



All About Hummingbirds by Emma Rhodes February 17, 2022



Emma Rhodes with hummingbird bander and teacher Bob Sargent in 2010. *Photo courtesy Emma Rhodes.* Emma banding a hummingbird in 2015. *Photo: Jonathan Phillips.* Below right, rare visiting female Rufous Hummingbird found on OAS' South Florida trip this January. *Photo: Shari Yudenfreund-Sujka*



On February 17th at 7 p.m., Orange Audubon Society (OAS) will host Emma Rhodes, an avian biologist from Alabama in a YouTube Live presentation.

Since a young age, Emma has been banding birds to help understand their behaviors. Her teachers were Bob and Martha Sargent who ran the Hummer/Bird Study Group near Fort Morgan, Alabama and trained over 100 hummingbird banders. OAS' January speaker Scott Weidensaul also participated in the Alabama hummingbird banding and remembers Emma as a preteen. Along with two other partners who also were trained by the Sargents, Emma has founded the [Banding Coalition of the Americas](#), which carries on Bob and Martha's work.

The only hummingbird that breeds in the Eastern United States, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, is with us from March through September. But even after the vast majority of ruby-throats have migrated south across the Gulf of Mexico in fall, a few remain on the Florida peninsula. Banding research has revealed that the ruby-throats that overwinter are actually migrants from farther north.

When people have enough red-flowered plants and/or keep hummingbird feeders up in the winter, they may host these ruby-throats. Rufous Hummingbirds, Black-chinned Hummingbirds, and Buff-bellied Hummingbirds, that breed out West, on rare occasions winter in Florida. A Rufous Hummingbird was a target species on OAS' recent South Florida trip.

On February 17th at 7 p.m., Emma will talk about hummingbird biology, about the winter hummingbirds that can be seen at bird feeders this time of year and about how they band. This is an online YouTube Live program and will be archived on OAS' YouTube channel. To see the program live and be able to ask questions, simply open YouTube and write Orange Audubon Society in the search field. The program will pop up at 7 p.m. Don't miss it!

Terry Piper, Programs Chair

Offering a Hand to Young Naturalists

The COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult for all of us, but among the most vulnerable have been children. For those families who have used parks or their own back yards to help children nurture new interests, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) would like to help.

If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in. Rachel Carson in *The Sense of Wonder* (1965).

OAS has started a Young Birders Club with a successful first walk on September 25th at Mead Botanical Gardens followed by a November 13th visit to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. The walk on January 22nd at Orlando Wetlands Park brought together several club members with their parents, two avid 16-year old birders who have recently been joining our trips, and two University of Central Florida students who are part of Audubon Florida's Conservation Leadership Initiative along with their OAS mentors.



OAS Young Birders Club trip to Orlando Wetlands Park, January 22, 2022. *Photo: Kathy Rigling*

The next trip will be March 27th. If you have a child or grandchild aged 7 to 16 who would like to participate in the Young Birders Club, please contact OAS' new Education Coordinator Kathy Rigling at riglingkathy@gmail.com.



Orange Audubon Society programs are free and no reservations are necessary.

Programs are the 3rd Thursday of each month (September-June).

In most months of the 2021-22 season, programs are held online through YouTube LIVE.



SpaceX Launch Site

With the growth of the space industry, Space X has asked for additional dedicated launch sites at Cape Canaveral. NASA has already committed previously-used shuttle sites 39A and 39B, but Space X has requested one additional site. The new area proposed is 3,000 feet from SR 402 (the entry way to the beaches).

will be impacted by these launches. Starting this month or next, the scoping process for this site will be initiated, and Audubon Florida (AF) will be monitoring the plans. Scoping is the first step in an environmental review. According to Charles Lee, director of advocacy for Audubon Florida, public comment is invited at that time and the result will be the first outline of salient issues.

For an overview of this project, go to <https://environmental.ksc.nasa.gov/EnvironmentalPlanning/starshipsuperheavy>. To receive notifications for meetings and opportunity to comment, sign up using the email at the top right of that page. Charles encourages everyone to sign up to ensure their comments will be heard at the appropriate time.

Tree Protection Ordinance

Orange County Environmental Protection Division's second presentation on updating Orange County's Tree Protection and Removal ordinance was at the January 11th Board of County Commissioners meeting. OAS President Deborah Green [spoke in public comments](#) on selecting native trees that host caterpillars for the birds. OAS' Conservation Committee is participating on this issue, since protection of the county's tree canopy and selection of new trees emphasizing native bird/caterpillar-friendly species are important Plants for Birds efforts. If you want to help us, email info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Legislative Session Continues

The Audubon Florida Advocate newsletter is sent weekly during the legislative session. Please sign up [at this link](#) and respond to the calls for action, most of which will be closer to the end of session. See also [Audubon Florida's Facebook page](#).

Central FL Conservation Issues

Audubon Florida's Central Florida Regional Conservation Committee in January discussed issues that will affect our area and the state of Florida.

Net Metering: A bill sponsored with support of the utility companies has been introduced to limit net metering—the practice of a utility company buying

Continued next page



Wood Stork Reflections—Wood Storks. Honorable Mention Novice Category, 2020 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. *Photo: Donald Martin*

A little history...In 1963 the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge was created with NASA retaining ownership of the land in the refuge. In the 1970s the Canaveral National Seashore was created. NASA retains the right to take back all or part of this land.

During the height of the shuttle launches, closure of the Cape and the beaches caused an increase in demand for an additional road to the beach. Through the work of environmental organizations, including Audubon Florida, and championed by then Representative Bill Nelson, environmental damage was minimized by re-locating SR 402 to the site of an existing railroad track and re-locating the RR track to the old location of SR 402.

The popularity of the beaches at the National Seashore has grown over the years to approximately 1.5 million visitors annually, adding significant ecotourism dollars to the area's economy. Continued temporary or permanent closures may result in demand for a new road to access the beaches. This would necessitate a causeway over the Mosquito Lagoon, a massive and hugely damaging road project.

Based on the SpaceX closures in Texas, an area of 3 to 6 miles surrounding the launch sites will be closed. With SR 402 only 3,000 feet away from the proposed launch site (less than 1 mile), access to the area



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

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Continued from p. 2

Central FL Conservation Issues

energy back from homeowners who install solar panels. In an article in the *Orlando Sentinel*, one solar installer pointed out that in one of the counties they serviced, no solar panels have been installed since local legislation was passed to eliminate net metering. It was also pointed out that utilities receive government support to install solar farms. Net metering is the only way individuals get assistance with installing solar panels that help meet our country's greenhouse gas reduction goals. Audubon Florida's stance, according to Charles Lee, is to support both solar farms and home solar installation as both will be needed to reduce our carbon emissions. Solar farms have more potential for preservation of habitats than housing developments.

Sea Grass Mitigation

Another bill proposed would allow destruction of prime sea grass beds for construction of docks and marinas in exchange for "mitigation" funding. Charles Lee points out that replanting quality sea grass beds has not been very successful to this point. The loss of quality sea grass beds would mean further devastation to marine life, including manatees.



Baby Manatee Doo Doo Doo—Manatees. Honorable Mention Novice Category, 2021 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. Photo: Steven Madow

Consistent Funding for Florida Forever

In recent years, funding for Florida Forever (the state program that purchases properties deemed important for wildlife and water quality) has dipped from \$300 million to zero and then finally up to \$100 million. With continued advocacy by State Senator Linda Stewart (Orlando), this year an additional non-recurring \$300 million from Federal Relief funding has been added. A state bill is being proposed to ensure a consistent amount

of funding is dedicated to Florida Forever for purchasing priority lands. Land prices and development are skyrocketing, and as ranchers and farmers grow older, their properties may be divided up and sold. Florida Forever has a list of priority parcels in each area [that is available to view online](#).

For our area, Lenholt Farms is a keystone property in creating an important link in the Wildlife Corridor connecting the Ocala National Forest to the Wekiva River Basin State Parks. During the Christmas Bird Count adjacent to this property active eagle nesting and fox squirrels were seen.

Charles Lee reports that many land owners are more interested in *conservation easements*. These easements prevent the property being developed and do not require state funding to manage lands. A downside is that lands are generally not open to the public (determined by the landowner), and habitat protection is not absolute as the landowner can continue to use the land as he or she warrants.

Elimination of the Lake County Water Authority (LCWA)

The LCWA was established in 1953 as an independent, non-partisan board with regulatory authority. It currently is a partisan board with no regulatory authority, but its role includes 1) Obtaining funding for Lake County water projects (which include dredging to maintain water levels), 2) Overseeing the Phosphorous removal project west of the Apopka-Beauclair Canal, 3) Overseeing 20 conservation properties which include Hickory Point and 4) Environmental Education. The proposal would move the conservation lands to Lake County.

This bill's local sponsor states it does not need a taxpayer referendum, while independent law counsels the state that it does need a vote by local taxpayers to be passed. Charles Lee stated that when local bills like this are passed, state agencies will not get involved.

Apparently not all Lake County commissioners support this move.

Audubon Florida supports moving the conservation properties to be overseen by the St. John's Water Management District.

Susan Thome-Barrett, Conservation Chair

Climate Change, Megafires, and Birds

While fire is a natural part of the landscape across the United States, in the past few years a combination of factors has led to extreme "megafires" in the western U.S. that have been becoming more frequent and severe. These fires directly impact both people and birds by destroying vegetation and releasing massive amounts of smoke that affect air quality. While some species of birds are impacted when their habitat is directly destroyed, other species are impacted during migration.

According to a recent paper in the journal *Ecology* (see <https://doi.org/10.1002/ecy.3552>), smoke from wildfires can easily reach the high altitudes at which migrating birds fly.

Migration is stressful and takes a lot of energy and effort. Migrating birds have problems when they inhale smoke while flying, just as human athletes do if there is smoke or other air pollution while they are running.

In 2020, scientists noticed that Tule Geese, a subspecies of the Greater White-fronted Goose, changed their routes, zig-zagged back and forth, and even stopped flying when their routes took them through high-altitude wildfire smoke. Overall, the geese took twice as long to get to their destinations and had to fly an average of 470 more miles. Scientists estimate that this extra effort will cause more birds to have problems reproducing and will lead to increased mortality.

Wildfires in the western U.S. are increasing due to a combination of changing rainfall patterns, dying vegetation because of invasive beetles, and hotter summers—all of which are linked to human activity and climate change.

Unfortunately, the new peak megafire season coincides with fall migration, so the new massive fires have terrible timing for birds.

This is a large-scale problem that will need society-level action to address.

While we can take individual actions like being careful with fire in fire-prone areas, only collective actions like preserving migration corridor habitat, managing land using ecologically prescribed fire, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions will be effective in the long term.

Sonia Stephens, OAS Climate Co-chair



Peregrine Falcon. Photo: Mark Heinen

Birds of Prey Identification, Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive February 6, 2022

Orange Audubon Society offers its second Birds of Prey Identification class of 2022 on the [Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive](#) on Sunday, February 6, 2022, 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Trip leader Bob Sanders is an avid birder and raptor expert. Before moving to Central Florida, he was co-founder of the Chimney Rock Hawk Watch in Martinsville, New Jersey.

Price is \$7 (Audubon members) or \$12 (non-members). We will be looking for Peregrine Falcons, Merlins, Kestrels, Cooper's Hawks, Northern Harriers, Osprey, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks. If any of these would be new to you or you just would want to bird with Bob Sanders—a font of natural history information—join us! To register contact Bob at (407) 459-5617 or email info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Green PLACE Nature & Photography Hike February 26, 2022

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is offering a FREE guided Nature & Photography Hike on Saturday, February 26, 2022 at Isle of Pine Preserve in east Orange County. Beth Jackson, Orange County Green PLACE manager and naturalist, and Lee Ann Posavad, wildlife photographer, will co-lead this hike. It is ideal for youth and families.

Learn about the easy-to-photograph nature of this 464-acre Orange County Green PLACE property. This continues a long-standing partnership between OAS and [Orange County Green PLACE program](#) in promotion of these important preserves.



Isle of Pine Preserve. Photo: Mary Keim

The walk will be from 8:30 to 11:00 a.m., Saturday, February 26th. The address for Isle of Pine Preserve is 14032 Lacebark Pine Rd, Orlando, FL 32832. The trip is free but limited to 12 participants. To reserve your spot, call Beth Jackson at (407) 836-1481 or email GreenPLACE@ocfl.net.

Overnight Trips

Northwest FL Panhandle Birding

Dates: Apr 13-17, 2022. This trip is timed to see migratory and southern breeding songbirds and shorebirds. Cost is \$150 for members, \$170 for non-members and includes local expert guides, Wakulla Springs boat tour and some picnic meals. For registration/lodging/other details, email Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com.

Maine Birding with Wildside Nature Tours

Dates: June 15-22, 2022. For registration/lodging/other details, email Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

City Nature Challenge 2022

A four-day global Bioblitz called the City Nature Challenge allows communities to compete to record the most species, document the most observations and engage the most participants. Participants document biodiversity within the urban landscape in this friendly intercity competition.

In the 2021 City Nature Challenge global event, 419 cities in 44 countries participated. Out of 1.27 million total observations, 45,300 individual species were recorded. 2,100 of those species were rare, threatened, or endangered. Each participant is encouraged to record as many nature observations as possible using [iNaturalist](#), the free mobile app that uses computer vision/artificial intelligence to provide real-time identification suggestions.

iNaturalist data is used in scientific publications worldwide relating to biodiversity and conservation that would not be possible without the participation of community scientists. Residents, resource managers and government officials alike have used this data to increase biodiversity awareness and improve decision-making.

Those who wish to participate in the [City Nature Challenge 2022](#) will have April 29th through May 2nd to take photos and share observations. Observations must be uploaded, and species identified by May 8th, and results will be announced May 9th. All participants should follow local COVID-19 rules and regulations while participating.

*Christianah Oyenuga,
City Nature Challenge*

Sunrise Photo Shoot at Orlando Wetlands Park February 26, 2022

Professional photographer, author and instructor of nature photography Milton Heiberg will teach a sunrise photo workshop on Saturday, February 26th from 6:00-10:00 a.m.

This is at one of the most scenic locations in Central Florida—Orlando Wetlands Park. The park's many gray sun-bleached tree branches make interesting, photogenic perches for avian subjects. Participants should have a working knowledge of digital SLR photography. Bring a tripod and a 300 mm or longer lens (tele-extenders help). Cost is \$60 (Audubon members); \$75 (non-

members), and class is limited to 12 adult participants. To register contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977 or mwilliams@cfl.rr.com.



Orlando Wetlands Park's distinctive flooded palms at sunrise. Photo: Milton Heiberg

In Case You Missed It...

A World of on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds by Scott Weidensaul

We were honored to welcome Scott Weidensaul to Orange Audubon in January. He is an ornithologist and the author of some 30 books, including a Pulitzer Prize finalist. His book, *A World on the Wing*, is a great read and his conservation efforts second to none.

He first discussed the successful conservation of waterfowl which began in the 1980s. His optimism for current conservation is based on the prevalence of data, from eBird to Doppler weather radar to the most recent and technologically advanced tracking methods. Thanks to these data, we now know more about the physiology of migrating birds and their extraordinary journeys.

The remarkable little Semipalmated Sandpiper makes a journey from subarctic Canada to the jungles of the Orinoco River delta in Venezuela. In autumn before migration they gather at the Bay of Fundy to fill up on *Corophium*, a crustacean full of Omega-3 fatty acids. Scott called this food a “performance-enhancing drug” that primes flight muscles and increases aerobic capacity. The sandpipers use the magnetic fields of the Earth to navigate their 3300-mile journey. We now have a clue how they do this, but you’ll have to read Scott’s book for a thorough explanation of “quantum entanglement” which occurs in a bird’s eye giving it the ability to use the planetary magnetic field as a map. According to Scott, in physics this is literally called “Spooky Action” and even gave Einstein pause!

Another example of the miracle of migration is the amount of time some



Pine Warbler with caterpillar. Photo: Robert Sena

migrants stay on the wing. Using “accelerometer” data in geolocation tracking of resting/ flying time, researchers found the Alpine Swift stays



Northern Pintail on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. Photo: Steven Shaluta

in flight for seven months of the year. Length of flight time in Common Swifts is ten months. Sooty Tern juveniles remain in flight for four to five years until adulthood. Sleeping on the wing as these birds do requires a special brain function called unihemispheric sleep in which one brain hemisphere sleeps while the other is active.

Migrants also face serious man-made challenges during migration, usually from loss of habitat. Perhaps the most important migration stopover is the tidal mudflats of the Yellow Sea in China, where 60–70 percent of the coast has been destroyed for development and agriculture. Shorebird populations there are suffering the same losses. With only 240–456 individuals left, of particular note is the endangered Spoonbill Sandpiper which breeds in the far eastern areas of Russia and winters on the Yellow Sea mudflats. Due to these issues and more, conservationist pressure on the Chinese government led to protection of the remaining Yellow Sea coastline and other important shorebird stopover sites, a rare bit of good news from China!

The same pressure has been less successful in Asia and the Mediterranean areas where many millions of migrating birds are killed for food each year. This is often not subsistence-level food, Scott emphasized, but rare, expensive kinds of dishes. Because of the large amounts of money to be had, organized crime is often involved. Much of this slaughter is currently illegal in most of these countries, like France and Italy, but enforcement has been insufficient.

Perhaps the greatest threat to migrating birds is climate change. Migration habits are changing in some species, and short- to moderate-distance migrants are able to successfully modify their migration timing and routes according to local conditions. However, long-distance migrants are having less

success adjusting. Conditions along 3,000– or 10,000–mile-long migration routes are unpredictable. Birds may arrive in weather or other conditions they can’t survive.

In addition, in some species like the European Pied Flycatcher, migration arrival coincides with caterpillar abundance, providing a rich source of food for nesting birds and their young. When the timing of these eons-old relationships is altered, starvation can result. Climate change is also causing greater extremes of heat and cold, as in northern Canada where insects are emerging too early to feed precocial juvenile Red Phalaropes and Hudsonian Godwits.



Hudsonian Godwits stopping over near Toledo Ohio in October on their migration south. Photo: Mark Hainen

Scott ended his presentation with hopeful news. Data provided by many new technological sources are helping researchers target important migratory locations for conservation efforts. For example, Doppler weather radar calculates quite precisely how many birds are flying, allowing researchers to determine changes in migration by comparing today’s weather data with archived data. See birdcast.info/news.

Millions of eBird entries allow researchers to determine the location of large flocks of certain migrating species. This information can clue local conservationists to target migrants’ greatest needs and act accordingly. For example, farmers’ fields might be temporarily flooded to accommodate large numbers of shorebirds moving through. In the case of urban areas where city lights allure migrants off course, cities might install automated “lights out” systems for the two or three days when large numbers of certain migrants are nearby. And of course cities can make urban parks more bird friendly in general to help migrants survive their arduous journeys.

Continued next page



Snowy Owl and Scott Weidensaul. Photo: Beth Sanders

Weidensaul. Continued from p.5.

A new collaborative tracking technology called Motus Wildlife Tracking System (motus.org) from Birds Canada collects data from tiny transmitters attached to birds, bats, and even insects.

The tracking data is available to the public. Another tracking system, one Scott and his colleagues developed, is [Project SNOWstorm](#) used to track raptors like Snowy Owls in amazing three-dimensional detail. Raptors and other flying creatures are tagged with transmitters and, using GPS and cell phone technologies, tracked by over 100 automated receiver stations across the northeastern US and Canada.

Scott's final story of hope involved the salvation of the 18,000-mile-migrating Amur Falcon in Nagaland, an area in northeastern India. The Naga were killing 140,000 of these termite-eating raptors each year to sell to cities for badly needed cash. Conservationists convinced them that ecotourism is more profitable than annual slaughter, and their behavior changed. And despite the terrible roads and danger from bandits, [Wildside Nature Tours](#) is now taking groups there for birding, and from Scott's video of feasting falcons in action, it's an incredible sight. COVID may have caused a set back, but the foundation for tourism and conservation has been laid.

Scott left us with a final thought. He said for millenia migrating birds have been travelling alone, in the dark, in incredible danger and difficulty, using only their muscles and strength, with no food or water for weeks. Their fate was entirely theirs. Now, he concluded, their fate is entirely ours. Do your part, whatever that is, for these imperilled birds. Scott Weidensaul's book is available through online vendors, and it's a great read. We're grateful for his time with us!

Terry Piper, Programs Chair

Note: The program is available on OAS' [YouTube channel](#) only until February 20th.

Audubon's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion...

Black History Month February 2022

In honor of black history month, Orange Audubon Society's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion committee highlights the statue of an educator who will be one of only ten women and the first African American to represent a state in the National Statuary Hall. Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955) fought for equal rights and founded Bethune-Cookman University. She also led the Black Cabinet during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration.



"Invest in the human soul. Who knows, it may be a diamond in the rough." Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune.

In 1864, Congress invited each state to contribute two statues of prominent citizens for permanent display in National Statuary Hall, a room in the U.S. Capitol. By 1933, Statuary Hall had already become overcrowded, and some statues are displayed in other parts of the Capitol. The last state to contribute its second statue was New Mexico, with a statue of the Pueblo leader Po'pay in 2005.

Dr. John Gorrie, who lived in Apalachicola during the 1800s and who is considered the father of air conditioning, was the first Floridian

represented by a statue, installed in 1914. The statue of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune will replace the statute of General Kirby Smith, a confederate general who has represented Florida since 1922. In 2016, the Florida Legislature passed a bill which then Gov. Rick Scott signed into law calling on the state to find someone to honor instead of Smith. And thanks to lobbying by many legislators, including local Representative Geraldine Thompson (Winter Garden and Lake Buena Vista), the honoree selected was Dr. Bethune. Funds to pay for the statue were raised by the Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Statuary Fund, Inc., based in Daytona Beach.

The sculptor Nilda Comas was selected from a field of 1,600 applicants and is the first Hispanic master carver to contribute to the National Statuary Hall Collection. She sculpted the 11-foot statue of Dr. Bethune out of the largest (and last) piece of statuary marble from Michelangelo's quarry in Italy.

Comas lives part of the year in Fort Lauderdale and part of the year in the Italian village of Pietrasanta, where she chiseled the statue in a historic studio. From April to September, several hundred sculptors from around the world work in studios in this Tuscan village, grinding, chiseling, chipping and polishing blocks of some of the purest marble in the world. Pietrasanta is important because success in the art of sculpting stone depends not only on the material and the artist's conception, but also on the skills and expertise of technicians who help the artist realize his or her vision.

Comas first created the sculpture in clay, to fine-tune every detail. From there, she used centuries-old techniques to copy it to the marble. This painstaking labor of love took four years, with completion this past spring. The 3-ton statue was shipped to the United States and unveiled in October in Daytona Beach, home of Dr. Bethune. En route to Washington, D.C., the statue stopped in Mayesville, South Carolina, where Dr. Bethune grew up.

The Capitol remains closed to the public due to COVID, but hopes are that the unveiling of Florida's new representative will be this May. *Deborah Green*



Above, Blue-winged Teal and one Green-winged Teal on the wing. Can you find it? Below, Two male Green-winged Teal. Photos: Lorri Lilja

Clay Island Trip

Twelve intrepid birders hiked from the Clay Island Trailhead to the Marsh Flow-way Overlook on January 22nd. In 2021 the St. Johns River Water Management District renovated the Marsh Flow-way and burned it, and bird life has really increased. We saw (or heard) our target birds: Least Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Green-winged Teal and Snail Kites. It was a cold morning but was fun to be out birding in such a great location.

Larry Martin, Field Trips Chair

Count Backyard Birds!

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is February 18-22, 2022. The GBBC was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time. 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, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. A webinar on how to participate can be accessed [at this link](#). Join the fun and contribute to this great community (citizen) science project! You may find a new bird in your “backyard.”

Mary Keim, OAS Member and GBBC Participant

Volunteering to Keep the Wildlife Drive Open

In November 2020, the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) awarded Orange Audubon Society (OAS) the prestigious Bob Owens Award for Citizen Volunteer Service.



We received the award for our conservation and public education work at Lake Apopka and on the Lake Apopka North Shore.



OAS volunteers are on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD) each Saturday and Sunday as Ambassadors, providing maps and information to visitors.

Although going to LAWD is free for residents and visitors, SJRWMD now has an online link to donate, and funds donated are used for amenities on the Drive. Many visitors prefer to pass \$3 to \$20 in cash to the Ambassadors, who collect and then pass this money to SJRWMD. Since collection by the District began, \$5,500 has been donated. Out of this total, \$2,800 was collected by the Ambassadors.

OAS also manages a [LAWD Facebook page](#) with over 17,000 followers and organizes the [North Shore Birding Festival](#) that has introduced the western part of the Lake Apopka North Shore to visitors. Attendees came from 18 states to the January 2020 festival (pre-COVID), and in 2021 the number of states inched back up to 14.

In addition to the Ambassador program, OAS volunteers clean the kiosks on LAWD and the western part of the North Shore and several volunteers make sure visitors are off

Ambassador Appreciation

In appreciation for the volunteering in the Ambassador program, St. Johns River Water Management District Land Manager Maria Zondervan and Land Management Specialist Brian Silverman hosted sixteen volunteers on an Ambassador Appreciation EcoBuggy tour of the western part of the North Shore.



Ambassador Appreciation EcoBuggy trip around the Lake Apopka North Shore. Photo: Bob Stamps. Visiting the Marsh Flow-way tower. Photo: Deborah Green. Female Vermilion Flycatcher near the tower. Photo: Lee Ann Posavad

the Drive by 5 p.m. closing time (do “sweeps”).

Over 2900 hours were contributed by the ambassadors, sweeps, and kiosk cleaners in 2021. Maria Zondervan, SJRWMD land manager, commented “I’ve never met a more committed group of people.”

With the LAWD Ambassador Program and other projects, share your love of birds while helping Orange Audubon. Email volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org. Thank you!

Deborah Green, OAS President

The fascinating Reddish Egret

Large and elegant, the Reddish Egret exhibits beautiful color variations and captivating foraging habits. Powerful, with long sturdy legs, a long neck and thick dagger-like bill, the bird is smaller than the Great Egret but larger than a Snowy Egret. The adult non-breeding dark morph has a shaggy, rusty-colored neck, slate-gray body, and heavy, two-toned bill.

The breeding adult white morph (a small percentage of the Florida Gulf Coast population) is entirely white with a pink, black-tipped bill.

You can find this species around coastal salt flats, lagoons and man-made salt pans (used for making table salt) feeding on small, minnow-like fish in tidal environments, reefs and barrier islands. Distinctive foraging habits, called “disturb and chase” helps birders identify them. For example they often open their wings when hunting to coax prey to take shelter in the shade of their wings. Or they extend their wings over their head to hunt beneath the umbrella they have created so they can see tiny fish more clearly. They also use their feet to stir up sediment and flush out prey. Wing-flicking is another unusual technique. A bird may lurch forward while extending and retracting its wings rapidly. As it lurches and weaves in a half run, half jump, it rapidly stabs the shallow water left and right attempting to seize a fish. At times they also hunt slowly and methodically as other egrets and herons do.

Reddish Egrets are primarily monogamous. Males execute elaborate displays to invite females to a potential nesting site. Stretching his neck up and back while erecting his head and neck feathers, the male moves his head side to side, and snaps his bill together loudly. The pair then performs a circular flight around their spot and chase and leapfrog over each other. During nest building, pairs engage in elaborate pair-bonding displays, erecting their neck feathers and making clattering sounds with their bills.

Males and females help build the nest, a flat platform of twigs and sticks lined with grasses and placed in trees or mangroves above water. They often nest with other wading birds like herons, ibis and other egrets.

Reddish Egrets are an Audubon Priority Bird or a species of conservation concern. Partners in Flight estimates a global breeding population of 15,000 with an estimated 2,400 breeding in the U.S. Found year-round in Central and South Florida, they are at risk from global climate change and frequent, strong tropical storms. Reddish Egret populations decline when coastal habitats are developed and destroyed. Disturbance of their nesting colonies or of their foraging habitats also contributes to their decline.

Check out this amazing species! You can find them at the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge or other shallow marsh areas of coastal Florida and Texas. Their splendid plumage and fascinating foraging techniques are captivating. You will fall in love as I have with the elegant Reddish Egret, another beautiful Florida treasure.

Linda Carpenter



Ruffled Reddish—Reddish Egret. Second Place Advanced Category, 2019 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. Photo: Bobby van Mierop

Birding South Florida

In early January, sixteen birders traveled with Orange Audubon Society (OAS) to Florida City for our first South Florida trip in many years. We saw 101 species, including lifers for all of us!

Our trip leaders, Luis Gles and Mariah Hryniewicz, were skilled and enthusiastic. Luis is a well-known South Florida birder and tour guide who has been lead hawkwatcher at the Florida Keys Hawkwatch for several years. He was a soccer player since he was a kid and, upon spotting or hearing a target bird, would RUN to grab his spotting scope. Mariah—who joins Luis as Florida Keys Hawkwatcher and now reps for PhoneScope, maker of attachments for smart phones to spotting scopes—is also a great trip leader. Both are ambassadors for KOWA Sporting Optics, major sponsor for the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL, and led trips at the last two festivals.

Our first official birding stop on Friday was the L31W Canal. The road north of the canal, at the edge of Everglades National Park, yielded White-tailed Kite, Cassin's Kingbird, Western Kingbird, Scissortail Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, a Smooth-billed Ani and other great birds. We explored Frog Pond Wildlife Management Area/Lucky Hammock before lunch, and later took an evening walk along the L31W Canal where we saw the red eyes of several Eastern Whip-poor-wills.

On Saturday we drove down to the Keys, starting at Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammocks State Botanical Site. In this failed development purchased by the state to save its botanical diversity, we found a Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Ovenbird, Black-and-white Warbler, Northern Parula and Prairie Warbler. At Long Key State Park we added Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, and Palm Warbler to our wintering warbler list. We continued as far south as Big Pine Key and Blue Hole. Sunday was focused on seeing rarities in the Kendall area and other areas of Miami. It took us a while to spot the Rufous Hummingbird, but the sighting was worth it. Two Scaly-breasted Munias and parrots rounded out a terrific OAS trip! Let me know if you missed it and want to encourage us to hold it again next year.

Deborah Green, Trip Organizer

Bird Chats with OAS

Bird Chats with Orange Audubon Society are back after a holiday break (see p.8 for schedule). To register for upcoming Bird Chats so you are sent the Zoom link each week, [click here](#). The Bird Chats team has created a rich resource of programs archived them on Orange Audubon Society's [YouTube Channel](#). The videos are now organized into Playlists to make it easy to find the talks you missed that are of interest to you. If you have requests for topics for programs or speakers, please email info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Birding South Florida



1. Birding L31W Canal area, (Deborah Green), 2. Cassin's Kingbird (Susan Thome-Barrett), 3. White-tailed Kite (Alan Shapiro), 4. Brown-crested Flycatcher (Kathy Rigling), 5. Smooth-billed Ani (Kathy Rigling), 6. Whip-poor-Will (Luis Gles), 7. Mariah at Long Key State Park (Deborah Green), 8. Prairie Warbler (Shari Sujka), 9. Birding at Long Key State Park (Deborah Green), 10. Leyton Hammock (Deborah Green), 11. Birding Pine Woods Park (Deborah Green), 12. Scaly-breasted Munia (Shari Sujka), 13. Planning last day (Deborah Green), 14. Common Myna (Susan Thome-Barrett), 15. Group shot at Long Key State Park (Luis Gles)

Chertok Deadline: April 21, 2022

Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) 2022 (34th Annual) Kit and Sidney Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest is themed *Florida Native Nature*. Competing in this contest will sharpen your photo skills, increase knowledge of Florida's amazing wildlife and wild places and teach valuable ethical field practices.

Eligible photos may not include humans, human artifacts or introduced plant or animal species—subject matter must be native to Florida—and photos must be taken in compliance with the [NANPA code of conduct](#).

The deadline is April 21, 2022 (postmarked or electronically submitted by date). Participants will be notified of any disqualified entries and may optionally replace them at no charge.

There are three skill level competition categories:

[Youth](#)—for photographers age 17 years or younger by April 21, 2022;

[Novice](#)—for new and less experienced

[Advanced Amateur/Professional](#)—for experienced photographers who have honed their skills over time.

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, OAS' Chertok Photography Contest Chair*



Foggy Cattail Sunrise—Wood Duck. Honorable Mention Winner, Advanced Category, 2021 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. Photo: Diana C. Rose

FEBRUARY/MARCH CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Chats with OAS via Zoom

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

- South Florida Birding by the Bird Chat Team

February 3, 2022

- The Casual Birder Podcast by Suzy Buttress

February 10, 2022

- Crossing of the Loons by Andy Krattner

February 24, 2022

- Birding in Panama by Tammy Martin

March 10, 2022

February Wekiwa Monthly Survey

February 5, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Birds of Prey Identification Field Trip

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive

February 6, 2022

Contact Bob at (407) 459-5617

February Program: All About Hummingbirds by Emma Rhodes

February 17, 2022

Contact Terry at (321) 436-4932

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 18-21, 2022

www.birdsource.org/gbbc

February Field Trip: Orlando Wetlands Park, Christmas

February 19, 2022

Contact Larry at (407) 252-1182

Orlando Wetlands Park Monthly Survey

February 20, 2022

Contact Jeffrey at jeffreyg@knights.ucf.edu

Sunrise Photo Shoot

Orlando Wetlands Park

February 26, 2022

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

Limited Edition Field Trip - Birding and Biking McDonald Canal Boat Ramp

February 26, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Green PLACE Nature & Photography Hike

February 26, 2022

Contact Green PLACE at (407) 718-1977

March Wekiwa Monthly Survey

March 5, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Beginners' Bird Watching Class: Various Locations

March 12, 20 & 26, 2022

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

Limited Edition Field to PEAR Park, Leesburg

March 13, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

March Program: Plants for Birds by Deborah Green

March 17, 2022

Contact Terry at (321) 436-4932

March Field Trip: Little Big Econ State Forest- Barr Street Trailhead Oviedo

March 19, 2022

Contact Larry at (407) 252-1182

Orlando Wetlands Park Monthly Survey

March 20, 2022

Contact Jeffrey at jeffreyg@knights.ucf.edu

Lower Wekiva River Preserve Quarterly Survey

March 23, 2022 (Wednesday)

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Young Birders Trip: Location TBA

March 27, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559