



This Month's Program: 150 Years of Wildlife Conservation History by Mark Madison May 20, 2021

Wildlife Conservation doesn't happen without effort, and it has been important to record the history of that effort. Dr. Mark Madison was the first Historian hired by the Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1999.

At the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) Museum/Archives in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, Dr. Madison helps coordinate all national heritage outreach. He manages more than half a million objects in the USFWS Museum and Archives.

Prior to working for the USFWS, Dr. Madison spent 3 years doing tropical reforestation in the Philippines for the U.S. Peace Corps and was faculty at Harvard University and the University of Melbourne (Australia). He has undergraduate and graduate degrees in History and Biology and a Ph.D. in the History of Science from Harvard University.

In this program for Orange Audubon Society, Dr. Madison will present a brief history of the USFWS and the importance of archiving history. See the NCTC's website at [this link](#).

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, May 20th.

Join us for an exciting presentation.

Terry Piper, Programs Chair

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive 6th Anniversary

It was May 2015 when the St. Johns River Water Management District opened the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD). Orange Audubon Society values LAWD and has been celebrating the anniversary of its opening each year. More on p.7.



Gray-headed Swamphen. Photo: Paula Duenas

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

Starting Sunday, May 2nd, Orange Audubon Society offers a Beginners' Bird Watching Class taught by Kathy Rigling and Jeffrey Gammon. An "outdoor" classroom session and mini-field trip are on May 2nd at Orlando Wetlands Park (OWP) and two 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. For questions about the class, contact Kathy at riglingk@aol.com or (407) 488-9559.



Clockwise: Rachel Carson, Teddy Roosevelt, Paul Kroegel (first warden of Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge), Ding Darling (creator of the Duck Stamp), Betty Losey (waterfowl biologist) and Aldo Leopold. Photos: USFWS

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.





May Updates

The Florida legislative session ended Friday, April 30, 2021 and now bills go to Governor DeSantis' desk for signature or veto. Please follow [this Audubon Florida Advocate link](#) for last minute calls to action and follow the [Audubon Florida's Facebook](#) page. Legislation details can be seen at [Online Sunshine](#).

The M-CORES (turnpike) repeal bill, SB 100, passed after senators voted unanimously to include an amendment that requires that the Florida Department of Transportation use the M-CORES task force recommendations in any future road project planning and design. Audubon Florida and 1000 Friends of Florida successfully advocated for this amendment so that provisions in the three M-CORES task force reports could guide any future road construction projects in those areas. The task forces met over a 15-month period and their reports reflect input of stakeholder groups, including thousands of Florida citizens who weighed in with comments. Numerous provisions to protect significant environmental resources were included.

While SB 100 halts the unneeded turnpikes, it does authorize road improvements from Citrus to Madison County, engineering studies on a northern extension of the Florida Turnpike to be presented to the Florida Legislature by December 31, 2022, and upgrades for the originally authorized toll roads where truck traffic is an issue. Floridians must continue to actively participate in the planning process to ensure that natural lands and waters are protected, sprawl is curtailed, and rural communities flourish.

Regarding sand mining: The St. Johns Water Management District and Lake County government went to court to stop the use of unauthorized borrow pits on the Wekiva Parkway. Future legislation may require documentation of all requisite land use permits before a borrow pit can be created. With input from Audubon Florida and Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society,

the Lake County Commission recently rejected the application for the White Water Farm Sand Mine.

For rural east Seminole County, the [River Cross Development](#) proposal was rejected by county commissioners in 2018, but the developer submitted a new proposal to settle a pair of lawsuits it had filed against the County. The County again rejected the developer's new proposal, a move supported by Audubon Florida and Seminole Audubon Society.

Florida Forever funding is requested at \$100 million in the House but only \$50 million in the Senate, most of which will be directed to conservation easements. Funding for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP), out of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and involving conservation easements, may be transferred to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Negative Bills — Our only hope to avert these is a veto by Governor DeSantis; please call or email him right away and ask that he veto these:

- **Impact Fees: HB 337.** This bill restricts the ability of local governments to pay for the cost of new growth. It limits their authority to increase impact fees, one of the last available tools to raise revenue to compensate for the financial impacts of new development.
- **Energy Preemption: SB 1128/HB 919** would remove local communities from the conversation about the energy options that power our homes and businesses. Residents' future utility bill costs would have no controls.
- **Renewable Energy: SB 896/HB 539** would allow utilities to build unrestricted mega-solar farms in any rural agricultural area without the consent or meaningful input of local officials and residents. The development of commercial solar infrastructure needs to be pursued in partnership with local communities, not in opposition.

*Orange Audubon Society
Conservation Committee*



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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New Orange County Solar Co-op Opens

Just in time for kite breeding season, the Orange County 2021 Solar Co-op has launched! The co-op is a no hassle way to learn more about solar energy from the trusted nonprofit [Solar United Neighbors](#). Sponsored by Orange County Government and the City of Orlando, the co-op facilitates homeowners and small businesses forming a group that can leverage the power of bulk purchasing.

SUN provides unbiased, installer-neutral support through each stage of the process of going solar. It explains how solar works, how it can be financed, and how it can be installed on your home through monthly webinars.

Co-op member volunteers choose an installer on behalf of the entire group through an open and competitive bidding process. The selected installer provides everyone in the group with a personalized proposal for their consideration; there is no obligation to install. Using bulk purchasing power, participants secure discounted pricing and a quality installation.

As we look up at the graceful, fearless Swallow-tailed Kites, notice (but don't look at!) the ball of energy casting photons down on the Sunshine State and remember to join your local co-op! Join the Orange County Solar Co-op today at: SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/orange. The next webinar is May 13th.

Heaven Campbell, Florida SUN



Buy Duck Stamps

One of the easiest ways to support bird habitat conservation is by buying the [Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp or Duck Stamp](#). Waterfowl hunters age 16 and older are required to purchase and carry a Duck Stamp while hunting and this provides free admission to national wildlife refuges.

Selling for \$25, Duck Stamps raise approximately \$40 million each year. Ninety-eight percent of the purchase price goes directly to acquire and protect wetland habitat and purchase conservation easements for the national wildlife refuge system. Since the inception of Duck Stamp sales in 1934, over 6 million acres of wetland and grassland habitat have been protected.

Birders can support our national wildlife refuge system by buying Duck Stamps wherever sold, but if you buy one from the American Birding Association, there is a tracking of purchases by birders.

Each year there is a design competition, including a Youth category. Revenues from the [sale of Youth Duck Stamps](#) support conservation education for K-12 students. The 2020-2021 Duck Stamp features a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (as above). The 2021-2022 Duck Stamp features a Lesser Scaup and will go on sale in late June 2021.

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 Kathy Rigling, Susan Thome-Barrett, Jack Horton, Sam Mitcham and me.

Register [at this link](#) to be sent the Zoom link each week. Programs coming up include Florida's Raptors by Jeff Bouton on May 6th and Wekiwa Springs State Park Birding by the Bird Chat Team on May 13th. Hope we see you!
Deborah Green

City Nature Challenge, April 30 – May 3, 2021



Join the Orlando Metro team and help document the biodiversity in Orange County! The City Nature Challenge is an

international effort for people to find and document plants and wildlife in the areas in and around cities across the globe. It uses iNaturalist — a joint initiative of the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society. The City Nature Challenge is organized by the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

In this bioblitz-style competition, cities compete against each other to see which can make the most observations of nature, which can find the most species, and which can engage the most people.

You can participate anywhere in Orange County. Take pictures of plants, animals or other evidence of life in parks and green spaces. Then, share your observations through the iNaturalist app. While participating, carefully follow public health guidelines provided by our local governments, as they are changed in real-time.

Data we collect from the challenge will help inform conservation work in the Orlando Metro area.

To participate in this exciting worldwide challenge, follow these simple steps:

- 1) Download the free iNaturalist app onto your smart phone from the AppStore or Google Play Store.
- 2) Create your own iNaturalist account.

3) From your account home page, click More, then Projects, and then using the search field put in CITY NATURE CHALLENGE 2021: ORLANDO METRO. In that way you can join the project and your iNaturalist observations will become part of the local effort.

4) From April 30 – May 3, sign into your iNaturalist account and use the app to take pictures of wildlife. Make sure you note the location and share your observations. You can suggest the identification of the organism, but if you are uncertain, others in the iNaturalist community will chime in.

If you have any questions, contact Daniel at daniel.friedline@orlando.gov.



Blue Dasher, Fern Creek, March 2021. Photo: Mary Keim

Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher An Adorable Eccentric

You can easily identify this fascinating species — if you can find it!

I often hear them but rarely see them: these tiny, darting, fluttery, maddening, long-tailed songbirds known as Blue-Grays, or Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers. The name has nothing to do with their food preferences; gnats are not a significant part of their diet.

What a surprise when an eccentric male landed right in front of me on the stark remains of a pruned azalea. His territory no doubt: they are fiercely territorial. As usual he darted away as quickly as he came, leaving me frustrated and longing for another close view.

Widespread year-round but not abundant in the Eastern U.S., Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers make themselves known by their nasal, wheezing song and insistent, squeaky calls. What odd sounds for an odd bird! It briskly hops and slides in dense foliage foraging for insects and spiders, cocking and flicking its white-edged tail from side to side to scare up insects and chase after them.

Pairs of Blue-Grays use spider webs and lichens to build small, neat nests that sit on the tops of branches. During breeding season they may build as many as seven nests, often using materials from previous structures. This practice supports reproduction as predators can invade their homes, or the nests can become infested with mites or overtaken by parasitic species.

Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers are an exquisite steely bluish-gray color and only about 4.5 inches in length. Their conspicuous tails are about half the length of their body and they often fan them out to display the striking white edges. The sexes are similar but the male has a black forehead (January–August) and black supercillium or “eyebrow.” Both sexes have prominent white eye rings and their under parts are white as well. Juveniles are washed grayish overall with loosely textured contour feathers.

The only gnatcatcher species in the Eastern U.S., the birds can be distinguished from bluish wood warblers by their smaller, slimmer bodies, and long black tails. During fall migration, Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on oak. Photo: Mary Keim

may accumulate on the Gulf Coast in huge numbers, particularly in Texas. What a spectacle that would be! These birds are the northernmost species of gnatcatcher, and the only truly migratory ones.

How to find this species? Your best bet is to listen for their insistent, thin, nasal, wheezy *szeewv* or *zeewv zeef zeef* call. Then get your binoculars ready to check out this erratic charmer! You will fall in love as I did with the darling Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher.

Linda Carpenter

World Migratory Bird Day May 8, 2021

World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) highlights spring migration on the second Saturday in May and fall migration on the second Saturday in October. Although spring migration in Florida is more concentrated in April, we mention this 28th annual WMBD to raise awareness of migratory birds and to promote actions to conserve them. In the Western Hemisphere WMBD is coordinated by the Colorado-based nonprofit — Environment for the Americas. This organization provides bilingual educational materials and information about birds and their conservation.

The theme of this year's World Migratory Bird Day is “Sing, Fly, Soar-Like a Bird”. Virtual programming for WMBD will be available May 2 through May 8. Visit birddaylive.com to join World Migratory Bird Day Live. To learn more about WMBD, visit www.migratorybirdday.org.

Kathy Rigling

Dragonfly Identification at Orlando Wetlands Park May 15, 2021

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is offering a Central Florida Dragonfly Identification Workshop. This outdoor workshop is Saturday, May 15, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon at the Orlando Wetlands Park (OWP) and adjacent Seminole Ranch Conservation Area.

Instructors are OAS members and dragonfly enthusiasts Mary Keim and Randy Snyder (rssmhk@gmail.com). Participants should bring binoculars, drink and snacks. Please prepare for the field with sun protection, insect protection and close-toed shoes that can get wet. We will meet at the OWP sign-in kiosk. An optional recommended text is Paulson, D. 2011. *Dragonflies and Damselflies of the East*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

Cost is \$10 for Audubon members; \$15 for non-members, payable to Orange Audubon Society. Non-members who join concurrently when registering are entitled to pay the reduced member registration rate. The 3-way membership is in Orange, National and Florida Audubon Societies (\$20 promotional rate). Such new memberships must be paid directly to OAS, as instructed when you register. The workshop is limited to 12 students and registration is required. To reserve a space, contact Teresa: mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 718-1977.

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey

The next Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey is May 8, 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.

In Case You Missed It...

Birds and Hurricanes

Have you ever wondered where birds go during hurricanes? For our April program, Dr. Ken Meyer presented the surprising results of his research on bird movement during three Florida hurricanes in 2017 — Maria, Irma, and Jose. Much of the research was conducted through the Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI), of which Ken is the co-founder and CEO, in partnership with many other environmental agencies and organizations, including Orange Audubon.

These studies tracked seven bird species' movements as hurricanes approached using telemetry-derived information. Accurate GPS signals were sent to satellites or cell phones recording the birds' locations.

ARCI has tracked some 200 Swallow-tailed Kites, including one nicknamed "Apopka," a kite injured by a car collision. The bird was rehabilitated and tagged with a transmitter and, as of this year, has been tracked for five southbound seasons. Apopka's first post-injury 5,000-mile migration began as Hurricane Irma approached the coast of Florida. Researchers worried as the bird lingered. Tracking showed that Apopka headed directly to Cuba, out of the path of Irma, successfully completing that migration and continues the arduous migration route to this day.



Magnificent Frigatebirds in Florida Keys.
Photo: Deborah Green

As Irma moved over Florida, a tagged Magnificent Frigatebird moved over the Gulf using northeasterly winds of the hurricane. On the other side of the storm, the bird used the opposite wind direction to land at Sanibel Island, eventually returning to its original starting place. The same route was

seen during the next year's storm. Dr. Meyer reported that the Magnificent Frigatebird's future is uncertain. Their breeding activity is limited to one small colony in the Dry Tortugas, with under 200 pairs. These islands are losing area as water rises with climate change.

ARCI discovered that the Reddish Egret, a coastal resident, stays put during hurricanes. A tagged Short-tailed Hawk moved inland from the coast to the protected forests of Sawgrass Lake Preserve.



Snail Kite. Photo: Sam Mitcham

The nomadic Snail Kite searches out and remembers places where they can find apple snails in varied weather conditions. Twelve tagged kites, all in the path of a hurricane, stayed in place.

White-crowned Pigeons nest only in the Florida Keys, migrating during winter to Caribbean islands or the Bahamas. They are fast flyers and are hunted to this day. Very particular in habit, they nest only in black mangroves and forage only on fruit of West Indian tropical hardwood species like poisonwood, gumbo limbo and others.

The Keys were totally devastated by Irma and many trees were killed. When the pigeons' nesting area in Barracuda Key was destroyed, researchers found the birds had moved to the East Bahia Honda complex. Most of the birds survived and some were tracked to Cuba, Jamaica, or Puerto Rico.

Dr. Meyer emphasized the potential danger to Florida birds by climate change and the related increased severity of hurricanes and sea level rise. Already declining species could be further threatened. You can help birds and ARCI's mission to study and understand them by donating at www.arcinst.org. Terry Piper, Programs Chair

Birdathon Results

Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) Birdathon was April 10th or 11th — people could pick a consecutive 24-hour period on those dates. A total of 172 species were collectively seen by the ten OAS teams that enthusiastically participated. Results of which team recorded the most species will appear in the June OASis.

Birdathon is one of OAS' major fundraising events and we hope additional pledges will be coming in. We'll also announce the winner in fund-raising in the June OASis.

Email Teresa Williams at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com if you have pledges coming in. If you want to make a donation and note that it is for Birdathon, the yellow Donate button is on [OAS' website home page](#) on the top right. Thanks to all for participating!

Kathy Rigling, Birdathon Chair

Jay Watch

Audubon Jay Watch volunteers contribute to citizen science research and preservation of the threatened Florida Scrub-Jay. Jay Watch will conduct its annual statewide survey from June 15 to July 15, 2021. To become a Jay Watch volunteer, you must take a free half-day training session in which you will learn standardized survey methods. With COVID-19 precautions, details are still being worked out. Visit [this link](#) and contact Audubon Florida's Jacqui Sulek at jsulek@audubon.org. Also if you missed it, see Maria Zondervan's talk on the St. Johns River Water Management's Florida Scrub-Jay work on Bird Chat from April 22nd. The talk is archived on Orange Audubon Society's YouTube Channel.

2021 Orange Audubon Society Board Elections

OAS' annual election of board members was carried out through an online questionnaire to up-to-date members with a link in the April mid-month update. Three board members were reelected — Linda Carpenter, Brent Mobley, and Victoria Schwartz — and Stephanie Nieves was elected as a new board member.

Linda Gaunt, Nominating Chair

Banded American Oystercatcher

On January 10, 2021, I attended my first Orange Audubon Society field trip (Fort DeSoto). Kathy Rigling, co-leader, asked each of us if there was a particular bird we were looking for, and I told her I had never seen an American Oystercatcher. I was very fortunate to see my first that day. Of the two American Oystercatchers that we saw, one was banded—another first for me—and Kathy suggested I report the sighting.



AE, the banded American Oystercatcher. Photo: Margie Sullivan

The reporting process seemed a bit intimidating for a first-timer because I wanted to get it right.

But as soon as I clicked submit, a biologist from Audubon North Carolina reached out and thanked me for my submission and asked me some questions. I was able to ask questions and make some revisions to my report and add extra photos.

Who knew that a field trip would lead to so many firsts: Seeing a banded American Oystercatcher, reporting the sighting, learning more about American Oystercatchers and AE, the banded American Oystercatcher I reported, connecting with a member of the Audubon North Carolina staff and understanding more of the work and mission of the Audubon Society.

Henceforth, I will refer to the American Oystercatcher by its 4 letter abbreviation used in banding (and in the birding world), AMOY.

From Audubon North Carolina, the American Oystercatcher Working Group (www.amoywg.org) coordinates the range-wide banding effort. The AMOY Band Database is administered by Audubon North Carolina's Lindsay Addison, who was born and raised in Southwest Florida. Lindsay stated "We are very grateful to everyone who reports their resights to the database."

The info below is from Lindsay Addison

about AE, the banded American Oystercatcher I reported. AE actually has a classic Florida story. It was banded as a chick on May 22, 2012, in Saint Catherine's Sound, GA. That's one of the most productive parts of the Atlantic coast for shorebirds. Like many AMOY, AE migrated south. We don't know where it spent its first winter, but it was seen in August 2013 at the Cross Florida Barge Canal, which is just north of the town of Crystal River. The Nature Coast is home to large wintering flocks of AMOY, so that's probably where AE wintered at first. The area is large, so surveyors could have missed it until then.

Next, it turned up in August 2015 in Fort DeSoto County Park (and Outback Key), and it has remained ever since, through summer and winter! Occasionally AE visits Shell Key Preserve, and once someone found it on the banks of the Manatee River near Palmetto. Some of the bays and estuaries aren't surveyed or birdwatched as often as Fort DeSoto or Shell Key Preserve, so AE probably gets around a little more than it seems from the resighting records, but it is definitely a case of a snowbird that came south one winter, fell in love with Florida, and decided to stay!

Some AMOY do that — migrate south in their first year and then never leave - but most do end up nesting closer to their natal site than AE did. Funny enough, though, another AMOY that makes Fort DeSoto home, Dark Green T0, was banded in North Carolina and migrated once, never to leave.

Thank you to Larry Martin and Kathy Rigling co-leaders for the Fort DeSoto Park Field Trip, and to OAS member Mary Soule who suggested I share my experience and the story of AE. The field trip was also special because I was able to share the experience with a friend who attended her first Audubon field trip.

Margie Sullivan



Short-billed Dowitchers and Willet (center). Photo: Delsy Rodriguez

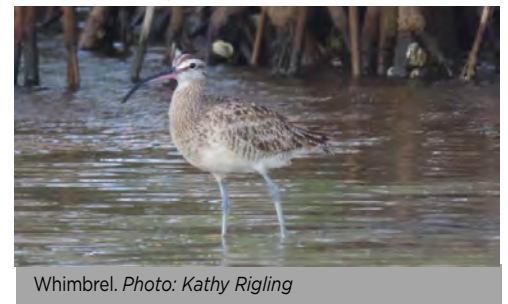
April Fort DeSoto Trip

On April 18, 2021 Orange Audubon had a Limited Edition Field Trip to Fort DeSoto Park. Led by up-and-coming birder Jeffrey Gammon with Susan Thome Barrett and myself, participants spent early morning to early afternoon exploring the wonders of the interconnected islands of this Pinellas County park.

The trip began at East Beach where we were treated to a nice array of shorebirds, including Short-billed Dowitchers, Dunlins and Black-bellied Plovers, some sporting breeding plumage.

Our stop at the ranger's residence and fountain did not yield warblers (the windy weather was not cooperating), but we had great looks at nesting Osprey feeding chicks and a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron high in a snag. Our stop at the fort yielded a very cooperative Gray Kingbird and two Osprey eating flounder for lunch!

The highlight of the day was North Beach where everyone was able to see the beautiful but elusive Whimbrel in a small lagoon.



Whimbrel. Photo: Kathy Rigling

The amazing shorebirds of North Beach included a Piping Plover in full breeding colors standing next to a Semi-palmated Plover, nesting Snowy Plovers, Wilson's Plovers, and Marbled Godwits. Reddish Egrets hunted nearby. A wonderful day was had by all, many vowing to return again to experience the magic of this special place. To see OAS' Bird Chat on Fort DeSoto, click [this link](#).

Kathy Rigling

If you are interested in participating in any coastal volunteer activity to protect birds, send an email with your name, telephone number, and general location to flconservation@audubon.org. Audubon Florida's shorebird steward program needs all the help it can get, especially on holiday weekends.

Lake Lotus Park Field Trip May 22, 2021

Orange Audubon Society's last monthly field trip of the season will be to Lake Lotus Park. This City of Altamonte Springs' nature preserve encompasses approximately 150 acres, including 120 acres of woods and wetlands. The trip is free but reservations are required, as it is limited to 15 people with COVID-19 precautions. This is suitable for beginners. Walking involved. Address is 1153 Lake Lotus Park Road, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714. Time: 8 a.m. to approximately 11 a.m. To reserve your spot, RSVP to Larry at lmartin5@msn.com or (407) 647-5834.

Oakland Nature Preserve Bird Survey, May 22, 2021

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) continues its quarterly bird surveys at Oakland Nature Preserve, 747 Machete Trail, Oakland, FL 34760. Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559 if you would like to participate. Oakland Nature Preserve—its restoration and birdlife—was the subject of OAS' April 29th Bird Chat, [archived on YouTube](#).

D Ranch Bioblitz May 22, 2021

Conservation Florida, the land trust with which Orange Audubon Society is partnering ([March 2021 OASis p. 5](#)), is holding a Bioblitz at D Ranch Preserve in Deltona on March 22nd, starting at 8 a.m. Here is [the link to register to participate](#).

Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area Trip May 29, 2021

For its last Limited Edition Field Trip of the program year, Orange Audubon Society will explore Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and nearby Joe Overstreet Road on May 29th.

These are wonderful birding hotspots, but since this area is rather remote, participants are encouraged to bring drinks, snacks, lunch and sunscreen. Restroom facilities are limited. There is a fee of \$6.00 per vehicle to enter Three Lakes WMA. This trip is limited to 15 people and costs \$10 per person for Audubon members and \$15 per person for non-members. Reservations are required and will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis the week prior to the trip. For trip questions or reservations contact Kathy at riglingk@aol.com or (407) 488-9559.

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive's Sixth Anniversary

Celebrating six years since the St. Johns River Water Management District opened the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive to the public, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) encourages visitors to stop by the shelter near the pumphouse with questions on May 1st from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Other information offered may include how to better identify birds seen along the drive, how to safely spot other wildlife, and in-depth background information about the property.

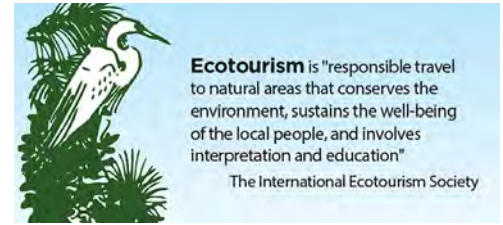
The popular 11-mile one-way Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD) was carefully designed to traverse existing farm levees to provide optimal wildlife viewing opportunities of both the recovering wetlands and lake. The LAWD entrance gate opens at 7 a.m. and closes at 3 p.m. to allow visitors time to complete the drive and exit the property by 5 p.m. The one-way drive begins at 2850 Lust Road in Apopka and exits onto Jones Avenue in Zellwood.

LAWD is open on days that District staff and contractors are not carrying out Lake Apopka restoration work — Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and most federal holidays. Any day of the week visitors may hike or bicycle the 18-mile Lake Apopka Loop Trail. Details for visitors, including an audio tour, can be found on [the District's website](#).

Nearly 150,000 visitors enjoyed exploring the drive in 2020. "We're proud of the drive's success and the incredible educational opportunity it offers residents and visitors," said District Executive Director Dr. Ann Shortelle. "It's just one of the many benefits of the numerous restoration projects under way to improve Lake Apopka's water quality and natural systems."

Any weekend throughout the year, you can see many out-of-state plates on LAWD, and these people buy gas and supplies, eat in restaurants, and stay locally, which brings in ecotourism dollars. As part of the anniversary celebration, OAS president Deborah Green has written an [Orlando Sentinel Op-Ed on the local benefits of birding ecotourism](#).

Deborah and OAS colleagues used a 2018 District-commissioned University of Florida ecotourism study and



visitation numbers provided by District staff to estimate current economic benefit to the local community of \$5.6 million annually. The Op-Ed points out how the Wildlife Drive has been a place for individuals and families to go since its opening in 2015, but even more so in the COVID-19 era. Birding and nature photography ecotourism meets the International Ecotourism Society's definition that OAS promotes: Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education. This definition has appeared on OAS' business cards for the annual [North Shore Birding Festival](#) — this year to be held December 2-6, 2021.

Since July 2020, Orange Audubon Ambassadors have been at the welcome shelter near the entrance gate each Saturday and Sunday to provide maps and tips for first-time visitors. As we tell visitors, the North Shore is not a park and is not staffed as a park. We volunteer to help keep public access. We could use a few more LAWD Ambassadors.



Responsibilities include being 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. Contact Deborah if you are interested at info@orangeaudubonfl.org or 407-637-2525.

Spring Birding at Mead Botanical Garden

Spring 2021 was a unique year for birding at Mead Botanical Garden. Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) April Saturday field trips had to be limited in participant number due to the pandemic, and trips averaged 14 or 15 people rather than the 40 people of previous years. Those who participated had fun and we saw some good migrants. Linda Gaunt kindly assisted with check-ins.

The mulberry tree area had plenty of activity, including frequent visits by Cedar Waxwings. Several nesting raptors — Red-shouldered Hawk with chick and Red-tailed Hawk with two chicks — were seen feeding, along with nesting Pileated Woodpeckers. The beautiful Wood Ducks no longer seem to mind presence of people.

Meanwhile with so many people retired or working remotely, birders swarmed the park during the week as well as on weekends.

Highlights this season were the Blue-winged Warbler and Swainson's

Warbler, "lifers" for many local birders. A Worm-eating Warbler gleaning in dead leaves was a popular sighting. A few avid birders saw a Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Cape May Warbler, and Tennessee Warbler. These added to the species we see every year like Ovenbird, Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, and Black-throated Blue Warbler.

Common Yellowthroats, Pine Warblers, and Northern Parulas appear to breed in the park. Thirty-four warbler species have been recorded on eBird from this park during the different seasons. [It is an Orange County birding hotspot on eBird.](#)

To see OAS' Bird Chat on birding at Mead Botanical Garden, click [this link](#). If you weren't able to get out to Mead this April, try again for fall migration. OAS will hold bird walks every Saturday in October.

Larry Martin, OAS Mead Liaison



Above, Blue-winged Warbler. Photo: Sam Mitcham. Below, Worm-eating Warbler with pupa. Photo: Steve Shaluta

With sadness we share that Victor K. Cooper — former Orange Audubon Society board member, field trip chair, and longtime member — passed away on April 20th. A memorial service will be held on May 8th at 2:00 pm at First United Methodist Church of Orlando, 142 E. Jackson Street, Orlando, FL.

MAY/JUNE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive 6th Anniversary

May 1, 2021
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Beginners Bird Watching Class

May 2, 9 and 16, 2021
Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

Bird Chats with OAS:

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

- Florida's Raptors with Jeff Bouton

May 6, 2021

- Wekiwa Springs State Park with Bird Chat Team

May 13, 2021

- Summer Birding and June Challenge

May 27, 2021

May Wekiwa Bird Survey

May 8, 2021
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Jay Watch Training 2021

May dates TBA

swDragonfly 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 by 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

June Challenge Starts

June 1, 2021
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

June Challenge Kickoff Field Trip

June 5, 2021
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Chertok Awards Program and Silent Auction

June 17, 2021
Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977