the program will be archived for later viewing.

The program will pop up on that [OAS' YouTube channel](#) at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 18th. Prepare your questions and let's use this program to give us all ammunition to expand habitat for the birds we love. Join us for an exciting presentation.

*Terry Piper, Programs Chair*

## Count Backyard Birds!

The next [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) (GBBC) is February 12-15, 2021. The GBBC was the first community (citizen) science project to collect online data on birds and to display results in near real-time. In 2020, GBBC participants turned in 268,674 checklists reporting 6,942 species of birds. This creates an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count (February 12-15), simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. First create [a free online account](#) to enter your checklists. If you already have an eBird (or another Cornell Lab project) account, use your normal login name and password. Counting instructions are at [birdcount.org/tools/counting-instructions](#). Join the fun and contribute to this great citizen science project! You may find a new bird in your "backyard."

*Mary Keim, GBBC Participant*



American Robin eating cabbage palm fruits. Orlando backyard. February 2019. Photo: Mary Keim

## Remembering Dick Smith

With sadness we remember our friend Dick Smith who passed away January 2, 2021, at the age of 82. Dick served as Orange Audubon Society (OAS) president from 2006-08. It was he who began the free Mead Botanical Garden bird walks in fall and spring as a way to introduce newcomers to birding. OAS today benefits from his efforts. Rest in peace.

Orange Audubon Society Guest speaker programs are the 3rd Thursday of each month (September-June) and all but June start at 7:00 p.m.

These programs are normally held at Harry P. Leu Gardens. However, they will be held virtually until further notice due to COVID-19 health precautions.

Bird Chats with OAS are offered most other Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. Your one-time registration at [this link](#) enables you to be notified before each Bird Chat.





## Wetlands and Backyard Habitats

February 2nd is World Wetlands Day and this issue of the *OASis* will highlight one of several wetland locations that Orange Audubon Society (OAS) supports.

This month we also have one of our most important conservation programs of the year — *Creating a Homegrown National Park* by Doug Tallamy— and this issue will

contain information toward the goal of increasing bird habitat through our home landscapes, including protecting our native trees.

We also will follow up on some national efforts that we have been asking you to write letters about and give you a heads up on initiatives coming up in the Florida legislative session starting in March. A lot going on!

*OAS Conservation Committee*



**World Wetlands Day,  
February 2, 2021**

Aerial view of Orlando Wetlands Park. Top left is St. Johns River. Wheeler Road is to the right. Water enters the park from the Iron Bridge Wastewater Treatment Plant. Photo: City of Orlando

The 1200 acres that comprise [Orlando Wetlands Park \(OWP\)](#) were once wetlands draining slowly toward the St. Johns River. The original wetlands were “dewatered” in the 1940s by building canals that shunted water into the river. This created more dry land for cattle ranching and a dairy. In 1986, the City of Orlando bought the land and began constructing artificial wetlands for the purpose of filtering 22 million gallons per day of treated wastewater from the Iron Bridge (Wastewater) Treatment Plant that serves much of eastern Orlando. Here in these artificial wetlands, just as in natural wetlands, the marsh vegetation takes up excess nutrients and protects water quality in the river when the water, now with lower nutrient levels, eventually flows into the St. Johns River. For more details, see [this EPA report](#).

At the November 2017 Audubon Assembly, Alachua Audubon Society President Debra Segal was honored for the design of Sweetwater Wetlands

in Gainesville, now a birding hotspot. [Sweetwater Wetlands](#) filters Gainesville’s stormwater before it reaches Paynes Prairie. She acknowledged that Orlando Wetlands Park, established in 1987, was the pioneer in this technique!

Modeled after Orlando’s pioneering effort are many other treatment wetlands — some treating stormwater alone, others both wastewater and stormwater, others just wastewater. All of these are wonderful wildlife viewing sites, among them [Viera Wetlands](#) near Melbourne, [Wakodahatchee](#) and [Green Cay](#) near Boynton Beach, [Blue Heron Wetlands](#) in Titusville, and [Circle B Bar Reserve](#) near Lakeland. The beneficial way these recreated wetlands work is now well documented, so more and more are being developed in Florida.

The [Lake Apopka Marsh Flow Way](#) is also a constructed wetland, cleaning water going into Lake Apopka.

Let’s appreciate our wetlands.

*Deborah Green*



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 *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](mailto:newsletter@orangeaudubonfl.org).

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## Wetland loss impact

Our water consumption means less water for nature. Wetland loss and pollution has intensified a water crisis threatening all life:

- Nearly 90% of the world's wetlands lost since 1700s, those remaining are disappearing three times faster than forests.
- 25% of all wetland species and 33% of freshwater species face extinction.
- Climate change is reducing surface and groundwater in already dry regions, resulting in increasing competition for water.

## Alaska and New Actions for the Environment

Hours after taking the Oath of Office, President Biden signed an executive order for the U.S. to rejoin the Paris Climate Accord, to stop the Keystone XL Pipeline, and to impose a moratorium on oil and natural gas leasing in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).

Thanks to those of you who followed Orange Audubon Society's and National Audubon Society's (NAS) calls to action ([December OASis p. 2](#)) and wrote objecting to the Bureau of Land Management's unprecedented proposed oil leases in ANWR. On January 6th the oil lease auction was held but *no major or mid-size oil company showed up*. Instead, bids fell well short of the forecasted \$1.8 billion, netting only \$14 million, most of which came from a state agency that has no track record in oil development. "The harsh reality of a world rapidly shifting away from fossil fuels just came crashing in on Alaska. Now the state must learn from the failed Arctic Refuge oil lease sale and join the rest of the world in embracing a clean energy economy," [said one author](#). [See more analysis at this link](#).

All this is only the beginning. NAS and other groups filed a lawsuit on January 19th [to reverse the weakening of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#). Stay posted on NAS conservation efforts by signing up for Action Alerts at [audubon.org/takeaction](http://audubon.org/takeaction).

## Protect Our Tree Canopy

State Representative Anna Eskamani filed HB 6023 in the Florida House of Representatives on January 12th to repeal F.S. 163.045, a 2019 legislative bill *that preempts local government control over the cutting of trees in residential areas*.

Senator Linda Stewart filed a companion bill, SB 596, in the Senate on January 13th. These repeal bills reaffirm that local communities know best how to run and maintain the quality of their communities and, if passed, will take effect July 1, 2021.

Since the passage of F.S. 163.045, anecdotal evidence indicates that property owners and large developers have taken advantage of the law to cut down many perfectly healthy, old growth trees. Repealing this statute should help preserve irreplaceable urban canopies that serve as habitats for birds and other native wildlife. It should also ensure the character of historic neighborhoods across the state and maintain the cooling that trees provide.

In the City of Winter Park — a Tree City USA — following the passage of the bill, staff initially suspended all tree preservation enforcement, but at a City Commission meeting it was voted to reinstate the need for permits for all trees that do not meet criteria of FS 163.045, effective September 9, 2019. Basically trees must be declared "dangerous by a certified arborist or landscape architect" to be removed from a residential property. However, because the person or company that applies for the permit to remove the tree is also the one who hires the arborist or landscape architect, a question of impartiality exists.

The report *Preemption Strategy — The Attack on Home Rule in Florida*, from the nonpartisan watchdog group Integrity Florida, details how new, more aggressive types of preemption laws are increasingly used to weaken the power of local governments over vast areas of law and regulation — often at the behest of rich donors, businesses, and corporate lobbyists. These laws are designed to keep public health, equity, and safety standards low and corporate profit margins high, according to this report.

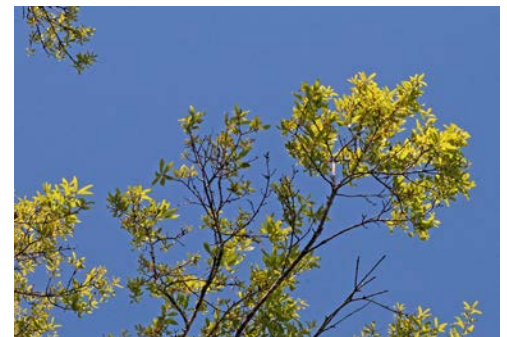
Protecting our older growth trees is not just important for the quality of our neighborhoods. These trees provide essential habitats for a variety of birds

(year-round, seasonal and migrants), mammals (including the declining flying squirrel), insects (essential food source for many of the aforementioned) and other amphibians and reptiles.

In addition, a University of Hamburg study published in 2017 found old growth trees absorb and store more carbon from the atmosphere in proportion to their size compared to younger trees. Older trees are up to 30% more efficient at carbon storage. The study pointed to the importance of managing older trees and forests to assist in the removal and storage of carbon from the atmosphere as one step to help mitigate the effects of climate change.

Local citizens and the local officials they elect should be the individuals that govern and protect their own communities' environments. Thanks Representative Eskamani and Senator Stewart. For many reasons of quality of life and for the birds, we need to protect our trees.

Susan Thome-Barrett



Laurel Oak. Photo: Mary Keim

TREES by Joyce Kilmer

I think that I shall never see  
a poem as lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day  
and lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear  
a nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain,  
who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

Plants for Birds

**Homegrown National Park with Biodiversity**

Dr. Doug Tallamy’s call to action (see p. 1 and be sure to tune in on February 18th) is not only to create native habitat in your own yard but to educate others on it and to convince your neighbors to join in. Orange Audubon Society’s (OAS) Mary Keim and Randy Snyder, native plant gardeners and all-around naturalists, spearheaded OAS’ *Bird- and Butterfly-Friendly Plants for Central Florida* brochure, now available [at this link](#) and a great guide when you are selecting new native plants to install.

In the [January OASis](#), we profiled the brochure’s top bird-friendly trees. They are Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*), Cabbage Palm (*Sabal palmetto*), Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*), Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*), Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), Sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata*), and Winged Elm (*Ulmus alata*).

**Wildflowers for Wildlife**

Florida native wildflowers serve as an important food source for birds in the form of caterpillars and seeds. They also provide nectar and pollen for pollinators. Some of the best wildflowers to support birds and pollinators are highlighted below:

**1. Goldenrods**

(*Solidago* spp.) are the most used herbaceous caterpillar host plants. In our area, 82 caterpillar species

use goldenrods as hosts. Those caterpillars are an important food source for birds. Many pollinators rely on goldenrods for pollen and nectar.

Goldenrod has mistakenly been blamed for triggering allergies, but its pollen is not typically air-borne. Instead, the real allergy trigger is often ragweed, that is wind-pollinated and blooms at about the same time of year as goldenrods. Seaside Goldenrod a.k.a. Southern Seaside Goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens* a.k.a. *S. mexicana*) is usually the most commercially available of our native goldenrods.



Great Golden Digger Wasp on Goldenrod. Photo: Mary Keim

**2. Sunflowers** (*Helianthus* spp.) support 58 species of caterpillars in our area and provide nectar and pollen for pollinators. Their seeds are eaten by birds and other wildlife. Florida gardeners will most often find Dune or Beach Sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*) available commercially. Dune Sunflower blooms much of the year in Central Florida. It is a sprawling groundcover, growing to about 2 feet tall.

**3. Milkweeds** (*Asclepias* spp.) are the Monarch’s and Queen’s primary host plants. They are also important nectar sources for a variety of butterflies. Three species are commonly available commercially: Butterflyweed (*A. tuberosa*) with orange flowers occurs in dry sandy soils landscapes. Swamp Milkweed (*A. incarnata*) with pink flowers occurs in moist, sunny landscapes. Aquatic Milkweed (*A. perennis*) with white flowers occurs in moist to wet soils with partial shade. Avoid the non-native milkweed found in big-box stores because of its potential invasiveness and its tendency to accumulate a disease-causing organism that infects milkweed butterflies.

**4. Coral Honeysuckle** (*Lonicera sempervirens*) supports a variety of caterpillars as hosts and provides nectar for hummingbirds and large butterflies.



Carpenter bee mimic leafcutter bee on Frostweed. Photo: Mary Keim

**5. Frostweed** (*Verbesina virginica*) - 20 species of butterflies and moths use *Verbesina* as a caterpillar host plant in our area. Seeds are eaten by birds. Because this is a tall wildflower, you may choose to put it in the background so it doesn’t look too “weedy.”

**6. Partridge Pea** (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*) is a host for Cloudless Sulphur and Gray Hairstreak. It is



Bumblebee on Partridge Pea. Photo: Mary Keim

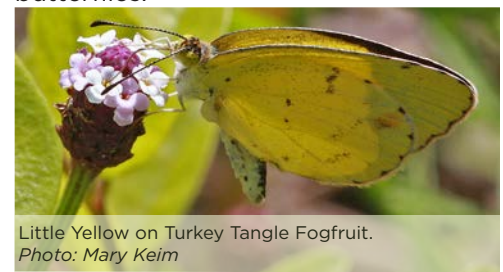
often visited by Bumblebees that use buzz pollination to “milk” pollen out of the anther’s terminal pores. The nectaries are extrafloral and often attracts ants.



Gulf Fritillary larvae on Corkystem Passionvine. Photo: Mary Keim

**7. Corkystem Passionvine** a.k.a. Pale Passionflower (*Passiflora suberosa* a.k.a. *P. pallida*) is a host for Florida’s State Butterfly, the Zebra Heliconian (Zebra Longwing) as well as the Gulf Fritillary.

**8. Turkey Tangle Fogfruit** (*Phyla nodiflora*) provides nectar for pollinators and is a host for White Peacock and Phaon Crescent butterflies.



Little Yellow on Turkey Tangle Fogfruit. Photo: Mary Keim

**The Florida Native Plant Society, Tarflower Chapter, will be selling native plants and providing tips at the Leu Garden Plant Sale March 13th and 14th.**

See also these online resources: [Native Plants for Your Area](#) [Choosing plants for your location](#) [Where to buy](#)

Mary Keim

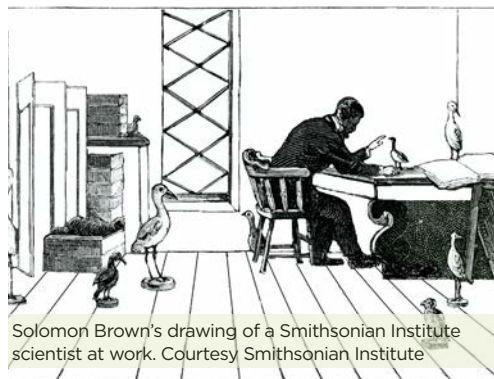
*Audubon's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion...*

**Black History Month February 2021**

In honor of black history month, Orange Audubon Society's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee shares the story of one of the earliest black naturalists, Solomon G. Brown (1829-1906). Brown, born a free man when slavery was legal, was one of the first African-American employees at the Smithsonian Institution; he began working there shortly after it was founded.

Education was out of the question for Brown following the death of his father, so he worked for the Washington D.C. post office. There he was charged to help Joseph Henry while he developed the first magnetic telegraph that ran from D.C. to Baltimore, Maryland.

Through Henry's connections, Brown started working as a general laborer at the Smithsonian — building exhibit cases, cleaning and moving furniture. He developed a close relationship with Assistant Secretary Baird, a naturalist. Baird trusted Brown to become his eyes and ears at the institute — entertaining visitors, handling the mail, making travel arrangements, performing clerical duties and handling payroll.



Solomon Brown's drawing of a Smithsonian Institute scientist at work. Courtesy Smithsonian Institute

Brown educated himself in natural history, illustrated specimens and made maps, and presented on topics such as "The Social Habits of Insects" that he delivered to church organizations and civic groups. He published a book of poetry, and his letters to Baird during the Civil War show the unique views of a free African-American man on the progress of the Civil War as it raged around him.

Brown was self-educated and so widely respected that he was known as Professor Brown. He excelled as a naturalist, writer, illustrator, lecturer, philosopher and poet. He was a community leader as well, elected to the D.C. House of Delegates and

served as superintendents of the Pioneer Sabbath School and the North Washington Mission Sunday school. He retired in February 1906 and died June 1906. *Susan Thome-Barrett*

**Birdability**

Birdability is an initiative to get mobility-impaired people out in the parks and enjoying nature, by way of birding — and in turn, to make birding more accessible. OAS has initiated a review of accessible birding sites that it will be adding to the national [Birdability list](#). Mead Gardens, Newton Park, Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, Lake Eola, Lake Greenwood Urban Wetlands, and Barber Park have been reviewed. If you have a park near you that you feel is accessible to those with decreased mobility or wheelchair mobility and would like to add to our reviews, here is the information that should be included: Name of Park/Trail; distance of trail/drive if known; handicapped parking; elevation changes/ramps; surface (paved, gravel, packed sand); handicapped bathrooms availability; availability of benches/railings; fees (entry/parking). Send information to me at 2904susan@gmail.com. Thanks!

*Susan Thome-Barrett*

**Glass Bottom Boat Soon to be Enjoyed by All**

Silver Springs State Park, located in Ocala, is a popular destination for hiking, camping, paddling, wildlife viewing and glass bottom boat tours. In 1987, the Silver River Museum and Environmental Center opened along with the Silver River State Park. In 2013 Silver Springs State Park was formed when the Florida Park Service acquired the headsprings area.

One thing that has not changed over the years is people's love of the glass bottom boat tours that have been in operation for over 100 years. Unfortunately, not everyone has been able to enjoy this attraction.

The current glass bottom boats and those of the past have not been wheelchair accessible. Often, friends and families traveling together are left with the disappointing decision to either not include their whole group on the tour or bypass

**Beginners' Bird Watching Class**

**March 6, 13 & 20, 2021**

Orange Audubon Society offers a Beginners' Bird Watching Class this spring, taught by Kathy Rigling and Susan Thome-Barrett. The class includes an "outdoor" classroom session and mini-field trip on March 6th at Orlando Wetlands Park (OWP). The second class will meet at Oakland Nature Preserve and the last class will meet at Mead Gardens. All sessions are 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. If you miss one of the spring sessions, you may make-up that day in fall 2021.

Class is limited to 12 students and subject to prevailing COVID-19 safety protocols. Cost for the spring class is \$30 for Audubon members, \$45 for nonmembers and \$10 for children through age 12 with a registered adult. Nonmembers who wish to join should do so concurrently when registering to be entitled to the member discount.

To register (and join concurrently) contact Teresa: [mwilliams@cfl.rr.com](mailto:mwilliams@cfl.rr.com) or (407) 718-1977. For questions about the class, contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559.

the tour altogether. Luckily, this disappointment will end soon with the construction of a long overdue wheelchair-accessible glass bottom boat.

This exciting step forward is due to time and dedication put in over the past six years by Paula Russo, a former Florida State Parks Foundation volunteer turned employee who uses a power scooter. Construction of the new boat began last June at the St. Johns Ship Building shipyard near Palatka. In addition to a flat deck, large aisle space and wheelchair accessibility, the boat will also include underwater lights for night tours and special electronics for hearing aids. Named Chief Potackee, the new boat will be delivered to the park within the coming weeks and is expected to be in service this spring.

*Victoria Schwartz*

## Green PLACE Nature & Photography Hike February 13, 2021

Orange County Green PLACE properties preserve the special places around the county and make them accessible. One of Orange Audubon Society members' favorite Green PLACE properties is Savage Christmas Creek Preserve in Christmas.



Great Horned Owl at Savage Christmas Creek.  
Photo: Mary Keim

Beth Jackson, Orange County Green PLACE manager and naturalist will co-lead this trip along with Lee Ann Posavad, wildlife photographer and enthusiastic photo teacher for her grandchildren and others.

This field trip is 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.

The hike will be Saturday, Feb 13, 2021; 9:00–11:30 a.m. It is free but limited to 10 participants. Masks and social distancing required. To reserve your spot, call Beth at (407) 836-1481.

## Youth & Family Photo Workshop March 13, 2021

Do you have any budding photographers in your life? Remember that the Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest has a Youth Category! Sign up for Orange Audubon Society's Youth & Family Photo Workshop to be held at Mead Botanical Garden, Winter Park, Saturday, March 13, 2021.

The instructor will be skilled photographer Susan Kirby who enjoys teaching young people — her grandchildren are accomplished photographers too!

Limit is 2 young people (10–17) with one adult, total workshop maximum 10 people. Cost per adult is \$5 for Audubon members; \$15 non-members. Youth (10–17) are FREE with registered adult. The date and time is Saturday, Mar 13, 2021 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. To register, call Teresa Williams at (407) 718-1977. For questions about the workshop, contact Susan at (443)



Young photographers at Youth and Family Photo workshop at the January 2020 North Shore Birding Festival. Photo: Tina Pruitt

branches that provide perches for avian subjects make this an exciting workshop. The morning will be spent photographing flying and perching birds and other wildlife. Participants should have a working knowledge of digital SLR photography and bring a tripod and a 300 mm or longer lens (tele-extenders help).

Costs are \$60 (Audubon members) and \$75 (non-members). Class is limited to 12 adult participants and subject to prevailing COVID-19 safety protocols. To register contact Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 718-1977. For questions about the workshop, contact Milton at (407) 658-4869.

## Get Out and Take Nature Photos!

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) announces its 2021 (33rd Annual) Kit and Sidney Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest. The theme is Florida Native Nature and the entry deadline is April 15, 2021 (postmarked by date).

The contest is open to all photographers (members of OAS' board and Chertok committee excluded) who may enter one of three skill-level categories: Youth—for photographers age 17 or younger by April 15, 2021; Novice—for new and less experienced photo hobbyists; and Advanced Amateur/Professional—for experienced photographers who have practiced and honed their skills over time.

Eligible photos must not include humans, human artifacts or introduced plant or animal species—subject matter must be native to Florida (References are Plants: [Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants](#); Birds: [Florida Ornithological Society Bird Checklist](#)). Entries must also be taken in compliance with the [NANPA code of conduct](#).

Participants will be notified of any disqualified entries and may optionally replace them at no charge.

Entry submission details will soon be posted [on the Chertok page of the OAS website](#). Meanwhile you can use last year's entry forms as guides. Note that winning entries since 2006 are posted, to give you ideas.

So get outside with your camera and start shooting and preserving Florida's amazing native nature! Contact me at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 718-1977 if you have questions.

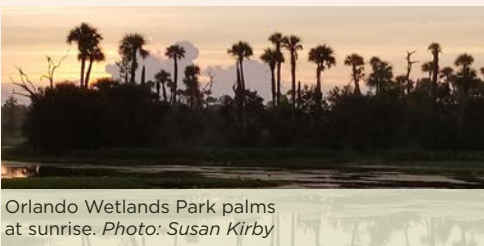
*Teresa Williams*  
2021 Chertok Photo Contest Chair

## Bird Chats with OAS

On Thursday, February 4th, the Bird Chats with Orange Audubon Society (OAS) team will focus on Birding Apps and on February 11th our guest will be filmmaker Najada Davis. If you have never attended a Bird Chat, register once [at this link](#) to be sent the Zoom link each week. To see past Bird Chats as well as past OAS monthly programs, visit OAS' YouTube Channel [at this link](#).

## Sunrise Photo Shoot — February 20, 2021

Renowned professional photographer, author and nature photography instructor Milton Heiberg will teach a sunrise photo workshop on Saturday, February 20, 2021 from 6:00–10:00 a.m. at Orlando Wetlands Park, one of Central Florida's most scenic locations.



Orlando Wetlands Park palms at sunrise. Photo: Susan Kirby

Sunrise with water reflections and the park's many gray sun-bleached tree

## February Bird Highlight: Red-tailed Hawk, A Powerful Bird of Prey

Drive into the country and you are likely to see Red-tailed Hawks perched on fence posts or soaring over fields searching for small mammals to eat.

Numerous and widespread throughout the U.S., Canada and Mexico, this large raptor is so common it may be taken for granted or seem mundane — its beauty and grandeur difficult to appreciate from a distance as it flies over.

It has spectacular attributes, however — a powerful body, broad chest, and splendid russet tail that spreads out like a fan in flight. When at rest, the bird's tail peeks out from beneath the brown primaries.

I was elated to discover these details when a Red-tailed Hawk appeared in my neighborhood last fall after the pandemic urged me to solitary birding in urban Winter Park. The bird's chocolate brown feathers, white chest, streaked belly band and enormous wings were striking and beautiful.

A few days later, I saw a similar bird perched on a tall oak snag in the yard of a neighbor's house and I studied its red tail. Weeks later two Red-tailed Hawks appeared on the same snag. Maybe they were in the area all along and I just didn't see them. Perhaps they have a nest nearby I wondered.

Stocky with rounded wings and a short tail, the Red-tailed Hawk has pale under wings and dark marks on the leading edge of the under wings. The juvenile has a pale rectangle on its primaries.

One of the largest hawks in the U.S., the Red-tailed Hawk can be 18 to 26 inches long, weigh 3 pounds and have a wingspan of 49 inches. In comparison the Red-shouldered Hawk measures about 17 inches long and weighs about 1.4 pounds. Among hawks, only the Ferruginous Hawk is larger than the Red-tailed.

When courting, Red-tailed Hawks fly with legs hanging beneath them or chase and swoop after each other, sometimes locking talons. Mating pairs often stay together until one of them dies. Males and females build large nests of dry sticks that can be up to 6.5 feet high and three feet across. They line the inner cup of the nest with bark strips, fresh foliage and dry vegetation, and the female lays one to five eggs that hatch about one month later. These birds will aggressively defend their nests and chase off predators like eagles or owls.

Fortunately, Red-tailed Hawk populations increased throughout much of their range between 1966 and 2015. Partners in Flight estimates a global breeding population of 2.3 million with 75 percent spending some part of the year in the U.S.

Check out this beautiful hawk! Get close so you can study its elegant russet tail, broad white chest and streaked bellyband. There are variations of the species like Krider's and Harlan's and others that occur in different geographic locations that make identification complicated. There is a lot to learn about this fascinating raptor.

Linda Carpenter



Red-tailed Hawk. Photo: Mary Keim

*In case you missed it...*

## Shorebirds of Florida

It's no surprise to birders that Florida's 52 species of shorebirds can be challenging to identify. In this regard, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) received assistance from Michael Brothers, who retired a few years ago as director of the Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet. He presented beautiful images and helpful information on many of these remarkable birds.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to identification of shorebirds is the change in appearance from summer to winter. Spectacular breeding plumage can fade to drab in a matter of weeks. For example, the Black-bellied Plover's impressive black belly, breast and neck disappear completely in winter. The Red Knot isn't red at all when it arrives in Florida.

The moniker "shorebirds" can be misleading as many species occur inland. For example, the Killdeer prefers pastures, the Long-billed Dowitcher frequents freshwater bodies and the Buff-breasted Sandpiper can be spotted in sod farms and other agricultural areas.

Perhaps the most remarkable characteristic of many shorebird species is the incredible migration routes they travel. From nesting on the shores of the Arctic Ocean, down to Florida and South America, and back again, many species like the Sanderling, Whimbrel and Ruddy Turnstone migrate thousands of miles every year. The bird with the longest migration is the Pectoral Sandpiper, which flies 19,000 miles from Alaska to South America.

Michael discussed hazards that climate change will bring to shorebird nesting areas on the banks of the Arctic Ocean as polar ice melts.

He also recommended several shorebird field guides: *The Shorebird Guide* by O'Brien, Crossley, et al.; *Shorebirds of N. America, Europe and Asia* by Taylor and Message; and *Shorebirds of the World* by Hayman and Marchant.

You can watch the recording of his talk [at this link](#) and while you are on OAS' YouTube channel you can Subscribe and view other past programs.

Terry Piper, Programs Chair

**Coming Up in April — Save Your Spot**

**NW Florida Panhandle  
Birding, April 29–May 2, 2021**

This trip will vary from past Panhandle trips; it is timed to see breeding songbirds and shorebirds at birding hotspots between Tallahassee and St. George Island State Park. St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge is a ‘can’t miss’ stop, and at Wakulla Springs we will also enjoy a boating tour in search of Prothonotary Warblers. To register and receive more details, contact Teresa at [mwilliams@cfl.rr.com](mailto:mwilliams@cfl.rr.com) or (407) 718-1977. Trip limit of 20 is subject to reduction based on prevailing COVID-19 safety concerns.



St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.  
Photo: Joyce Stefancic



St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.  
Photo: Pat Husband

**Coastal South Carolina  
Birding, April 16–18, 2021**

This trip to bird primarily in the ACE Basin near Beaufort, South Carolina will likely have to be cancelled due to South Carolina’s COVID-19 restrictions on entry by visitors from other states.

If we are able to take this trip, cost is \$70 for Audubon members; \$85 non-members and includes local expert guides and some picnic meals. Limited to 15 participants. If interested contact Deborah Green at [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org) or (407) 637-2525 to be put on a notification list.

**Fort De Soto Park Trip**

Six participants enjoyed a cool, foggy but wonderful day of birding on the January Fort Desoto Limited Edition field trip led by Larry Martin and myself.

Among the 56 species seen were Short-billed Dowitchers, Western Sandpipers, Dunlins, Least Sandpipers, Red-breasted Mergansers, Wilsons Plovers and Semi-palmated Plovers on East Beach.

A noisy flock of Nanday Parakeets passed us at the Pier parking lot. We had excellent views of a Reddish Egret, Marbled Godwit and Piping Plover at the north end of North Beach and Black Skimmers, Royal Terns, Sandwich Terns, Red Knots and American Oystercatchers at the south end of North Beach. We saw Blue-headed Vireo, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler and nesting Ospreys near the Ranger’s residence.

We’ll be going back to this great park in April for spring migration.

*Kathy Rigling*

**FEBRUARY/MARCH CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**Bird Chats with OAS: Birding Apps**

February 4, 2021  
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

**Bird Chats with OAS: Filmmaker Najada Davis**

February 11, 2021  
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

**Great Backyard Bird Count**

February 12–15, 2021  
<http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

**Bird Survey: Wekiwa Springs State Park, Apopka**

February 13, 2021  
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

**February Program: Homegrown National Park by Doug Tallamy**

February 18, 2021  
Contact Terry at (321) 436-4932

**Sunrise Photo Shoot with Milton Heiberg**

February 20, 2021  
Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

**Oakland Nature Preserve Bird Survey, Oakland**

February 20, 2021  
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

**Monthly Field Trip: Ferndale Preserve, Clermont**

February 20, 2021  
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

**Bird Chats with OAS: eBirding**

February 25, 2021  
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

**Limited Edition Field Trip: Lake Harney Wilderness Area, Geneva**

February 27, 2021  
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

**Beginners’ Birdwatching Class**

March 6, 13 and 20, 2021  
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

**Bird Survey: Wekiwa Springs State Park, Apopka**

March 13, 2021  
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

**Monthly Field Trip: Wekiwa Springs State Park, Apopka**

March 20, 2021  
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

**Limited Edition Field Trip: Orlando Wetlands Park, Christmas**

March 27, 2021  
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834