



Top, Wayne Osborne with Snapping Turtle. Bottom, researcher snorkeling to survey turtles. Photos: Turtle Survival Alliance

This Month's Program September 21, 2023 Freshwater Turtles of Central Florida by Wayne Osborne

Florida's springs, rivers, and lakes have a large number of turtle species, some doing well but others in need of conservation help. Turtle populations reflect populations of macro-invertebrates, fish, and the quantity and type of vegetation in the water body. They are a window onto the health of our aquatic ecosystems.



To guide conservation efforts, population data is essential. The non-profit [Turtle Survival Alliance](#) began surveys at Wekiwa Springs State Park in 1999, with one to three sampling sessions a year, to assess the continued impact of development surrounding the park. Biologists and volunteers search for turtles by snorkeling, and collect, tag and release them to recapture the next year.

Wayne Osborne, a biologist and volunteer on this project, will share details about survey and conservation efforts. He'll also share how to identify our local turtle species, bringing several species for us to see up close.

Take the opportunity to learn to identify turtles seen in Central Florida, including the Florida Softshell, Eastern Snapping Turtle, Striped Mud Turtle, Loggerhead Musk Turtle, Florida Redbelly Cooter, Peninsula Cooter, and the Red-eared Slider, an invasive species from the pet trade.

Join us September 21st at 7 p.m. at Leu Gardens for a fascinating program, suitable for all ages. See box below for address. *Alan Shapiro, Programs Chair*

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

Programs are the 3rd Thursday of each month (September–June)
at 7:00 p.m. and all but October and December are at

Harry P. Leu Gardens

in the Camellia Room at 1920 North Forest Ave., Orlando, FL 32803

For map and directions, visit:

www.leugardens.org/plan/directions/



Monthly Field Trip: September 16, 2023 Trimble Park, Mt. Dora

Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) first monthly field trip of the season will be to Trimble Park. This Orange County park near Mt. Dora is on an isthmus between Lake Beauclair and Lake Carlton in the Harris Chain of Lakes.

Spanish moss-draped live oaks line the lake shore. The oaks and other trees should be full of migratory songbirds, as we walk the 1.3-mile loop trail.

To reserve a space or if you have any questions about the trip, contact me at riglingkathy@gmail.com or (407) 488-9559. *Kathy Rigling*



Eastern Amberwing, Orlando Wetlands Park, July 2023. Photo: Mary Keim

September 23, 2023 Dragonfly Identification at Orlando Wetlands Park

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is very lucky to have local dragonfly experts (or enthusiasts, as they prefer to say) Mary Keim and Randy Snyder willing to share their knowledge. Sign up for their Dragonfly ID Field Trip. It will be Saturday, September 23rd from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at Orlando Wetlands Park and adjacent Seminole Ranch.

This walking trip is limited to 15 participants with registration required. Cost is \$12 for Audubon members; \$17 for non-members. Save your space by contacting Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 718-1977. If you have questions about the class, email Mary and Randy at rssmhk@gmail.com.



Welcome to a New Program Year

Those of you who are on Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) mailing list members will receive OAS' annual print mailing with my President's Letter Appeal by mid September. The mailing includes the new season's brochure with our many great trips, programs, and other events listed. If you didn't receive the mailing, please email membership@orangeaudubonfl.org to check on your membership status. When you receive the letter appeal, we hope you donate generously to support efforts of our chapter. Thank you!

Deborah Green, President



Climate Action Needed For Survival of Birds

This summer brought record-breaking temperatures—caused by a combination of this year's El Niño event and human-caused changes in climate. Heat waves are predicted to increase in intensity, frequency, and duration.

Many bird species will have their ranges greatly reduced if global temperatures continue to rise at the current rate. [With 3 billion birds lost](#) in the last 50 years, due to habitat loss and other factors, we must do all we can to protect the birds that remain. National Audubon has printed this hopeful curve of bird populations upward but it is going to take all of our efforts.



In October 2019, National Audubon Society released [Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink](#), an in-depth report shedding light on how 389 out of 604 North American bird species are being affected by climate change. The study was based on Audubon scientists' observations and studies, as well as extensive citizen science.

Click on [this link](#) to see projections on how each species' range will change with climate change. Vulnerable species here in Central Florida year-round or in migration include the Red-headed Woodpecker, Gray Kingbird, Fish Crow, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, Boat-tailed Grackle and Yellow-throated Warbler.

Transition To Clean Energy Is Critical

Florida's nickname, adopted officially by Florida legislature in 1970, is The Sunshine State. Yet state programs and policies have not been the driver of increasing use of solar. Individuals, right here in Central Florida, have stepped up to expand rooftop solar through the Solar Co-op movement.

There are large financial incentives toward renewable energy, including solar, in the bipartisan Inflation Reduction Act, passed by Congress in August 2022. Among states with thriving solar job markets, California remains the leader, but Florida, Massachusetts, New York and Texas have also created thousands of jobs through solar implementation, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Of states with the greatest number of homes powered by solar, California is followed by Texas, Florida, North Carolina and Arizona ([Solar Energy Industries Association](#)).

This and the following articles are compiled by the OAS 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.

Orange Audubon Society
P.O. Box 941142
Maitland, FL 32794-1142
www.orangeaudubonfl.org

President and OAS*is* Editor:
Deborah Green
info@orangeaudubonfl.org
(407) 637-2525

The OAS*is* (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: membership@orangeaudubonfl.org

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2023 Solar Co-op Open Through September 5th

The non-profit [Solar United Neighbors \(SUN\) of Florida](#) has hosted over 83 Co-ops around Florida since 2016. If you are an Orange County homeowner, you are invited to join the 2023 Orange County Solar Co-op BEFORE September 5th. Nearly 200 homeowners have already joined.

Advantages of joining a Solar Co-op are that you have a third party (Florida SUN) assisting in case issues arise with the installer (a rare occurrence). Plus, you have reduced group pricing.

The installer chosen by Orange County Co-op members is 15 Light Years, that won a Co-op contract several years ago and has installed solar in Winter Park and Orlando for several years. The company is currently installing the solar array on Orange County Public School's new high school near Windermere.

Joining is free and does not obligate you to sign a contract. Sign up [at this link](#), scrolling down to find the signup form.

LEDs and Light Pollution

It took a little while for Light Emitting Diode (LED) technology to catch on. But since LED lights are longer-lasting than incandescents or compact fluorescents and use significantly less energy, municipalities, companies and individuals have switched to using them. Regulations propelling a changeover have been slow, but as of August 1st, you can no longer purchase incandescent light bulbs nor are they being manufactured in the United States. This ban also applies to Halogen bulbs. It is possible that by 2025, Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs will also be phased out.

A published study now documents that *light pollution has increased since municipalities have shifted to LED streetlights*. In Chelan County, Washington, one year after the changeover to LED streetlights began, the additional glare masked about half of the previously visible stars, as documented by the National Park Service.

The U.S. Department of Energy estimated that LEDs made up about 19 percent of all lighting installations in 2017, saving about 1 percent of total energy consumed in the United States. By 2035, LEDs are expected

to comprise 84 percent of lighting installations. Lights near stadiums can often be the brightest light source in a city, along with streetlights and illuminated billboards. These can be minimized by using timers or dimmers.

The ecologically conscious Town of Oakland (May 2023 OASis, p. 4) had considerable discussion about the new LED lights on its water tower and how these lights would affect bird migration and would set back the Town's Dark Sky efforts. With Orange Audubon Society weighing in about concern for bird migration, the Town Council committed to [directing the lights downward](#).

The National Park Service says one way to reduce night sky light pollution is to be intentional about where lighting is located: Is a light really needed in that spot? And what's the appropriate brightness for that light use?

In addition to night sky light pollution, there are also health problems associated with the changeover to LEDs. Common types of LED lights contain higher proportions of bluer wavelengths, which can affect people's nighttime patterns. They disrupt our circadian rhythms, lower the performance of our immune systems and increase the occurrence of certain diseases, including cancer.

Our circadian clock produces melatonin, which is correlated with sleepiness. When you expose people to light at night or in the evening, you suppress production of melatonin.

LEDs use fewer watts than traditional incandescent light bulbs, and people should choose lights based on *lumens*, often marked as brightness, rather than wattage. Many people use much brighter LED lights than necessary, especially outside.

Ideally, you can buy a much lower-wattage LED and still have the same level of brightness as an incandescent light bulb. A 30-watt LED bulb has the same number of lumens as a 250-watt incandescent bulb, according to the National Park Service. Currently, the industry does not often provide enough options with low lumens, according to a researcher quoted in the [Washington Post Hidden Planet](#) article.

Meanwhile, for your own health as well

Eaglewatch Training

Bald Eagle nesting season in Florida is soon upon us. Audubon Florida's Eaglewatch Program started in 1992 in the Central Florida region, with only 22 volunteers. Today the program is statewide, and reaches more communities each year, with heightening awareness of Bald Eagle nesting activities throughout the state.



Top, Bald Eagle Nest. Photo: Mary Keim.
Bottom, Eagle fishing on Lake Apopka.
Photo: Joseph Mileyka

In preparation for the upcoming nesting season, Shawnlei Breeding, Audubon Florida's Eaglewatch Coordinator, will be hosting online trainings. New volunteers or those who wish to reactivate this season are required to attend one of these trainings. Trainings are free, but registration is required. Click the link to register for the date/time that works best for you:

[Saturday, Sept 9th 10am-12pm](#)

[Saturday Sept 16th 10am-12pm](#)

[Tuesday Sept 19th 6pm-8pm](#)

[Sunday Sept 24th 2pm-4pm](#)

[Sunday Oct 1st 2pm-4pm](#)

as to save a little energy use, [consider unplugging those pesky little LED indicator lights.](#)

Orange Audubon Society
Conservation Committee

Orange County Tree Ordinance Being Finalized



Live oaks provide extensive ecosystem services. Photo: Mary Keim

Orange County staff have been working toward an updated Tree Removal and Preservation Ordinance for nearly two years, with a series of stakeholders' workshops. The ordinance went before the Planning and Zoning Commission on August 17th (To see the presentation and discussion, [click on this link](#) and scroll down on the right to the next to the last item). The ordinance will be brought to the Board of County Commissioners on September 12th.

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) has recently written in support of staff's work. We appreciate that the presentations emphasize "ecosystem services" for individual trees species and the tree canopy.

OAS understands that this ordinance is aimed primarily for new development, which, with rare exceptions, removes all trees on a property and replants with readily available fast-growing nursery stock.



Land clearing for development rarely saves trees. Photo: Deborah Green

Trees commonly utilized — like crepe myrtle—look pretty, but do not have the ecosystem services of preserved native trees. Also, for establishment, planted trees require water, which is now in shorter and shorter supply. The OAS Conservation Committee is still concerned about provisions in the ordinance for moving trees, both for

success rate and the water required. Things we like about the ordinance:

- By requiring a tree survey, delineating sizes of trees and identifying specimen trees and heritage trees, Orange County will accomplish greater tree preservation. Specimen trees are trees that are 18 inches or more diameter breast height (DBH) and include the following species: live oak, winged elm, Southern magnolia, turkey oak, longleaf pine, sweetgum and bald cypress. Heritage trees are defined as live oaks 40 inches DBH or larger and Southern magnolias 24 inches DBH or larger.

We are pleased that longleaf pine, a critically important tree of the southern uplands, of which the range has been drastically reduced, is included among specimen trees. We would like to see all mature longleaf pines (starting at 12 inches DBH) saved, but the 18 inches in the draft ordinance is progress.



Male Summer Tanager in longleaf pine at Rock Springs Run State Reserve. Photo: Mary Keim

- The inclusion of diversity requirements for replacement trees is progress.
- The idea of fines being used to plant new trees in heat islands, which may be in low-income areas, is positive.
- We would like to see native trees protected and invasive species prohibited on homeowners' lots, most of which are below the 2-acre threshold for tree removal permits. But we understand that this would be a different ordinance.
- We concur with Marge Holt of Sierra Club that existing scrub habitat needs to be protected, and scrub oaks *Quercus geminata*, *Q. chapmanii*,

Q. myrtifolia and others—grow slowly in their sandy habitat and never reach the 8-inch DBH threshold that the ordinance protects. We would like to see scrub oaks of 3-4 inches DBH protected, as these are mature, and replacement trees will take excessive water in sandy soils. OAS' request to include, on the suggested native tree list, two tree species that host caterpillars that songbirds can feed to their young, the sugarberry and wild black cherry, was honored.



Two native trees that OAS promotes—because they host caterpillars for birds and have small fruits eaten by birds—are Sugarberry (above) and Wild Black Cherry (below). Photos: Mary Keim

In accordance with our vision of "connecting people with nature," OAS will work to assist the county in education on the value of trees. If you would like to get involved, either in the educational aspect or would like to write a letter or speak at the September 12th Commission meeting, please contact Conservation Committee Chair Susan Thome-Barrett at 2904susan@gmail.com. Thanks for caring about trees!

Orange Audubon Society
Conservation Committee



Pectoral Sandpipers in flight over sod fields on Joe Overstreet Road. Upland Sandpiper. Photos: Ethan Landreville

Young Birders Club Trip September 30, 2023

Orange Audubon Society's Young Birders Club will be going on a field trip on September 30th to Central Winds Park in Winter Springs.

We will look for migrants at this migratory bird hotspot along Lake Jesup.

The field trip is free to parents and Young Birders, but you are required to register in advance.

Please email me at riglingkathy@gmail.com to reserve a spot for you and your Young Birder. Loaner binoculars will be available upon request.

Kathy Rigling



Young Birders trip to Center for Birds of Prey. Photo: Daisy Fiore

searching each individual field before continuing to the next. Most birds will be distant, so a spotting scope is recommended. Ethan explains that with large amounts of rain, different shorebirds may be seen. Thus, what we see will depend on the rain on the previous days. Our trip leaders will explain methods and approaches to shorebird identification, such as finding "benchmark species" and understanding size and structure.

We will search for Pectoral, Least, Western, Semipalmated, and Solitary Sandpipers, as well as Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers. Rarer sightings may include Upland, Buff-breasted and Stilt Sandpipers.

Participants will meet at the Publix on Canoe Creek Road at 7:30 AM, and then proceed to the road. Bring drinks, snacks, lunch and sunscreen.

Limited Edition field trips are limited to 12 participants. The cost is \$12 for OAS members and \$17 for nonmembers. To register please email Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com.

Limited Edition Field Trip: Joe Overstreet Road and Landing, Osceola County September 9, 2023

Limited Edition Field Trips will be kicking off Saturday, September 9th with a visit to Joe Overstreet Road and Landing, in Osceola County, a well known birding hotspot. Joe Overstreet Road is bordered on each side by cattle ranches and sod fields leading up to a boat launch on Lake Kissimmee.

Crested Caracara, Eastern Meadowlarks, Loggerhead Shrikes, American Kestrels, Sandhill Cranes, Northern Bobwhite, Barn and Bank Swallows are typically seen along the road. At the beginning of Joe Overstreet, the area with dead pines and other trees hosts Red-headed Woodpeckers and migrating land birds. At the end of the road, we will bird the edge of Lake Kissimmee, where there are sometimes Snail Kites. Our target will be the migrating shorebirds that stop over here in early fall and spring.

This trip will be co-led by hotshot Young Birders Club member Ethan Landreville, who has taken prizes at the Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest—along with his photographer and birder father Brennan Landreville (shown in the photo above right, second from right in wide-brimmed hats).

Our group will drive and stop,

Oakland Nature Fest, September 23, 2023

The second annual [Oakland Nature Fest](#) is being held Saturday, September 23rd, 10am - 3pm, at Oakland Nature Preserve! Enjoy meeting the environmental community, participate in animal interactions and guided hikes and learn more at interesting presentations! Admission is free, but donations are gratefully received, and will benefit the mission of Oakland Nature Preserve.



Orange Audubon Society (OAS) will be there with a table. If you are an OAS member who lives in West Orange and has time to volunteer at this event, we could use your help. Email volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Beginners' Birdwatching Class October 15, 22, & 29, 2023

Would you like to improve your bird identification skills? Take Orange Audubon's Beginners' Birdwatching Class starting October 15, 2023 and continuing October 22 and 29, 2023

If you have to miss one of the three Saturday mornings, you can make it up in the winter series (Jan 6, 21 and 27, 2024). Instructors are Susan Thome-Barrett and me. All sessions are 8:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. An "outdoor" classroom session and mini-field trip is October 15th at Orlando Wetlands Park. On October 22nd and 29th field sessions are at Mead Botanical Garden and the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, respectively.

The class is limited to 12 students and registration is required. Total cost for all three sessions is: \$50 members; \$65 non-members; \$10 youth (12 & under) with registered adult. Non-members can join when registering, directly through OAS, as instructed when you register. Email Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com. For questions about the class, contact me at riglingkathy@gmail.com or (407) 488-9559.

Kathy Rigling



Zellwood Elementary Birders Club. Photo: Kathy Rigling

Education Webinars

Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) monthly free educational webinars will resume on September 13th. Generally held on the second Wednesday of each month, September–April from 7:00 to 7:30 pm, these programs give ideas to teachers and homeschool groups on how to use birds and nature to teach STEM concepts.

Sign up at [this link](#), and you will be sent an updated Zoom link each month.

September 13, 2023

Nature Connections with Feathered Friends Curriculum Webinar

October 11, 2023

Audubon Adventures

November 8, 2023

Feeding Birds and Project Feederwatch

December 13, 2023

Counting Birds for Science

January 10, 2024

Sustainability: What Is It All About?

February 7, 2024

Participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count

March 13, 2024

Improving your School Habitat for Nature Study

April 10, 2024

The City Nature Challenge and Using I Naturalist

Some of these topics were presented in the 2022-23 program year and are archived on OAS' You Tube Channel. Watching the programs live allows you to ask questions and for participants to share success stories. Contact me at education@orangeaudubonfl.org if you have any questions.

Kathy Rigling, Education Coordinator

Education Coordinator Update

For the new school year, as Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) Education Coordinator, I am available to visit your classroom. After 35 years teaching in Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) as well as 7 years as the nature coordinator at the Wekiva Youth Camp, OAS has hired me to provide standards-based science lessons, community science field experiences and guidance for planning and implementing native plant gardens to schools—all free of charge. Programs offered will be aligned to standards and grade level appropriate.

We are now offering a limited number of monthly before or after school STEM birding clubs. I will visit your extracurricular club, providing an engaging bird-related curriculum, with binoculars to loan on the day of the visit and other related resources.

OAS offers a limited number of free class subscriptions to the engaging [Audubon Adventures](#) print publication for OCPS 3rd through 5th grade classrooms. Please email education@orangeaudubonfl.org to request a classroom or after school visit or to request a class subscription to *Audubon Adventures* magazine.

OAS accepts donations of gently used binoculars and bird field guides that students can use during school visits. I look forward to a great school year!
Kathy Rigling, Education Coordinator

Conservation Leadership Initiative Begins Again

Audubon Florida's Conservation Leadership Initiative (CLI) brings college students into the Audubon fold. In this 10-year old program, chapter leaders are paired with students in mentor-mentee relationships, called co-mentorships, because both learn from each other.



CLI students and co-mentors at Lake Lotus Park after visiting the Wekiva Basin Bird Banding Station. Photo: Audubon Florida

The hope is that students continue the relationship with the local chapter and become conservation leaders.

Through grants, the program has been expanded for 2023–24 to fund students to attend events and to keep students interacting with their local chapter. Students can [apply at this link](#) (deadline: September 10th). Potential mentors should email olivia.priest@audubon.org

I have participated in CLI as a co-mentor since its inception. Through the Audubon network and other environmental connections, I have been able to give job leads to my students and recommendations.

OAS' Linda Gaunt has been a co-mentor for many years, and she regularly texts and keeps in contact with her current and past students, providing advice and encouragement. Kathy Rigling and most recently Susan Thome-Barrett have joined CLI as co-mentors, providing abundant learning opportunities for their students.

CLI student participants are provided funding, originally donated by a National Audubon board member, that allows them to sign up for programs that otherwise are financially prohibitive. We thank Audubon Florida for the CLI program.

Deborah Green

"CLI has gifted me lifelong connections, experiences to get involved in local conservation, and memories to carry with me as I enter the field of environmentalism!" - Emma Aagaard, UCF, CLI 2022-2023

Resources for Plants for Birds

Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) [Bird- and Butterfly-Friendly Plants for Central Florida](#), written by Mary Keim and friends, is now available at this link.

See native plants for Central Florida landscapes in [this yard tour video](#).

See also Dr. Doug Tallamy's [2021 talk for OAS](#).

Find native plant nurseries [at this link](#).

Learn more from the Florida Native Plant Society at [this link](#).



Sandhill wildflowers at Wekiwa Springs State Park, October 2011. Photo: Mary Keim. Bachman's Sparrow. Photo: Joseph Mileyka

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, September 10, 2023

Fall is not only a good time to see migratory birds at Wekiwa Springs State Park, but it is the height of wildflower season, and there are some great wildflowers

You don't have to be an expert birder but should be willing to hike on sandy trails while birding for several hours. To participate, contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559 or riglingkathy@gmail.com.

June Challenge Winners

The June Challenge is an easy-going contest to get birders out in the field in one of the more difficult months to find birds. For several years Orange Audubon Society (OAS) has encouraged participation and publicized the winners.

Clearly, all who participated are winners for birding in the heat and rains of June!

In the June Challenge, the first number is the number of species seen that are American Birding Association (ABA) countable. The second number is the non-ABA countable species (not established).



June Challenge participants: Kathy Rigling, Lorri Lilja, Haden Klinger, Terry Breese, Claudia Breese, Susan Thome-Barrett, and Ethan Landreville. Photo: Vanessa Picariello

Our Top Birder and First Place Winner for Orange County with 106 ABA and 7 non-ABA species is Terry Breese! Terry won last year also with 97/7.

The Top Young-Birder was Haden Klinger with 48 ABA species in Seminole County. The Top Seminole birder was Lorri Lilja with 77 ABA/4 nonABA species. The Top Lake County birder was Jennifer Tedman with 60 ABA/1 nonABA species.

Other top Orange County birders were Second Place, by a feather, Kathy Rigling 106 ABA; Third Place, Sylvie Nadeau-Gneckow 100 ABA; Fourth Place, Julia Nadeau-Gneckow; 96 ABA; Fifth Place, Glenn Blaser 95 ABA/ 7 nonABA; Sixth Place, Claudia Breese with 91 ABA/7 nonABA; Seventh Place, Susan Thome-Barrett 86 ABA/9 nonABA; and Eighth Place, Whitney Breese with 63 ABA/5 nonABA.

To see all the results from Florida, [see this link](#). OAS' June Challenge winners celebrated at Trimble Park with a bird walk on July 22nd. Congratulations to all our participants!

Susan Thome-Barrett and Kathy Rigling

Audubon Assembly 2023

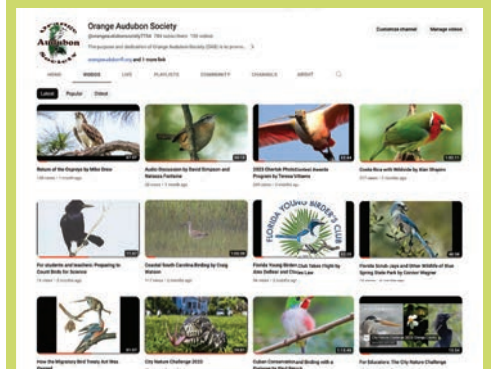
Before the pandemic, Orange Audubon Society eagerly awaited the wonderful networking opportunity of Audubon Florida's annual Audubon Assembly. Last year Assembly was scheduled for October in Fort Myers, but was cancelled due to the devastation from Hurricane Ian.

Assembly is finally back! It will be October 26-28, 2023 at the Sheraton Tampa Brandon Hotel. This year's theme is "Conservation in a Changing Landscape"

With learning sessions, a keynote presentation, awards, and field trips to some of the birdiest hotspots in the region, Assembly is a great opportunity to meet Audubon staff and volunteers across the state. [Click here for field trip details and registration.](#)

Bird Chats with OAS

Orange Audubon Society will resume its fun weekly "Bird Chats" on Zoom each Thursday at 7 p.m. (except the 3rd Thursday). Bird Chats include identification of mystery birds, discussion of new arrivals, and a topic of the week—generally a guest presentation. Register at [this link](#) to participate live. Past bird chats are archived on [OAS' YouTube channel](#).



Bird Chats start start again on September 28th (See p.8 for the schedule). Meanwhile, there are many past programs archived on [Orange Audubon Society's YouTube channel](#) that you may not have seen or that you may want to see again.

The Bird Chats team of Kathy Rigling, Susan Thome-Barrett and Deborah Green could use more ideas. Send suggestions for speakers and topics to info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Latino Conservation Week and Trailer Ride

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) continued its annual participation in Latino Conservation Week, a project of the Hispanic Access Foundation based in Washington, D.C.. This year OAS did a cleanup at Wekiwa Springs State Park in partnership with Poder LatinX on July 18, 2023. With the park breaking records for visitation, clean-ups are greatly appreciated by park management.

Buscando Pajaros is a free tram ride throughout Orlando Wetlands Park led in Spanish by volunteer Gilberto Sanchez-Perez on March 9, 2024, 9:00-11:30 AM. To reserve a seat, email me at info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

If you have ideas of how OAS can be more welcoming to our Spanish-speaking residents, please let us know. We are always trying to improve. Agradezco. *Deborah Green*



Birders viewing a Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Mead Botanic Gardens. Photo: Deborah Green

Fall Bird Walks at Mead Botanical Garden October 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2023

To celebrate fall migration, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) will host bird walks at Mead Botanical Garden each Saturday in October. We are sure to see many species of warblers and other songbirds in the oaks and other trees, as well as woodpeckers, owls and Wood Ducks.

Each walk will be led by an experienced birding guide. Walks start at 8:00 a.m. and last 2 to 3 hours with lots of stopping to look at birds.

Location is Mead Botanical Garden, 1500 S. Denning Drive, Winter Park. We will meet in the parking lot. If you have any questions, contact me at (941) 704-1189.

Linda Gaunt

Labeling Party Thanks

Many hands made light work on August 23rd for Orange Audubon Society's labeling party as we stuffed and labeled the 2500 envelopes for our annual mailing. Thanks to Teresa Williams for developing the mailing list, to Mike Daley for printing the labels and to Rick Baird and Laurel Roberts for taking the trays to the post office.

Thanks so much to the following for helping: Rick Baird, David Bottomley, Claudia Breese, Whitney Breese, Linda Carpenter, Joan Cooper, Mo Cortese, Gail Holdiman, Christy Jones, Marian Lichter, Norma Linden, Sharon Mercer, Brian Miller, Brent Mobley, Elizabeth Osborne, Dutch Perez, Kathy Rigling, Mary Van Egmond and Teresa Williams.

Deborah Green

Yellow-billed Cuckoo Secretive, solitary, and ...peculiar?

Common but elusive, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo tantalizes birdwatchers. If persistent and lucky I may get a glimpse of one as it slinks among the trees at Mead Botanical Garden during spring or fall migration. This slender, exotic-looking species has a hooked yellow curved bill, a long tail, rufous wing patches, brownish-gray back, white underparts, and a black-and-white under tail. Usually veiled in foliage, however, the creature rarely reveals its entire body. Although not small at 12 inches long, these birds hide as they hunt, and often sit hunched over waiting patiently and quietly for their favorite food—caterpillars—to move. Alas! I have to settle for parts: a white belly, yellow bill, or black-and-white tail graphics! How exasperating!

In the East, Yellow-billed Cuckoos eat large numbers of tent caterpillars (100 in one sitting), and they are among only a few species that eat hairy caterpillars. They also eat webworms, moths, beetles, ants, spiders, cicadas, katydids or crickets. In summer and fall they forage on wild fruits like elderberries and blackberries.

Breeding Yellow-billed Cuckoos build a structure three-to-90 feet off the ground on a horizontal branch or fork of a tree. The nest may be eight inches wide and lined with strips of bark or leaves. Both parents incubate the eggs and brood the nestlings, with the male taking the night shift—that is if they don't lay their eggs elsewhere. Cuckoos have a peculiar habit of depositing their eggs in the nests of American Robins, Gray Catbirds, and Wood Thrushes.

Unfortunately Yellow-billed Cuckoos are declining sharply. Their populations declined about 34 percent between 1966 and 2019 according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, and the species is listed as a Common Bird in Steep Decline. Western populations may be extinct in British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. In California the Yellow-billed Cuckoo has been reduced to about 40 pairs (from 15,000), primarily because of the destruction of wetlands. Thus the Western population of this species is a candidate for federal endangered status.

How to find them? Although rare in the West, Yellow-billed Cuckoos are widespread throughout the rest of the U.S. in summer. Easy to hear, they have a long, drawn-out distinctive knocking or croaking sound emitted in response to loud noises, especially thunder. Join an Orange Audubon bird walk at Mead Botanical Garden and a group of birdwatchers can help you find one of these beauties (see article to left and photo of participants viewing a cuckoo).

Check it out! You will no doubt fall in love, as I have, with the charming, secretive Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

Linda Carpenter



Top, Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Photo: Joyce Stefancic

Bottom, Yellow-billed Cuckoo eating tent caterpillar Photo: Mark Meifert



Glenn Crawford calling out a bird, Belize 2018. Photo: Deborah Green



Above, Cashews were once a cash crop but now are just enjoyed by Crooked Tree residents. Below, Vermilion Flycatchers at nest on Crooked Tree. Photos: Jill Miller

Belize Tropical Birding with Wildside Nature Tours

Those who went on Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) Costa Rica trip this past spring with Wildside Nature Tours had a fabulous time (May OAS*is* p.6). Their leader was Glenn Crawford, a gifted naturalist and trip leader from Belize.

Upon their request, OAS has set up two Wildside trips to Belize led by Glenn. Dates are November 12–20, 2023 and February 3–11, 2024. Both trips are 9 days and cost \$3,300, including food, lodging and guiding. The trips are to the northern part of Belize with a new extension to add some Yucatan endemics.

Wildside donates to OAS for each participant on our private tours. Past trips have been Puerto Rico in March 2020, Maine in June 2022, Costa Rica in March 2023 and Central California in August 2023. In addition to the two Belize trips, OAS has scheduled a trip to Ohio (Magee Marsh) in May 2024. Wildside also donates a gift certificate each year to our Auction.

Trip leader Glenn Crawford was raised in the remote village of Crooked Tree in northern Belize. Located near several Mayan ruins, Crooked Tree is a 36,000-plus acre area of wetlands, lagoons, savannas and thick brush now designated as a Wildlife Sanctuary. The village was established in the mid-1700s as a Creole-speaking logwood camp, has about 1,400 residents and more than 300 different species of birds.

The large lagoons which surround Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary kept it isolated, until a causeway was built in 1980. Before then, without electricity, Glenn grew up in tune with nature's rhythms. Excited about birds, he spent days in the bush studying field marks, habits and vocalizations.

When tourists began coming to his village, Glenn was there to show them his birds. One tourist, so impressed with Glenn's skills, gave him his first field guide and binoculars!

Glenn became an official Belizean licensed guide in 1986. When photographer Kevin Loughlin met him on his first visit to Belize, the idea of Wildside Nature Tours was born. Glenn guided Wildside's very first tour in 1994.

Wildside also sponsors the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL, having sent Greg Miller from 2017 to 2019 and Alex Lamoreaux for the past four festivals. Kevin himself will be joining us this year, leading photo workshops ([The festival will be November 30 to December 4, 2023](#)).

Enjoy Glenn's amazing trip leadership on one of OAS' Belize trips. [Visit this link for more details and to register](#), and please also email info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Deborah Green

Sign Up Early

Kissimmee River Boat Trip and Kissimmee Prairie Preserve Visit

Last April Orange Audubon Society (OAS) made a trip to the fabulous Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park east of the Kissimmee River. Park biologists took us on a swamp buggy ride down to where the park abuts the river.

The biologists explained that the project to restore the Kissimmee River—after the Army Corps of Engineers had straightened it into a canal in the 1960s—had just been completed.

Over forty square miles of floodplain have been restored, as the river has been returned from a straight canal to the original meandering river. This inspired the idea to see the river's restoration at the [Riverwoods Field Station](#), which is 20 miles southeast of Sebring on US 98.

OAS has scheduled a guest presentation on the restoration project from the director of Riverwoods for November 16th. And we have set up a field trip that includes a pontoon boat trip on the Kissimmee River.

After about 4 hours at Riverwoods, including the boat ride, we will drive about 45 minutes to Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park, with a slow drive down the entrance road enjoying views of Crested Caracaras, Northern Bobwhites, Eastern Meadowlarks and other great dry prairie birds.

This trip will be Saturday, March 2, 2024, from 10:00 AM–5:00 PM, starting at the Riverwoods Field Station 100 Riverwoods Circle, Lorida, FL 33857. Cost, including the boat trip, is \$60 for members and \$85 non-members. To register, email me at info@orangeaudubonfl.org. Looking forward to it. Deborah Green



April 2023 field trip to Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park. The restored Kissimmee River is to the left. Photo: Deborah Green

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Chats with OAS via Zoom

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

- Brevard County Birding by David and Dee Simpson

September 28, 2023

- Bachman's Sparrows and Brown-headed

Nuthatches by Jim Cox

October 5, 2023

- The NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL by the Bird Chats Team

October 12, 2023

- The Limpkin by Dana Bryan

October 26, 2023

Limited Edition Field Trip: Joe Overstreet Road and Landing, Osceola County

September 9, 2023

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

September 10, 2023

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

September Field Trip, Trimble Park, Mt. Dora

September 16, 2023

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

September Program: Freshwater Turtles of Central Florida by Wayne Osborne

September 21, 2023

Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Nature Fest at Oakland Nature Preserve

September 23, 2023

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Dragonfly Identification Field Trip, Orlando Wetlands Park

September 23, 2023

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

Young Birders Field Trip, Central Winds Park

September 30, 2023

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Oakland Nature Preserve Quarterly Survey

October 1, 2023

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walks, Winter Park

October 7, 14, 21 and 28, 2023

Contact Linda at (941) 704-1189

Limited Edition Field Trip: Oak Hammock and Weather Tower Road, Merritt Island

October 7, 2023

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

October 8, 2023

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Beginners Birdwatching Class

Orlando Wetlands Park, Mead and Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive

October 15, 22 and 29, 2023

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

October Program: Bats, Birds and Bugs by Lee Bloomcamp (online on YouTube LIVE)

October 19, 2023

Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

October Field Trip: Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walk, Winter Park

October 21, 2023

Contact Linda at (941) 704-1189

Backyard Biodiversity Day, Mead Botanical Garden, Winter Park

October 21, 2023

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Rock Springs Reserve Survey Quarterly Survey

October 25, 2023

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Audubon Assembly

October 26-28, 2023

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Save Your Spots!

Northwest FL Panhandle Birding Trip

This season's four-day trip to see migratory and breeding songbirds and shorebirds in the Florida Panhandle will be April 10-14, 2024. The cost of \$300 for members; \$350 for non-members includes a great itinerary, local expert guides, Wakulla Springs boat tour and some picnic meals. Photos of last year's trip are in the June OAS*is*, p. 8. For lodging and other details and to save your space, contact Teresa Williams at (407) 718-1977.

Ohio Warbler Migration: Magee Marsh & More with Wildside Nature Tours

Selected by Kathy Rigling and birding friends, this trip in mid-May is at the height of spring warbler migration, the week after The Biggest Week in American Birding festival. This Wildside trip will be led by Gabriel Lugo, who led our Puerto Rico trip three years ago. Dates are May 13-18, 2024. Cost is \$2,200 per person, double occupancy and includes lodging and guiding. For itinerary and details, see wildsidenaturetours.com/orange-audubon-society/ and email info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL



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NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL

<https://NorthShoreBirdingFestival.com>