



Brown Noddy blown off course by Hurricane Hermine. Photo: Frank Salmon

Spring Bird Walks at Mead Botanical Garden April 3, 10, 17 & 24, 2021

For the past 10 years, Orange Audubon Society has hosted bird walks at Mead Botanical Garden in Winter Park each Saturday in April. Songbirds pass through Central Florida en route to forests of the Appalachians, the northeastern U.S. and Canada after wintering in the Caribbean or Central or South America.

Mead is a great migrant trap because it supplies insects and berries to eat and shelter in a variety of habitats — including open water, wetlands and uplands with oaks and tall pines. On eBird 195 species have been documented at Mead, including 23 species of warblers, most of which should be in their colorful breeding plumage by April.

The walks are free, but with COVID-19 precautions, participants are limited to 12 and registration is required. Contact me at lmartin5@msn.com or (407) 647- 5834 (in advance, not day of walk). Mead Botanical Garden is at 1500 S. Denning Drive, Winter Park. Good birding!

Larry Martin, Field Trips Chair

This Month's Program: Birds and Hurricanes by Dr. Ken Meyer April 15, 2021

A rare bird that arrived in Central Florida in early September 2016 was a tern of tropical offshore waters, rarely seen from the mainland. A beautiful Brown Noddy was blown by Hurricane Hermine to near the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive pumphouse and seen for several days.

Birds and Hurricanes is a fascinating topic, and for Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) April 15th program, Dr. Ken Meyer will share information gathered by the Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI). Meyer is co-founder and Executive Director of this Gainesville-based non-profit that tracks Swallow-tailed Kites and other species using technology for data-driven bird conservation.

Florida's hurricanes seem to get worse each year. Until recently people could only speculate how birds survive big storms since direct observations came with risks of the researchers getting hurt. But new technology, employed in creative ways by ARCI, has brought amazing revelations. Meyer will share and analyze ARCI's data collected during Hurricane Irma and other storms and explain what ARCI has learned about how birds ride them out.

The program will be aired on YouTube Live — search YouTube for Orange Audubon Society or use this link: [OAS' YouTube channel](#). The program will pop up at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 15th. Join us for an exciting presentation.

Terry Piper, Programs Chair

Photo Contest Deadline is Here!

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

There are three skill-level entry categories: Youth—for photographers age 17 or younger by April 15, 2021; Novice; and Advanced Amateur/Professional.

Eligible photos *must not* include humans, human artifacts or introduced plant or animal species—*subject matter must be native to Florida*. Participants will be notified of any disqualified entries and there is no added entry fee for (at your option) replacing them.

To check if a plant in your photo is native use the following authority: [Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants](#). As to whether birds you photograph are native, consult the [Florida Ornithological Society Bird Checklist](#). Photos must also be taken in compliance with the [NANPA code of conduct](#).



Making a Beautiful Noise - Eastern Meadowlark on Broom Sedge. Honorable Mention winner, 2017 Chertok Nature Photography Contest. Photo: Joyce Stefancic

2021 submission details are posted [on the Chertok page of the OAS website](#) along with winning entries since 2006.

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

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.



Birdathon, April 10, 2021

A Birdathon is like a Walkathon but sponsors pledge donations on the number of bird species seen during a 24-hour period, instead of the number of miles walked. People can pledge 10¢, 25¢, 50¢, \$1.00, etc. per bird species, or a flat amount (and write their checks on the spot). Please ask friends, neighbors, relatives, doctors, vets, and every Girl Scout mom you bought cookies from to sponsor you by donating. A pledge sheet is posted on the Orange Audubon Society (OAS) website.

In one 24-hour period April 10th to April 11th, you can join the teams recording birds seen at your favorite birding buddy spots. Team up with your birding buddy (socially distanced, of course) and see how many species you can spot in one day. Email your list(s) to me, so that we can tally our total species. The top 3 listers and/or teams will be recognized in a future *OASis* as well as the team/individual that collects the most donations. If you appreciate OAS and can afford it, please make or solicit Birdathon donations. All donations will benefit OAS' nature and environmental education center fund. To participate as a donor, a birder or both, contact me before April 10th at riglingk@aol.com.
Kathy Rigling,



Speak Up for Bills Moving Through Legislature

As Orange Audubon Society (OAS) members, we are also members of National Audubon Society and Audubon Florida (AF). This is the time of year I appreciate the efforts of AF in Tallahassee the most. The Florida State Legislature convened on March 2nd and will adjourn on April 30th, although lawmakers have been holding committee meetings and voting on measures since November. Things are not going well in our beautiful state regarding the priorities of the majority of legislators, including [restricting voting and preemptions of local laws](#). Nevertheless, AF's skilled lobbyists from the state policy office continue working with bills to make them better. AF will be asking us to contact our representatives as the session draws to a close. [Please sign up for the Audubon Advocate at this link.](#)
Deborah Green, OAS President

Lights Out for Spring Migration

We normally think of "Lights Out" as something that applies to big cities, but as Dr. Doug Tallamy pointed out in his February 18th presentation to OAS (now on our YouTube Channel), this is also important for all of us who own or rent homes and apartments. Lights shining into the sky at night can cause confusion and disrupt migrating birds — causing increased strain on our already decreasing bird populations.

Tallamy recommends making sure lights are down-shielded to avoid excess light shining upward into the sky. While research shows strobe lighting is least intrusive, it's not always functional for our homes. Tallamy recommends motion activated lights to reduce the amount of light pollution at night.

If neither of these options are possible, consider replacing bulbs with yellow LED lights that research shows are less distracting to migrating birds.

If you live in a higher apartment or have a second story in your home, consider closing drapes in the evening. Using task lighting in place of general lighting will reduce light pollution from the windows.

When updating your outdoor light fixtures, take care not to "over-light" with the newer, brighter fixtures now available.

Turning off bright lights helps birds move on within minutes, as discovered by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and New York City Audubon during the annual 9/11 memorial in New York City. Hundreds of birds are caught in the memorial's beams every year but turning them off for just 20 to 30 minutes at a time greatly reduces the density of birds in the area.

And it's not just the birds, as Tallamy pointed out in his presentation to OAS. Insect collision deaths also substantially increase when outdoor lights are left burning continuously, and birds depend on insects. *Susan Thome-Barrett*

Groveland and Dark Skies

In an ambitious two-year stride to become Florida's first Dark Sky Community, the City of Groveland conducted a community-wide virtual Dark Sky Workshop in February. The discussions included the benefits of dark sky preservation, dark sky tourism, the City's current light pollution conditions,
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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.

For other membership information, contact: Mike Daley
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Dark Skies

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the International Dark-Sky Association’s (IDA) role in limiting light pollution, and the steps needed to achieve the Dark Sky Community designation. The IDA is a United States-based nonprofit founded in 1988 and is the globally recognized and leading authority on light pollution.

An International Dark Sky Community is a local government that has shown extraordinary dedication to preserving the night sky through dark sky lighting policies, education, and citizen support. With Groveland’s current momentum, the City hopes to achieve the Dark Sky Community designation within two years.

Audubon Florida’s 2021 Conservation Leadership Initiative participant Pierce Harding, a Rollins College senior and Sustainability Coordinator for the college, focused his senior project on assisting Groveland toward the goal of becoming Florida’s first Dark Sky Community.

Pierce’s project points out that 80% of the country is under light pollution and 99% of the country cannot experience natural light. Conserving dark skies will enhance community aesthetics and benefit local wildlife. Unshielded streetlights impair human senses and the feeding patterns of nocturnal wildlife.

The IDA represents 145 different destinations in 21 different countries. Parks with dark skies have seen an influx of revenue generated from ecotourist activities such as stargazing and dark sky festivals. Throughout the pandemic, Dark Sky Communities have benefitted because stargazing is a great socially distanced ecotourist activity.

The city of Flagstaff was the first to receive the Dark Sky Community certification from IDA after having implemented a full IDA guided light pollution mitigation plan following its lighting codes from 1989, which were designed to minimize artificial glow from light fixtures as well as conserve energy.

Pierce provides some links to learn more: [Central Florida IDA Initiative](#)

[Dark Sky sites from Florida Astronomy](#)

[Groveland’s Dark Sky Initiative](#)

[International Dark Sky Initiative Guidance for U.S. Homeowners Associations](#)

OAS Conservation Committee



Shooting star from the Geminids meteor shower in Melbourne Beach. Photo: Central Florida Chapter Of International Dark-Sky Association

Sea Turtle Stewardship

March brought us the start of spring and the beginning of sea turtle nesting season which will continue through October! According to the Sea Turtle Conservancy, roughly 90% of sea turtle nesting in the United States occurs along Florida’s coasts with the majority of nesting beginning in May. During nesting season, we are visited by five species of sea turtles: Hawksbill, Kemp’s Ridley, Loggerhead, Leatherback and Green, all of which are endangered or threatened.

It is an exciting time to go on a morning beach walk and spot tracks or take a guided night tour for the chance to see hatchlings on the move, but it is also a time for us to step up and do what we can to aid in their journey.

Common threats to sea turtle survival include, but are not limited to — human predation, wildlife predation (turtle eggs and hatchlings are a much-desired meal to many critters), artificial lighting (confusing to both hatchlings and females trying to lay eggs) and pollution/litter/debris.

In the United States, sea turtles are protected under the Endangered Species Act and Florida’s Marine Turtle Protection Act making it illegal to take, destroy or harass sea turtles, their nests, and hatchlings. Here are things we can do to welcome them during this exciting time:

1. Remove Obstacles: Both visiting mothers and hatchlings are at risk of entrapment by holes dug in the sand, sandcastles, and discarded beach accessories including chairs and umbrellas. Knocking over sandcastles, filling in holes, and removing trash/taking home anything brought on a beach trip provides an open and clear route between the beach and ocean.

2. Lighting: If staying in a hotel/home nearby at night, ensure artificial lighting outdoors is turned off and curtains/blinds are drawn to block as much light as possible from the outdoors. According to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the three golden rules for sea turtle friendly lighting are low, long, and shielded—1. keep lighting fixtures low with low wattage, 2. lamps and bulbs used outdoors should produce only long wavelengths (amber/orange/red) and 3. lighting fixtures should be downward facing to shield the bulb/lamp from the beach. If going on a night hatchling guided tour, red light flashlights should be used and remember not to use phones for pictures.

3. Food and Trash: Removing food and trash is crucial to stop further attraction of critters that are interested in consuming eggs. Many volunteer events for beach clean-ups have unfortunately been postponed due to COVID, but we can still take a bag or bucket to fill during visits with friends and family.

4. Alert: A good number to store in your phone is for the FWC Division of Law Enforcement at 1-888-404-FWCC (3922). This is the number to call to report a dead or stranded turtle, a hatchling found wandering in the wrong direction, or if you need to report turtle harassment.

Victoria Schwartz

Rescheduled South Carolina Trip September 17-19, 2021

This will be Orange Audubon Society’s third trip to South Carolina, and this one will be based out of Beaufort and focus on seeing southward migrating shorebirds. Our guide Craig Watson will lead us to Fish Haul Beach, Harbor Island, Bailey Road Tidal Impoundments, Bear Island/Donnelley, Santee Coastal Reserve and possibly some private lands.

Cost is \$105 for Audubon members and \$120 for non-members. The trip will be limited to 16 participants, require vaccinations, and follow COVID-19 safety protocols. Participants will secure their own lodging in Beaufort (early booking recommended). To register, contact Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com and for trip questions, contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Wekiva River Woes

Declining flows and nutrient pollution are harming the Wekiva River and the springs that sustain it. The Wekiva River is an Outstanding Florida Water, an Aquatic Preserve, and one of only two rivers in Florida that hold the federal designation as a Wild and Scenic River. The river and springs are the region's premier environmental jewels. A recent study by the Friends of the Wekiva River (FOWR) and the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council showed that the river and springs generate \$60 million annually in revenue and support 500 jobs.



Birding by canoe trip on the Wekiva River at the North Shore Birding Festival. Photo: Deborah Green

The Central Florida Water Initiative's 2020 Regional Water Supply Plan (RWSP) determined that the Wekiva River and Wekiwa Springs would not meet their current Minimum Flows and Levels (MFLs) by 2026–27 if groundwater withdrawals described in the RWSP continue to increase as projected. Flows in Wekiwa Springs, which receives its water from the Upper Floridan Aquifer (UFA), have declined steadily over the past 30 years. Continued declines in flows would further degrade Wekiwa Springs and the Wekiva River, which are listed as impaired due to excess nutrients that fuel algae growth.

The RWSP determined that—to protect the flows in Wekiwa Springs and the Wekiva River—no more than 760 million gallons per day (mgd) should be withdrawn from the Upper and Lower Floridan Aquifers within Central Florida.

Even worse! The RWSP noted that the three water management districts (WMDs) have already permitted more than 1,064 mgd of groundwater withdrawals—a 300 million gallon a day overshoot that threatens our environment and economy.

This past November, the Florida

Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) proposed a rule that would limit withdrawals from the UFA and require utilities to conserve more water. The proposed rule allows utilities up to nine (9) years (until 2030) to implement water conservation and/or alternative water supplies to meet future water demands. However, several utilities have filed challenges to the rule's proposed limitations on withdrawing groundwater from the UFA by asserting that the WMDs already have the authority to limit groundwater withdrawals by determining which individual withdrawals are threatening the aquifer. But demonstrating that permitted groundwater withdrawal is causing harm to the overall aquifer is very difficult. This is a case of death by a thousand cuts. The cumulative effect of all the withdrawals must be considered when determining how much the groundwater withdrawals should be reduced. That is the purpose of the proposed FDEP rule.

FOWR believes that water conservation is the least expensive approach to meeting future water demands. The RWSP states that half of public water supplies in Central Florida are used for landscape irrigation. Reducing the use of potable water for landscape irrigation must be a top priority.

[Several utilities have challenged the water conservation goals proposed in the rule.](#) As of this writing, FDEP is working with the utilities to modify the language in the rule to accommodate some of these concerns. FOWR believes that the rule's proposed limits on withdrawals from the UFA and the requirements for more water conservation must remain in place to protect the springs.

FOWR believes that utilities and local governments must immediately implement aggressive water conservation measures such as the following:

- Restricting grass cover and requiring native and Florida Friendly Landscaping for new residential and commercial developments.
- Aggressively promoting conversion of grass lawns to native and Florida Friendly Landscaping in existing developments by providing tax or other incentives.
- Providing more incentives for water conservation (e.g., more steeply tiered rate structures).

- Expanding reclaimed water systems.
- Maintaining more open areas for aquifer recharge.

The RWSP determined that we only have a short window of time to act if we are to protect the river and springs. We must encourage our elected officials to understand the urgency of this situation and to act in the region's best interests!

Mike Cliburn, Friends of the Wekiva River

April is Water Conservation Month

In April, May and June, Florida's temperatures increase but the state's rainfall tends to lag behind irrigation requirements. April is typically Florida's driest month. Particularly as temperatures rise, so does outdoor water use.

Use a hose nozzle when hand watering. It saves water by keeping the water from running constantly.

Orange Audubon Society's March speaker Dr. Nash Turley (p. 5) promoted reducing your lawn in favor of site-specific Florida native plants, which need water only during establishment and the worst dry periods.

But if you have a lawn,

Water only when necessary. Visual clues to determine when your grass needs watering are: 1) When you walk on the lawn, footprints appear briefly because the bent blades don't spring back for several minutes, 2) grass blades appear blue-gray in color or 3) grass blades are folded in half lengthwise on at least one-third of your lawn.

If you have an automatic irrigation system, make sure you know your irrigation days. Go to the St. Johns River Water Management District [watering restrictions](#) to find out when it's okay to water.

Use a rain sensor device or turn the system off when it rains or has rained.

Need your irrigation system tuned up? Make sure the contractor is a certified member of the Florida Irrigation Society. Go to www.fisstate.org for more information.

In Case You Missed It...

Lawn to Wildflowers

Perhaps you've heard that the American obsession with lawns is problematic. Dr. Nash Turley may have a solution. He has developed a clever app called Lawn to Wildflowers, available for free on your smart phone, which introduces users to the fascinating world of pollinators, their behavior, identification, and needs.



Wild Flower – Butterweed. Honorable Mention winner, Youth Category, 2016 Chertok Nature Photography Contest. *Photo: Caroline Clark*

As a plant and insect ecologist at UCF and post-doctoral fellow, Turley's project "Lawn to Wildflowers" will engage local volunteers, trained with the app to locate, identify, and record pollinator occurrence. This data will direct his research.

The need is great. Turley presented some startling statistics. Lawns cover 63,000 square miles in this country, an area the size of Georgia; 20 trillion gallons of water are used irrigating lawns; 60 million pounds of pesticides are applied every year; and Americans spend \$40 billion annually on lawn maintenance!

The impacts of our lawn mania are also shocking. Lawns have replaced important wildlife habitat, lawn-care equipment increases fossil fuel use, fertilizer runoff causes water pollution, pesticide use poisons our environment, kills wildlife, and damages our bodies — all of the above making the cost of maintaining lawns much greater than just financial.

At the same time lawn area has been increasing, wildflower habitats have been disappearing. One of our largest and richest ecosystems, the longleaf pine savannah, is almost gone. At



Bee Fly on Roseling. Honorable Mention winner, Advanced Category, 2018 Chertok Nature Photography Contest. *Photo: Paul Rebman*

one time this ecosystem covered most of the Southeastern Coastal Plain, from Virginia to Texas, with some 900 endemic plant species. It is now our most threatened ecosystem, with only 1% of it remaining in good condition.

None of this bodes well for pollinators — or for people. We need pollinators. But of the some 5200 species of North American pollinators, half are in decline. Ten percent of the global crop production depends on pollinators. Animal species pollinate 88% of plant species, with bees doing the heavy lifting.

And pollinators need native plants, especially native wildflowers. When native wildflowers are planted near blueberry fields, berry production doubles.

Just a few of the crops that require insect pollination include cucumbers, squash species, blackberries, apples, peaches, and cacao (chocolate).

We can help the pollinators that help us by adding native plants to our yards, as many species as possible, and in the right location so they thrive. To reduce any negative reaction by neighbors or HOAs, landscapes can be planted aesthetically by adding structure and organization, grouping like species, or perhaps by using borders around distinct areas.

Dr. Turley's website, also called [Lawn to Wildflowers](#), has lots more "how-to" information.

Other great sources of information are the [Florida Native Plant Society](#), the [Florida Association of Native Nurseries](#), and the [Xerces Society](#).

Terry Piper, Programs Chair

Beginners' Bird Watching Class, May 2, 9 and 16, 2021

Orange Audubon Society offers a Beginners' Bird Watching Class, taught by Kathy Rigling and Jeffrey Gammon, this May. An "outdoor" classroom session and mini-field trip are both on May 2nd at Orlando Wetlands Park and 2 field sessions are on May 9th and 16th at Mead Botanical Garden and the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, respectively. All sessions are 7:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m. If you miss a May class, you may make that up in fall 2021.

The class is limited to 12 students. Masks and other COVID-19 precautions are required.

Total cost is \$40 for Audubon members for all three classes in this session, \$55 for non-members and \$10 for children through age 12 with a registered adult. Non-members who wish to join and receive the member-reduced rate must join concurrently when they contact Teresa to register at (407) 718-1977 or mwilliams@cfl.rr.com. Registration closes April 26th. For questions about the class, contact Kathy at riglingk@aol.com or (407) 488-9559.



Caspian Terns, Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. *Photo: Jack Horton*

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive 6th Anniversary

In May 2015 the St. Johns River Water Management District opened the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD). Orange Audubon Society had worked toward securing public access and greatly values LAWD. We have been celebrating the anniversary of its opening each year with an outreach event. Watch for the May 1st anniversary celebration details in the next OASis.

The Oviedo Snow Goose and eBird Sharing



Snow Goose in Oviedo. Photos (above): Susan Thome-Barrett and (below) Sam Mitcham

through eBird for a particular county or see the statewide alerts.

Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens*) [breed in colonies on the Canadian and Northern Alaskan tundra](#). They travel as far as 5,000 miles between their nesting grounds and their winter homes. Around 1900, Snow Goose populations were less than 3,000 birds, but during the 20th century and into the 21st century, the population exploded as they began taking advantage of farm crops, including waste grain, along migration routes and in wintering areas.

During migration, they fly both by day and night and are capable of speeds of 50 miles per hour. There are many spots where they stop in winter or in migration but one of the most famous is Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico.

Early November to late January is the best time to see these flocks. Thousands of geese spend the night in water to protect themselves from predators and near dawn take off en masse to feed for the day in fields throughout the Middle Rio Grande Valley.



Snow Geese at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico. Photos: Kathy Bargar

University of Central Florida (UCF) grad student Jenny Bouchenot was jogging in Oviedo when she made an amazing bird sighting — a Snow Goose feeding with Muscovy Ducks and White Ibis in a retention pond. Jenny is a past Conservation Leadership Initiative (CLI) participant, a bird bander with the Wekiva Bird Banding Station at Lake Lotus Park, a volunteer at Audubon Center For Birds of Prey, and a co-leader of trips at the North Shore Birding Festival. She was a founding member of the UCF Knighthawk Audubon Chapter.

Jenny contacted her fellow CLI participant Brian Cammarano to confirm her identification of the goose. Brian is in South Florida working on a Black Rail study, but he passed the word to Sam Mitcham, one of his Orange Audubon Society (OAS) birding friends. From there, through word of mouth and posts on Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird database, the sighting of the Snow Goose became an local overnight sensation. Birders who weren't informed directly by Sam saw the sighting on eBird. You can sign up for Rare Birds Alerts

Birding can be a community effort, which makes it more fun. And eBird is an amazing communication tool to help birders find rarities and share the sightings with others. See [OAS' eBird introduction](#) at this link.

Deborah Green

2021 Orange Audubon Society Board Elections

I have the pleasure of chairing the Orange Audubon Society (OAS) nominating committee with committee members Mary Soule and Mary Van Egmond. Since we are still not holding in-person programs, OAS' annual election of board members will be held through an online questionnaire with a link in the mid-month update.

The OAS members-only ballot will include a vote for reelection of three board members whose terms are up — Linda Carpenter, Brent Mobley, and Victoria Schwartz—and the election of new board member Stephanie Nieves, a recent graduate from Rollins College (Environmental Studies) who works for Seminole County.

The OAS board is comprised of 15–20 volunteer members: 5 officer/directors who serve two-year terms and up to 15 non-officer members (directors) who serve staggered 3-year terms. The officer positions—president, 1st vice president, 2nd vice president, secretary and treasurer—are not up for election/re-election until April 2022.

To serve on the board, you must be an OAS member, have an interest in wildlife and the environment, and be able to attend up to nine monthly, one-hour board meetings and an all-day summer planning meeting. Once in-person meetings start again, board meetings will resume on the third Thursday of each month at Leu Gardens. Currently board meetings are held through Zoom on the 4th Wednesday.

Prior to applying for the board, we encourage you to join one of OAS' committees (listed in [last month's OASis](#)). If you wish to give back to your community through the conservation and nature education initiatives of OAS, contact me at lgaunt246@gmail.com.

To check your membership status so you can vote, email membership@orangeaudubonfl.org. The ballot includes an opportunity to make suggestions to OAS on our upcoming programs. Thanks for participating.

Linda Gaunt, OAS Nominating Committee Chair



Blue Dasher, Merritt Island National Wildlife Drive, Shiloh Marsh, Sept 2020. Photo: Mary Keim

Dragonfly Identification at Orlando Wetlands Park with Mary Keim and Randy Snyder

Orange Audubon Society is offering an outdoor Central Florida Dragonfly Identification Workshop on Saturday, May 15, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Orlando Wetlands Park and adjacent Seminole Ranch Conservation Area.

Instructors are Orange Audubon members and dragonfly enthusiasts Mary Keim and Randy Snyder.

Cost is \$10 for Audubon members; \$15 for non-members. Non-members can join Audubon, following instructions when you register.

The workshop is limited to 12 students and registration is required. Reserve a space (and for non-members, join when you register) by contacting Teresa: mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 718-1977.

Bird Chats with OAS

Bird Chats with Orange Audubon Society (OAS) are fun online programs happening every Thursday night on Zoom and archived on [OAS' YouTube Channel](#). The Bird Chat team consists of Jack Horton, Sam Mitcham, Kathy Rigling, Susan Thome-Barrett and myself.

You must register [at this link](#) (but only once) to thereafter receive the weekly Zoom link and reminder.

The great Bird Chats coming up include Mead Botanical Garden, Spring Migration Hotspot on April 1st, Fort DeSoto Spring Migration Hotspot on April 8th, Jay Watch with Maria Zondervan on April 22nd, and Florida's Raptors by Jeff Bouton on May 6th. Hope we see you!

Deborah Green



Beginners' Bird Watching Class. Photo: Kathy Rigling

Volunteers Needed

The next Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey is April 10, 2021 starting at 7:15 a.m. We are documenting the changes in bird populations associated with the park's active prescribed burning program. Contact Kathy to sign up at riglingk@aol.com.

Orange Audubon Society will have a display and sell nature-inspired merchandise at the Apopka Art & Foliage Festival in downtown Apopka on April 24-25, 2021. If you can help with outreach and fundraising either day (masks required), please contact me.

We also could use a few more Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD) Ambassadors. Responsibilities are to be at the LAWD entrance shelter giving out maps and some logistical tips to first-time visitors on Saturdays and Sundays. Shifts are 2 1/2 hours and most Ambassadors do one shift per month, always in pairs. Detailed training is provided. We have fun and help keep LAWD running smoothly. Contact me if you are interested at info@orangeaudubonfl.org or (407) 637-2525. Thanks!

Deborah Green

Wekiwa Springs State Park Field Trip

We had an amazing field trip on March 21, 2021 to Wekiwa Springs State Park. Led by Larry Martin, Susan Thome-Barrett and me, we explored the beautiful sandhill habitat of the park. Despite very cool, overcast conditions we were treated to some rare sightings including two very active Sherman's Fox squirrels and two very young Great Horned Owls, appearing as curious about us as we were about them!

Other notable sightings included Swallow-tailed Kites that have only recently returned from South America, Wood Ducks, singing Bachman's Sparrows, Eastern Towhees, Brown-headed Nuthatches, and Northern Parulas. The pine forest had just been burned as part of the park's prescribed burning management system. We also observed Pocket Gopher mounds, Gopher Tortoise burrows and native Pinewoods Milkweed in bloom.

With reduced number of participants in the COVID era, I recommend signing up for field trips early so you don't miss out on the fun!

Kathy Rigling

Limited Edition Field Trip to Fort De Soto Park, Pinellas County

On April 18, 2021, Orange Audubon Society will travel to Fort DeSoto Park for a Limited Edition Field Trip. This will fill quickly. Contact me the week before at riglingk@aol.com and (407) 488-9559.

Kathy Rigling



Baby Great-horned Owls, Sherman's Fox Squirrel, and Red-headed Woodpecker at Wekiwa Springs State Park. Photos: Kathy Rigling

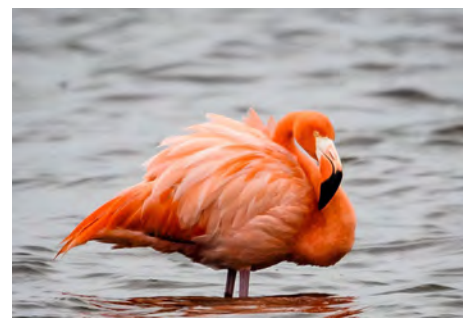
Panhandle Trip—A Few Spaces Left, April 28–May 2, 2021

Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) Panhandle trip in late April/early May has been expanded a day for optimum opportunities to see breeding songbirds and shorebirds at four of the western Panhandle's top birding destinations.

Participants should arrive Wednesday to check in to lodging before kicking off the trip with an afternoon boating and birding excursion on the Wakulla River — nesting Prothonotary Warblers may be seen. After supper, a Wakulla Springs State Park ranger will present on natural history, and we will view Chimney Swifts returning to roost.

Full day trips with local expert guides are planned for the Red Hills Region (Tallahassee, FL/Thomasville, GA) to see longleaf pine/wire grass specialties; at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge to see shorebirds, lingering ducks, rails and rarities like American Flamingo and Iceland Gull; and at St. George Island State Park and the nearby Unit 4/Easthole tract (along the bayshore of St. George Sound), [target birds](#) — Snowy Plovers, breeding songbirds and the last rush of migrant warblers.

A block of 8 rooms in nearby Crawfordville, FL (breakfast, WiFi and pool privileges included) are available, first come, first served and can be reserved through OAS after you register. Contact Teresa for registration and other details: mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 718-1977. Limit: 16 participants. Prevailing COVID-19 safety protocols apply.



American Flamingo from St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: John Middleton

APRIL/MAY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Chats with OAS:

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

- Mead Botanical Garden Spring Migration Hotspot

April 1, 2021

- Fort DeSoto Spring Migration Hotspot

April 8, 2021

- Jay Watch with Maria Zondervan

April 22, 2021

- Oakland Nature Preserve with Jackie Rolly

April 29, 2021

- Florida's Raptors with Jeff Bouton

May 6, 2021

Spring Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walks, Winter Park

April 3, 10, 17 & 24, 2021

Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

April Wekiwa Bird Survey

April 10, 2021

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

OAS Birdathon Fundraiser

April 10, 2021

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Chertok Nature Photography Contest Deadline

April 15, 2021

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

April Program: Birds and Hurricanes with Ken Meyer

April 15, 2021

Contact Terry at (321) 436-4932

Limited Edition Field Trip to Fort De Soto Park, Pinellas County

April 18, 2021

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Apopka Art & Foliage Festival, Apopka

April 24–25, 2021

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

NW Florida Panhandle Birding

April 28–May 2, 2021

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive 6th Anniversary

May 1, 2021

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Jay Watch Training 2021

May dates TBA

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Beginners' Bird Watching Class

May 2, 9 and 16, 2021

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

April Wekiwa Bird Survey

May 8, 2021

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Dragonfly Identification at Orlando Wetlands Park with Mary Keim and Randy Snyder

May 15, 2021

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

May Program: 150 Years of Wildlife Conservation History with Mark Madison

May 20, 2021

Contact Terry at (321) 436-4932

May Field Trip: Lake Lotus Park, Altamonte Springs

May 22, 2021

Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

Oakland Nature Preserve Bird Survey

May 22, 2021

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Limited Edition Field Trip to Three Lakes WMA, Osceola County

May 29, 2021

Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834