



Jim Duby, Photo: Seminole County. An invasive Tegu, Photo: University of Florida.

Florida's Invasive Fauna by Jim Duby April 21, 2022

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is pleased to announce that it will hold its April 21st meeting at Leu Gardens IN PERSON! Our speaker Jim Duby is the Seminole County Natural Lands Program Manager and a reptile aficionado and expert on invasive animals. Florida is plagued by more than 500 plant and animal species that are not native, and some of these are wreaking havoc on delicate ecosystems around the state. Jim will inform us about these and will bring several live specimens of invasive animals to show

This is the only in-person program OAS plans this spring. Even the Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest and Silent Auction on June 16th will be online again this year. We at OAS have missed seeing you all and hope you attend! The program will be April 21st at 7 p.m. in the Camellia Room at Harry P. Leu Gardens, 1920 North Forest Ave., Orlando, FL 32803. Don't miss it!

Terry Piper, Programs Chair

Birdathon Fundraiser is April 9-10, 2022

Birdathon is one of the main fundraisers of the year for Orange Audubon Society (OAS). Supporters can contribute by birding and/or by securing donations based on the number of bird species our chapter observes during a twenty-four-hour period. Ask for a flat amount or pledges of 10 cents, 25 cents, 50 cents, a dollar, etc. per total bird species we collectively see. 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 here](#).

To allow flexibility you can select one 24-hour period between April 9th and 10th to bird by sight or sound, either alone or with fellow birders. Please email your lists to me by April 16th so that we can tally our total species. The top three listers and/or teams will be recognized in the next OASis along with the team or individual that collects the most donations. All donations will benefit OAS's nature and environmental education center fund or related educational programs. Contact me at riglingkathy@gmail.com.

Kathy Rigling

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

Programs are the 3rd Thursday of each month (September-June). This program will be held in-person in the Camellia Room at Harry P. Leu Gardens, 1920 North Forest Ave., Orlando, FL 32803. For map and directions, visit: www.leugardens.org/plan/directions/



Spring Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walks

April 2, 9, 16, and 23, 2022

For the past 11 years, Orange Audubon Society has hosted bird walks at Mead Botanical Garden in Winter Park each Saturday in April.

Many 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 198 species have been documented at Mead](#), including 35 species of warblers, most of which should be in their colorful breeding plumage in April.



Baltimore Oriole eating black mulberry at Mead Botanical Garden, late March 2022. Photo: Sam Mitcham

The walks are FREE, but participants are limited to 15 and registration is encouraged. Contact me at lmartin5@msn.com or (407) 252-1182. Mead Botanical Garden is at 1500 S. Denning Drive, Winter Park. Good birding!

Larry Martin, Field Trips Chair

Chertok Photo Contest Deadline is April 21st!

Details on p. 8



Bald Eagles Soar

Florida's Bald Eagle nesting season has just two more months to go. The season

starts in October and ends in May to cover the wide range of nest initiation timeframes among the breeding pairs. Volunteers with the Audubon Florida EagleWatch nest monitoring program have been busy collecting 18,000 nest reports on 1200 nests around the state.

Early nesting pairs hatched their young in November and those chicks have already fledged, while our late nesters are just getting started and have eggs or very small chicks present in their nests.

As the only consistent, statewide Bald Eagle nest monitoring program in Florida, EagleWatch data is used to inform management decisions for lands and structures that eagles nest on.

Each eagle nesting season has its own unique challenges, from hurricanes and other strong storm events to Avian Pox outbreaks.

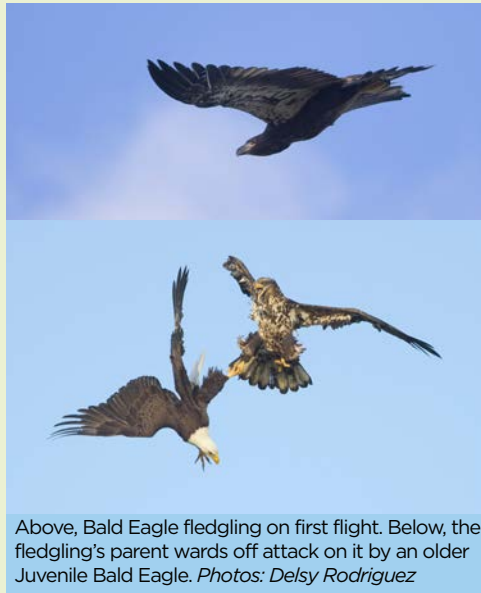
This season our eagles (and other bird species) are facing a serious threat from an outbreak of a highly pathogenic strain of Avian Influenza (A.I.). A.I. is a viral disease that is spread among birds through contact with bodily fluids (mainly feces, but also saliva or nasal secretions). Infected birds are lethargic and show neurologic signs such as seizures or tremors, with a final outcome of death. EagleWatch volunteers have documented suspected and confirmed deaths of both adult and young eagles from A.I. in the nests we monitor.

In spite of these challenges, productivity data collected by EagleWatch volunteers indicates that our population is holding steady. As we come to the end of another nesting season, the positive stories outweigh the negative, and we trust that our eagle population will continue to soar. If you know of a nest near you or have a question about a nest, email eaglewatch@audubon.org or visit <https://cbop.audubon.org/conservation/about-eaglewatch-program> to learn more!

*Shawnlei Breeding,
Eaglewatch Coordinator*

April is Water Conservation Month

In April, May and June, Florida's



Above, Bald Eagle fledgling on first flight. Below, the fledgling's parent wards off attack on it by an older Juvenile Bald Eagle. Photos: Delsy Rodriguez

rainfall tends to lag behind landscape plant water needs. April is typically Florida's driest month. Particularly as temperatures rise, so does outdoor water use.

Use a hose nozzle when hand watering. It keeps the water from running constantly.

Orange Audubon Society's March speaker Deborah Green (p. 6) promoted reducing your lawn in favor of site-specific Florida native plants, which need water only during establishment and the worst dry periods—plants that support birds too.

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 [this link](#).



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
miked129e@gmail.com
(407) 417-7818

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Orange Audubon Society Election Month

The Orange Audubon Society (OAS) annual election of board members will be held before the April 21, 2022 program at Leu Gardens. I chair the nominating committee with committee members Mary Soule (msoule43@aol.com) and Mary Van Egmond (mary.vanegmond@icloud.com).

Nominations for OAS' five board officer positions, as follows:

President: Deborah Green

1st Vice President: Jack Horton

2nd Vice President: Paula Duenas

Secretary: Linda Gaunt

Treasurer: Teresa Williams

Nominated new board members are Marian Lichtler and Alan Shapiro along with past board member Lori Parsons. Current board members with expired terms who have agreed to be nominated for continuing board positions are Milton Heiberg, Sonia Stephens, and Susan Thome-Barrett. There are two OAS board positions available for nominations.

To serve on the board, you must be an OAS member, have an interest in wildlife and the environment that supports it and be able to attend monthly one-hour board meetings either on Zoom or at Leu Gardens on the third Thursday of each month (except July and August). Board members are expected to attend an all-day summer planning meeting, usually in late July.

Prior to applying for the board, please join one of OAS' committees. Most help is needed with conservation, education, and outreach. Other committees are Birdathon, brochure, Chertok photo contest, climate, equity, diversity and inclusiveness, field trips, finance, hospitality, membership, nature and environmental education center, nominating, *OASis*, plants for birds, publicity, sanctuaries, silent auction, speakers' bureau, website and wildlife surveys. The OAS board application collects information about your interests and skills to align them with OAS' needs. If you wish to give back to your community through the conservation and nature education initiatives of OAS, contact me at Stephanienieves55@gmail.com.

*Stephanie Nieves,
Nominating Committee Chair*

Audubon Engages Students with Conservation Leadership Academy

Audubon Florida sought to inspire future conservationists with a Conservation Leadership Academy, hosted at Wekiwa Springs on March 19th. This day-long event for college students was planned by a diverse team: Conservation Leadership Initiative (CLI) students Alexa Santoni and Julianna Merotto, Orange Audubon Society President Deborah Green, Seminole Audubon President Phyllis Hall, and Audubon Florida Engagement Manager Kristen Kosik. As a CLI student, I had the pleasure of attending this event and learning more about Audubon, careers in conservation and climate advocacy.



CLI trip to Wekiwa Springs State Park, Photo: Phyllis Hall

We had a choice of two morning field trips. Some leisurely paddled the Wekiwa River, while others (including myself) explored Wekiwa Springs by tram, guided by Deborah and Phyllis, along with the Friends of the Wekiwa River President and Valencia College geology professor Jim Adamski. Students appreciated seeing first hand native plants, Central Florida's ecological communities, how invasive species disrupt ecosystems, and how sinkholes relate to Florida's aquifer system.

Following the trips, students settled in the classroom at Wekiwa Island for workshops. Deborah Green kicked off the afternoon with a breakdown of Audubon's history, current work

Birdathon Field Trip

A Birdathon Leader's Choice trip will be April 9th, starting on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive with an optional early meetup for owls and other nocturnal species. Limited to 12 participants. Cost is \$12 for OAS members and \$17 for nonmembers. Email me to register at riglingkathy@gmail.com.

across various chapters, and ways to get involved. Students then broke out into small groups for a career panel. Environmental professionals from Audubon Florida, the City of Orlando, Walt Disney World Resort and IDEAS for Us rotated through the groups to share their experiences and answer questions.

The day concluded with a climate advocacy workshop—hosted by Audubon Florida Conservation Organizer Halle Goldstein—to equip students with tools and strategies to fight against climate change on their campuses. Similar Conservation Leadership Academies are scheduled for other parts of Florida. Students attending those events will surely enjoy the experiences and become eager to participate in their local Audubon chapters.

Robin Pitlon, CLI Participant

City Nature Challenge

A four-day global Bioblitz called the City Nature Challenge is a fun competition among communities, April 29th - May 2nd. Designed to document biodiversity within the urban landscape, the City Nature Challenge determines which city or county records the most species, documents the most observations and has the most participants. In 2021, 419 cities in 44 countries participated. 2,100 of the 45,300 species recorded were rare, threatened, or endangered, so the information generated is important.

Each participant records as many nature observations as possible using [iNaturalist](#), a free mobile app that uses computer vision/artificial intelligence to provide real-time identification suggestions. See this [archived Bird Chat](#) on The City Nature Challenge by Kierstyn Cox and on using iNaturalist by local birder, photographer and naturalist Scott Simmons.

Read more at this link: [City Nature Challenge 2022](#). Let's make Orange County a player! And document our diversity.

*Christianah Oyenuga,
The Nature Conservancy*

OAS Education Coordinator Report

Late February and early March have been busy times for outreach in my role as Orange Audubon Society (OAS) Education Coordinator. On February 28th, I spent the morning visiting kindergarten and first grade classrooms at Tildenville Elementary as part of the school's Science Day. The lesson for these young students included a reading of *Outside You Notice* by Erin Alladin, followed by a rainbow nature walk in which the children were tasked with looking for different natural items in all the colors of the rainbow. Later that evening I set up a display at Science Night at Tildenville that was attended by over 400 students and parents.

On March 4th I was able to visit Blankner Elementary and presented to third graders on adaptations of bird beaks. The students really enjoyed using manipulatives simulating different types of beaks to see which type picks up which type of food the best.

On March 8th, I traveled to Wyndham Lakes Elementary School for their STEM Night. Although inclement weather kept some families away, the students and parents that visited our display enjoyed learning about Central Florida birds and practical things they can do to help bird populations



Kathy Rigling at Science Night at Tildenville. Photo courtesy Kathy Rigling

On March 22th, I visited Rock Springs Elementary School in Apopka and gave migration lessons to two separate fifth grade classes. The students learned about the challenges of bird migration through listening to the story of *Flutes Journey* by Lynn Cherry and by playing a very interactive migration challenge game.

On March 23rd, I visited Dillard Street Elementary School and presented to five different second grade classrooms about birds and their needs within their habitats. We played a lively game of bird facts true and false in which the children were very surprised to learn among other things that not all birds eat worms! The children then listened intently to the reading of *On*

Meadowview Street by Henry Cole as they learned about how one little girl helped improve the habitat at her house. Finally, we ended the lesson with another active game of "Oh Bird!!" in which the children simulated birds and the components of their habitat and tried to match each to survive a round of the game.

I am available to do classroom visits with standards-based lessons, Science Nights, Earth Day events, and activities for after-school groups. I can also involve students in community science activities like the City Nature Challenge. For information, email me at education@orangeaudubonfl.org

Kathy Rigling,
OAS Education Coordinator



Fifth graders at Rock Springs Elementary playing migration games. Photo: Kathy Rigling

Young Birders Field Trip

The spring field trip for Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) Young Birders Club was March 27th with a visit to Wekiva Basin Banding Station at Lake Lotus Park in Altamonte Springs.



Jenny Bouchenot helps young birder release a Swamp Sparrow at the Wekiva Bird Banding Station at Lake Lotus Park. Photo: Kathy Rigling



Young Birders Club at Lake Lotus Park. Photo: Kathy Rigling

Jenny Bouchenot, UCF grad student and past Conservation Leadership Initiative participant, is working towards her banding certification under master bander Andrew Boyle.

OAS' Young Birders Club is growing, and we are finding new leaders, like OAS Board member and UCF grad student Jeffrey Gammon, whose bird knowledge is inspiring to the younger folks. The next trip is April 16th to Mead Botanical Garden. Contact me at riglingkathy@gmail.com if you have a young person, up to age 18, that would like to participate.

Kathy Rigling

Children's Book Review: On Meadowview Street

On Meadowview Street by Henry Cole is a very sweet story about a little girl who moves into a new neighborhood. She is looking for a meadow on the street that she has moved to and instead finds a few flowers in her yard. She decides to protect them and day by day the area spreads. She learns that if she provides places for the native plants that more and more living creatures visit her yard. Her family proceeds to add other features such as trees and a pond. This is a beautifully illustrated children's picture book that very simply explains how we can improve habitat for the native plants and animals in our yard.

Even though it is a picture book, it is also appropriate for older children to help them understand the connection between the components of habitat and living things. After I read this book recently to several classes of second graders, the children were inspired to try to improve the habitat at their school.

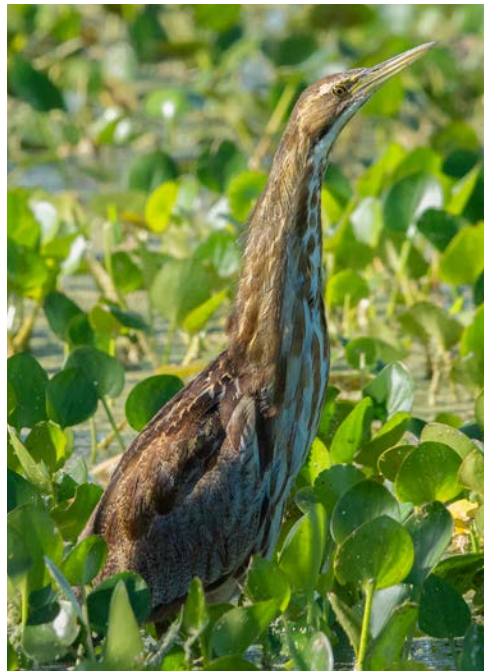
Kathy Rigling

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

FLEDJE!

In fall 2021 Orange Audubon Society (OAS) joined the inaugural cohort of Future Leaders for Equity, Diversity, and Justice in the Environment or FLEDJE! This Audubon Florida/ National Audubon program, led by Steffanie Munguia of the National Audubon board, extends through May. Chapter leaders from around Florida participate in large group sessions with expert speakers on Environmental Justice and ways to increase diversity. Participants set goals, carry out homework assignments, and meet in smaller groups to keep goals on track to improve Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in their chapters.

The OAS FLEDJE! Team's specific goals for the year are to 1. create an Instagram presence to reach younger audiences in advertising our events, 2. collaborate with City of Orlando for beginning birding instruction for at-risk youth, 3. host a "Buscando Pajaros" event and use this to increase Hispanic participation in our events, 4. present on "Plants for Birds" for Youth Programs, and 5. introduce a Black Birder's Weekend to coincide with Black History Month. OAS President Deborah Green, Conservation Chair Susan Thome-Barrett, and Conservation Leadership Initiative student Alexa Santoni serve on OAS' FLEDJE team and share progress with Audubon Florida representative Jacqui Sulek and representatives from Alachua Audubon and Apalachee Audubon.



Left column, Orlando Wetlands Park volunteer Gilberto Sanchez Perez orients participants on the March 26th Buscando Pajaros field trip, *Photo: Shalimar Rodriguez*; Latina photographers at work, *Photo: Deborah Green*. Middle column, American Bittern, Mottled Duck with ducklings, *Photos: Shalimar Rodriguez*; Ducklings feeding in duckweed, Trip participants, *Photos: Delsy Rodriguez*. Right column, Trip participants, *Photo: Alexa Santoni*

Buscando Pajaros

Orange Audubon Society put in some hard work to make the Spanish-speaking field trip to Orlando Wetlands Park (OWP)—"Buscando Pajaros"—on March 26th a success. Twenty-five of us were able to enjoy the tour. It was a nice day to go birding in a great place. Our guide, OWP volunteer Gilberto Sanchez Perez, along OWP's Public Outreach Coordinator, Rachel Kessler who drove the trailer, were awesome and very accommodating. We thank *La Prensa* newspaper for helping get the word out to the community and all the leaders and volunteers who brought their own families or friends.

There were many Coots, Ospreys and even an American Bittern! My family enjoyed seeing all the birds nesting and caring for their young. Spring has surely arrived at the Orlando Wetlands Park. My mother especially loved watching the baby ducks having a duckweed breakfast, and my cousin liked seeing the many alligators lazily sunbathing on the sides of the trail.

Gilberto explained how the park's wetlands clean treated wastewater and shared great information about all the wildlife. Latinos and Hispanics make up a large portion of our Central Florida community, so it is wonderful that Orange Audubon Society would provide a birding tour in Spanish for us to enjoy. Hopefully in the future, we can have more events like this one!

Alexa Santoni, UCF Student and Conservation



Bird Chats with OAS

The Bird Chats with Orange Audubon Society (OAS) team has nearly 80 programs archived on OAS' [YouTube Channel](#), now organized into Playlists to make it easy to find those you missed. To register for upcoming Bird Chats so you are sent the Zoom link each week, [click here](#). Upcoming programs are listed in the calendar on p. 8. To suggest topics or speakers, please email info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

In Case You Missed It...

Plants for Birds: Best Options for Central Florida

This month, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) President Deborah Green introduced viewers to her large urban yard via video presentation. Over an 18-year period, Deborah has cultivated her backyard into a mature native landscape. She follows the teachings of Dr. Doug Tallamy to create a “homegrown national park” by planting native plants in your own yard and encouraging her neighbors to do so too. She mentioned two of Dr. Tallamy’s books, *Bringing Nature Home* and *Nature’s Best Hope*, in which he references the loss of 2.9 billion birds in last 30 years and the urgency of planting native plants for their very survival.

Deborah was accompanied on the tour by Gabbie Milch who added a historical and ethnobotanical perspective on Deborah’s plant choices.

In the beginning of the landscape process, Deborah had to remove some of the more aggressive plants from her yard. She took out the non-native Boston fern, liriope, and camellias, and also some aggressive native plants, like yellow jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) and wild coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*). She made other changes like converting a hedge of one species, cherry laurel trees (*Prunus caroliniana*) to include a greater diversity of shade-loving plants like pipestem (*Agarista populifolia*), yellow star anise (*Illicium parviflorum*), river oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*), coontie (*Zamia floridana*), and bluestem palmetto (*Sabal minor*).

Because her focus would become emphasizing native plants that benefit birds and pollinators, and especially host plants for butterflies and moths, Deborah planted corkystem passionflower (*Passiflora suberosa*) for zebra longwing butterflies, *Asclepias* species for monarch butterflies, and several species of plum (*Prunus* spp.) for many types of Lepidoptera species. Florida’s state tree, the cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*), offers nectar-filled flowers to pollinators and Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) supplies seasonal berries for birds and other wildlife. The spectacular red, tubular-shaped flowers of coralbean (*Erythrina herbacea*) emerge early



Wild black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) is a beautiful tree that hosts caterpillars for birds. Photo: Mary Keim

in the spring to provide migrating hummingbirds with sustenance. Residual pine snags feed and house woodpeckers and other cavity nesters.

Deborah’s large property is composed of several habitats. In her mesic hammock areas, sugarberry trees (*Celtis laevigata*) and wax myrtle (*Morella cerifera*) attract warblers and other songbirds, stately sand live oaks (*Quercus geminata*) and sweetgum trees (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) provide shade and cover, and the purple berries of American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) serve as a food source during the fall and winter months.

In a drier area, Deborah created a coastal-type habitat under some existing Eastern red cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) buying coastal shrubs from Maple Street Natives in Melbourne and silver saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) from Green Images in Christmas. She used oyster shells as mulch to emulate the middens of Turtle Mound in the Canaveral National Seashore. She planted marlberry (*Ardisia escallonioides*) and Simpson’s stopper (*Myrcianthes fragrans*) which fruit in spring and summer, and yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) which fruits in fall and winter, providing food sources for most of the year. The blossoms of ironweed (*Vernonia* sp.) and necklace pod (*Sophora tomentosa*) add color and diversity.

Other upland areas feature slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) and turkey oak (*Quercus laevis*), milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.), partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*), Chapman’s goldenrod (*Solidago odora chapmanii*), beebalm (*Monarda punctata*), and more unusual landscape species such as catbriar (*Smilax* spp.).

Deborah and Gabbie discussed general

recommendations for a landscape, like adding paths and borders for definition, using newspaper under mulch rather than black plastic groundcover, and starting landscape with drip irrigation, necessary only for establishing new plants. She referenced OAS’ [Bird- and Butterfly-Friendly Plants for Central Florida](#) brochure as a guide.

Throughout the video ([link here](#)), the constant accompaniment of birdsong made it clear that Deborah had succeeded with her goal of making her yard attractive to and supportive of wild birds. And it certainly is inspiring to others to do the same. Dr. Tallamy would be proud!

[Deborah’s “Caterpillar Connection” is [available online](#) on the Florida Native Plant Society’s Lunch & Learn series. It highlights the connection between native plants, lepidoptera larvae, and the soft, nutritious caterpillars nestlings require to grow and thrive.]

Terry Piper, Programs Chair



Pear Park Field Trip. Photo: Kathy Rigling

PEAR Park Trip

On March 13th, Orange Audubon’s Limited Edition field trip was to PEAR Park in Leesburg. We braved unseasonably cold temperatures as we explored this very diverse park. Highlights of the morning included seeing two low-flying newly arrived Swallow-tailed Kites, singing White-eyed Vireos, Eastern Bluebirds that were round and puffed up from the cold and a flock of American Goldfinches lit beautifully by the sun. We heard first of the season Yellow-throated Vireos and Blue-headed Vireos and saw the Black-and-white Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Yellow-throated Warbler. When we were almost finished with our hike we were pleasantly surprised by two Vesper Sparrows sitting up in a tree.

Our next Limited Edition field trip that has space is to Ocala Wetlands, May 7, 2022. Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com for more information.

**April 2022 Bird Highlight:
White Ibises and
Wetlands**

The White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*, Family Threskiornithidae) is a contradiction. Seemingly abundant and increasingly seen feeding even around people's homes, it is very reclusive in nesting. Consider yourself lucky if you have seen an ibis nest and any fledgling White Ibises. I urge appreciation of the wetlands this species depends on.

The White Ibis is a wading bird found from the mid-Atlantic and Gulf Coast of the United States south through most of the New World tropics. It forages by walking slowly in shallow water, probing with its curved bill. It also forages on land, especially on mud or in short grass, probing for food by touch or finding it by sight at the surface.

Its diet favors crustaceans, especially crayfish and crabs, but it also eats insects, snails, frogs, marine worms, snakes, and small fish. When White Ibises feed in lawns, they are eating insects and worms and, in that way, are beneficial. Sometimes White Ibises forage alongside Glossy Ibises, which eat primarily dragonflies, crickets, flies and other insects.

White Ibises were hunted for both their striking white feathers and their meat (once called the Chokoloskee chicken). Today loss of habitat and disturbance of their nests are this species' biggest threats. By 1993 Florida population studies indicated that White Ibises needed protection under Florida's version of the endangered species act. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) officials noted the numbers of nesting White Ibis in Florida had declined by about half from mid-1970s levels.

Their ability to nest depends on having suitable water levels, but water levels in Florida wetlands have been manipulated by a network of manmade canals and dikes to serve urban and agricultural needs.



White Ibises at sunrise, Photo: Lynn Marie Folts. White Ibises on roost at Orlando Wetlands Park, Photo: Mary Keim. Parent feeding hatchling White Ibises in Dallas, Photo: Chris Jackson. White Ibis Juvenile at Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, Digiscoped Photo: Mary Soule. Right, White Ibis Juveniles. Photo: Roger Smith

At the FWC meeting in 1993 [when Threatened status was being proposed](#), ranchers and other agriculturalists and developers came out in droves to testify against protection, not wanting any restrictions on use of their property due to presence of this bird. So FWC designated it only a Species of Special Concern in Florida. And during a more recent period of weakening environmental protection, in January 2017, that protection status was eliminated.

Ibises travel in large flocks, flying out from the roosting site to feed actively during the day, and returning to sleep near each other in trees at night. While they choose roosts that have some degree of protection, they choose where they will nest—their rookeries—with much more care. At Orlando Wetlands Park, they nest in at least one cypress dome surrounded by water and inaccessible to people and predators. An enormous rookery in a wet depression on the campus of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas is a place to see nesting White Ibises. Boating in shallow areas in some of our more pristine lakes you might find a rookery in wax myrtles.

The young are fed through regurgitation by both parents, and they clamber about near the nest at around 3 weeks of age. They are capable of sustained flight at 6 weeks and may leave the colony to forage with adults after 7 weeks ([Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)).

Look closely to see what you can learn about this species and speak up for protecting our wetlands!

Deborah Green



Chertok Deadline: April 21, 2022

Orange Audubon Society's 2022 (34th Annual) Kit and Sidney Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest is themed *Florida Native Nature*. The deadline is April 21, 2022 (postmarked or electronically submitted by date). Photography must follow the [NANPA code of conduct](#) and subjects be native. Participants will be notified of any disqualified entries and may replace them at no charge.

Competition categories are:

Youth—for photographers age 17 years or younger by April 21, 2022;

Novice—for new and less experienced photographers



Comin' Atcha!—Sandwich Tern. Honorable Mention Winner, Advanced Category, 2021 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. Photo: Joyce Stefancic

Advanced Amateur/ Professional—for experienced photographers who have honed their skills over time.

Get out and preserve Florida's amazing native nature! Contact me at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 718-1977 if you have questions.

Teresa Williams, Photo Contest Chair

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive 7th Anniversary

In May 2015, the St. Johns River Water Management District opened the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD). Orange Audubon Society values LAWD and has been celebrating its anniversary each year. We'll be there providing bird information on Sunday, May 1st. Email info@orangeaudubonfl.org to help.



Hitching a Ride—American Alligator and Florida Red-bellied Cooter. Third Place Winner, Novice Category, 2021 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. Photo: Jan Pewsey

APRIL/MAY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Chats with OAS via Zoom

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

- Eastern Panhandle Birding by Robert Gundy

April 7, 2022

- The Biggest Day— the World Record Big Day of 1982 in Amazonian Peru by Dr. Scott Robinson

April 14, 2022

- Burrowing Owls by Brittany Piersma

April 28, 2022

- Birding Indian River County by David and Dee Simpson

May 5, 2022

- Dim the Lights for Birds! by Carol Bailey-White

May 12, 2022

- eBird Review by Gallus Quigley

May 26, 2022

April Wekiwa Monthly Survey

April 2, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Spring Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walks

April 2, 9, 16, and 23, 2022

Contact Larry at (407) 252-1182

OAS Birdathon

April 9-10, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Birdathon Leader's Choice Trip

April 9, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Limited Edition Field to Fort Desoto

April 11-12, 2022 (full)

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Chertok Nature Photography Contest Deadline

April 21, 2022

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

April Program: Florida's Invasive Fauna by Jim Duby

April 21, 2022 (in person at Leu Gardens)

Contact Terry at (321) 436-4932

April Field Trip: Mead Botanical Garden, Winter Park

April 23, 2022

Contact Larry at (407) 252-1182

Orlando Wetlands Park Monthly Survey

April 23, 2022

Contact Jeffrey at jeffreyg@knights.ucf.edu

Central Florida Earth Day, Lake Eola

April 23, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Apopka Art & Foliage Festival, Apopka

April 23-24, 2022

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Oakland Nature Preserve Survey

April 24, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive 7th Anniversary

May 1, 2022

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Baby Owl Shower, Center for Birds of Prey, Maitland

May 7, 2022

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

Limited Edition Field Trip to Ocala Wetlands

May 7, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

May Wekiwa Bird Survey

May 14, 2022

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

May Program: Seminole St Forest Birds by Ralph Risch

May 19, 2022

Contact Terry at (321) 436-4932

Orlando Wetlands Park Monthly Survey

May 21, 2022

Contact Jeffrey at jeffreyg@knights.ucf.edu

May Field Trip: Lake Lotus Park, Altamonte Springs

May 22, 2022

Contact Larry at (407) 252-1182