



Clockwise, left to right, Red-throated Bee Eater, Uganda; Yellow-billed Kingfisher, Australia; Cundinamarca Antpitta, a bird discovered by Peter in 1989 near Bogotá, Colombia; Peter birding in the rugged mountains of the Panama/Colombia border.
Photos: Peter Kaestner

This Month's Program, December 21, 2023

Zero to 9,800: A Lifetime of Birding by Peter Kaestner

Peter Kaestner is a world-renowned independent birder who has spent a lifetime sharing his passion for birds with others. For many years, he has traveled the world on an adventure-filled quest to become the first birder to see 10,000 species of birds. The 69-year-old's life list is currently at 9,796. On eBird, Kaestner has the top ranking.

The few hundred birds he still needs are some of the rarest and most difficult to spot in the world. They're found in places that are basically inaccessible, off-limits due to political unrest, or threatened by deforestation and climate change.

Peter birded his way to about 9,500 species while working for the Foreign Service for 36 years. He and his wife, Kimberly, a diplomatic specialist, worked overseas in Central and South America, Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, South Pacific and the U.S. Rotating through embassies as a diplomat allowed Kaestner to excel as a lister. After retirement in August 2016, he became a full-time birder.

Join us on YouTube LIVE on December 21st at 7 p.m. for a fascinating program. Simply put Orange Audubon Society into the YouTube search field, and the program will pop up at 7 p.m. The program will remain on our [YouTube channel](#) for later viewing, but tune in live, so you can to ask Peter questions.

Alan Shapiro, Programs Chair

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

Programs are the 3rd Thursday of each month (Sept–June) at 7:00 p.m.

All but October and December (on YouTube LIVE) 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/



Christmas Bird Counts

This year is the 124th Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Orange Audubon Society hosted a Bird Chat about Christmas Bird Counts, [see link](#), and another about Frank Chapman who started these counts in 1900, [see link](#).

Each year CBCs are held from December 14th through January 5th, [coordinated by National Audubon](#). Participating is a great way to learn more.

Listed on page 8 are the CBCs in our area. If you are traveling during this period, you can locate [counts in other areas here](#). To join, email the compiler with your contact information and your birding experience level. Have fun while contributing to science!



Kathy teaching bird identification. Photo: Brian Miller

Beginners' Birdwatching

Class, January 6, 21 and 27, 2023

Join Orange Audubon at our Beginners' Birdwatching Class three mornings, January 6th, 21st and 27th, 8:00–11:30 a.m. If you have to miss a class, you can make it up in next fall's series. Instructors are Kathy Rigling and Susan Thome-Barrett, with the class limited to 12 students. Combined cost for the three sessions is \$50 members; \$65 non-members; \$10 youth (12 & under) with registered adult.

Saturday, January 6th, is an "outdoor" classroom session and mini-field trip at Orlando Wetlands, followed by Sunday, January 21st and Saturday, January 27th field sessions at Oakland Nature Preserve and the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. To save your space, contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com or (407) 488-9559.



Orange County Wetlands Ordinance: Adoption Date is December 12, 2023

On December 12th, the final draft of a new Wetlands Ordinance will be presented to the Orange County Commissioners for a final vote.

Orange County’s current Wetlands Ordinance dates back to 1987 (35 years ago) and required updating to address wetland loss through development. Audubon Florida’s Charles Lee provided input, and Orange Audubon Society’s (OAS) conservation committee has sent comments. Members have attended and spoken at Commission meetings and several Orange County Advisory Boards (Zoning and Environmental Protection), particularly in support of the 100-foot buffer to new development impacting wetlands.



Join me and other members of the OAS Conservation Committee at the County Admin Building on December 12th at 2 p.m. in support of the work of Orange County Environmental Protection Division toward better wetlands protection.

Deborah Green, OAS president and Conservation Committee Member

Tax Tips for “Going Green”

Will you be paying federal income tax for tax year 2023? If “yes”, then be sure to apply for Investment Tax Credits on Form 5695 on any eligible home improvements made in calendar year 2023. See [this IRS document for details](#).

Want to take advantage of Investment Tax Credits in 2024 and beyond? Then visit the websites below for more information on energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy choices. Make a plan for your household to be able to reduce your energy use and save money at the same time.

energystar.gov

rewiringamerica.org

Disclaimer: Get advice from your tax consultant

Mary Dipboye, OAS member and League of Women Voters of Orange County, Clean Energy Chair

Gifts for Birders

It’s the gifting season, so here are a few ideas for your favorite birder:

For the coffee drinker, consider the gift of bird-friendly coffee. When you purchase Bird Friendly® certified coffee or cocoa, you preserve critical tropical habitat for birds and help protect biodiversity. National Audubon sells Audubon brand bird-friendly coffee. Birds and Beans is another great brand.



With all the up-coming changes to bird names, consider an Amazon gift certificate with a note to be used to purchase a new bird guide. Or *Bringing Nature Home* by Doug Tallamy, the classic “native plants and caterpillars for birds” book. Or Rebecca Heisman’s excellent *Flight Paths: How a Passionate and Quirky Group of Pioneering Scientists Solved the Mystery of Bird Migration*.

How about a gift of a Beginners’ Birdwatching Class (p.1)? Or the Panhandle Trip (p.3)? *Susan Thome-Barrett*



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: membership@orangeaudubonfl.org

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

**Belize Tropical Birding
February 3-11, 2024**

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) has set up a February trip with Wildside Nature Tours to Belize, guided by Glenn Crawford, a gifted naturalist and trip leader from that country. The 9-day trip is February 3-11, 2024 and costs \$3,300, including food, lodging and guiding, cost of flight extra. The trip is to the northern part of Belize with a new extension to add some Yucatan endemics. For more about Glenn, see the [September OASis](#), p. 9. [Visit this link for more details and to register](#), and please also email info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Disappearing Island Trip

The new boat trip during the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL to Disappearing Island in Ponce Inlet, in the Marine Discovery Center's boat from New Smyrna Beach, was so popular that we have set up another one for March 23, 2024, 1 to 4 pm. Michael Brothers will again lead. Email info@orangeaudubonfl.org to sign up.

Northwest FL Panhandle Birding

Orange Audubon Society'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 *OASis*, p. 8. For lodging and other details and to save your space, contact Teresa Williams at (407) 718-1977.

Biggest Year Yet Field Trip, January 7, 2024

Don't miss Orange Audubon Society's first limited edition field trip of 2024 on January 7th! We will be doing our traditional "biggest year yet" field trip. This year we will be going on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive and possibly some surrounding areas. Our leaders will be 13-year old hotshot birder Ethan and as his father Brennan Landerville, Kathy Rigling and Susan Thome-Barrett. We will see how many different species we can start the new year, at one of the best birding locations in Central Florida. Spots are limited to 12 people so sign up as soon as you can! Cost is \$12 for OAS members, \$17 for nonmembers. [Sign up on our website](#). If you have any questions, email riglingkathy@gmail.com.



Ethan and Brennan Landerville, trip leaders for Biggest Year Yet.

LAWD Ambassadors Needed

The 3 1/2 year old Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD) Ambassador Program could use reinforcements. In light of the importance of the Lake Apopka North Shore for birds, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) has stepped up. Volunteers spend 2 1/2 hours a month on LAWD providing maps and tips to new visitors. This effort supports the St. Johns River Water Management District, to keep the North Shore (a lake restoration area) open for visitation without staffing as a park. LAWD has visitation of over 150,000 people a year, and OAS' Ambassadors keep things running smoothly. To find out more, email volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org.

On November 19th, some of the LAWD Ambassadors had the fun of an EcoBuggy trip on the western part of the North Shore. Because there is no public driving access on the western side, most Ambassadors had never seen it (unless they have participated in the field trips at the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL). We learned about the Lake Apopka restoration from the land managers, Ben Guigliotti and Brian Silverman.

January Bird Surveys

Orange Audubon Society's Bird Surveys will be January 14th at Wekiwa Springs State Park, January 24th at Rock Springs Run State Reserve and January 28th at Oakland Nature Preserve. To participate, contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com.



Top, LAWD Ambassadors after EcoBuggy Ride led by St. Johns River Water Management District Lake Apopka North Shore land managers. Below, OAS President Deborah Green presenting a Great Florida Birding Trail sign to land managers Ben Guigliotti and Brian Silverman. Photos: Sharon Mercer

Great Florida Birding Trail

Did you ever wonder why the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD), which has been the top eBird hotspot in Florida, does not have a Great Florida Birding Trail sign? I did and have been requesting of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission Great Florida Birding Trail Coordinator to secure signs for LAWD for many years. The site is on the Great Florida Birding Trail, just no sign.

This year the Coordinator sent me a sign to pass to the land managers. There are a few more steps in permitting with Florida DOT before it has a place guiding visitors to the site.
Deborah Green

Education Coordinator Update

This month Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) educational programs were in full gear. First was a science night at the brand-new Kelly Park school in Apopka with over 125 students and 75 adults participating. The students really enjoyed trying out different kinds of bird beaks to see how well they picked up different items of food.

I started an additional afterschool bird club at Rock Springs Elementary school. Even though it was late afternoon, the students saw a Merlin fly over and later a mature and juvenile Bald Eagle.

I visited Sand Lake Elementary to do a bird count with two second grade classes. The students enthusiastically ran to see each bird spotted. Highlights were Eastern Bluebirds and Palm Warblers.



Eccleston Elementary Birders Club. Photo: Kathy Rigling

Susan Thome-Barrett and I did our first Ecotherapy tour on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive for Advent Health on November 10th. Prior to this tour we did an online program about the health benefits of birding.

Afterschool bird club programs continued at Eccleston Elementary, Zellwood Elementary and Eustis Elementary. This month the focus was on habitat. The students were excited to see some of our winter residents during their bird count.

The Young Birders Club had a field trip to Clay Island on November 5th. The highlight was Ethan Landreville finding a Dickcissel by the observation tower. Ethan also found a Broad-winged Hawk soaring and an American Pipit, which flew across the path.

I presented a homeschool program for the Forest Friends on October 30th. The theme of this program was comparing bats and birds. The students enjoyed *Stellaluna*, the story of a bat that ends up with a family of birds.

November ended with a week of Teach-In programs for Orange County Public Schools. Teach-In is when community partners visit schools to talk about their careers. I did programs at five different schools, talking to the students about working with birds.

I also did an additional program at Waterbridge Elementary with five kindergarten classes on the characteristics of birds.

OAS' monthly free educational webinars will continue December 13th from 7:00-7:30 pm with a program about counting birds for science. Here is [the link to sign up](#). The November [webinar on Project Feederwatch](#) is posted on our YouTube channel.

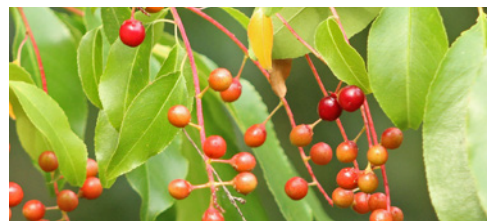
For more information on educational programs or to schedule a class or after-school club visit, please email education@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Kathy Rigling, Education Coordinator

Plants for Birds

It is not too early to plan improvements to your home landscape. [This flyer](#) by Orange Audubon Society (OAS) member Mary Keim is an informative guide to plant selection. Recommended native plants for Central Florida landscapes are featured in this [yard tour video](#) with more information in the [Caterpillar Connection](#). Also check out [Dr. Doug Tallamy's 2021 talk for OAS](#).

Deborah Green



A native tree that hosts caterpillars for birds and has small fruits eaten by birds is Wild Black Cherry, *Prunus serotina*. Photos: Mary Keim

Lyonia Founder Wins Award

Those who have enjoyed seeing Florida Scrub-Jays at the Lyonia Preserve in Deltona will appreciate this. Preserve founder and retired head of Volusia County Environmental Management, Steve Kintner of West Volusia Audubon Society, was honored by National Audubon with the 2023 Callison Volunteer Award. Congratulations, Steve!



The well-burned sandhill habitat at Wekiwa Springs State Park abounds with wildflowers and native grasses. Photo: Deborah Green

Wekiwa Springs State Park Partnership Hike

Wekiwa Springs State Park is a crown jewel in Florida's award-winning state park system, with reportedly the greatest habitat diversity in the state.

The park has unique plants and a wide variety of birds. On November 18th, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) joined the Tarflower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society for a joint field trip at the park.

Birders learned from plant experts and vice versa, and it was a wonderful trip.

OAS has long partnered with Tarflower on its annual Backyard Biodiversity Day and in the promotion of Native Plants for Birds.

Years ago, we partnered on a Native Plants Yards Tour and hope to begin planning another such event for 2024-25.

Kathy Rigling with Deborah Green

Mead Volunteer Needed

Orange Audubon Society's long-time liaison to Mead Botanical Garden, Larry Martin, has provided a valuable service over the years in filling the bird feeders at Mead. Seed is provided by Wild Birds Unlimited in Winter Springs. With Larry's retirement from this activity, I have been trying to continue, but my schedule now prevents me from consistently keeping the feeders filled and cleaned.

If you live close to Mead Gardens or are a frequent visitor to the Gardens, we are looking for someone who can fill and clean the feeders. If you are available, email me at 2904susan@gmail.com.

Susan Thome-Barrett



Piping Plover at Lighthouse Point Park, Ponce Inlet. Photo: Deborah Green. Banded Piping Plover at Fort DeSoto Park. Photo: Max Weakley.

The Threatened Piping Plover

Piping Plovers breed in the Northeast along ocean shores, in the northern Great Plains in alkali wetlands and along the shores of the Great Lakes. They winter on coastal beaches, sandflats, and mudflats in Florida, the Gulf Coast and Caribbean.

Small, round shorebirds, in winter plumage they blend in, until they run, stop, and tilt forward to pull an insect or worm from the soft sand. They forage alone or in small groups, sticking to higher parts of the shoreline than other shorebirds. A distinctive (and endearing) behavior is holding one foot forward and shuffling it rapidly over the sand or mud, helping startle small creatures into view.

On their northern breeding grounds, when humans approach too closely or dogs chase adults, the birds abandon their nests. Predation and changes in water levels also reduce suitable breeding habitat. In winter, human impacts on beaches have contributed to this species' decline. In 2020 the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service listed the Piping Plover as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Conservation efforts have focused on control of predators and human recreation near breeding sites and restoring breeding sites such as sandbars. These efforts have helped stabilize populations, especially along the Atlantic Coast and to a lesser degree in the Great Lakes.

In Volusia County, there are other challenges. The beaches where these plovers have traditionally wintered have a conflict with cars, where driving on the beach has long been a tradition. Driving is now restricted within 20 feet of either side of the inlet. Since sand migrates south, dredging and beach renourishment have to be ongoing. When the Ponce Inlet jetty was rebuilt 30 years ago and now is being repaired after hurricane damage, Volusia County and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection have to do ongoing monitoring and various measures to protect this species.

We thank early environmentalists and federal staff for the 50-year old Endangered Species Act, which provides requirements and tools to save species like this. (Sources: All About Birds; Volusia County information from Michael Brothers, David Hartgrove and Steve Kintner)

Deborah Green

Tree Swallow: A Flashy Acrobat

Handsome aerial songbirds, Tree Swallows have short legs and bills and long pointed wings. Their dark blue iridescent backs and clean white breast and throat are a familiar sight in summer fields and wetlands across most of North America as they chase flying insects, twisting and turning to flash their dazzling feathers in the sun.

These birds feed from dawn to dusk in sheltered areas full of prey, often foraging no more than 40 feet from the ground. They eat all kinds of flying bugs: dragonflies, damselflies, mayflies, bees, ants, wasps, beetles, butterflies and moths as well as spiders and roundworms. When breeding they eat fish bones, crayfish exoskeletons, clamshells and eggshells of gulls and loons to obtain calcium.

Tree Swallows breed in fields, marshes, shorelines, wooded swamps and beaver ponds throughout most of North America, preferably near water that attracts a variety of insects. They nest in old trees with existing cavities (often made by woodpeckers) or human nest boxes, Wood Duck boxes or hollow stumps. Migrating and wintering birds use sites similar to their breeding habitat but live in open areas.

Females do most of the nest building by collecting material on the ground near the water's edge. The structure is usually made entirely of grass but may include pine needles, plants, animal hair, or trash like cellophane or cigarette filters. The female presses her body against the nesting material to shape it into a cup about three inches across and lines it with many feathers of other bird species. What a design wonder!

Tree Swallows are highly social and form large migratory and wintering flocks. Although common, they declined about 30 percent between 1966 and 2019 according to the North American Breeding Survey—primarily due to habitat loss. Natural cavities for this species have been disappearing for the past 200 years, and their heavy insect diet exposes them to high levels of pesticides and contaminants like PCBs and mercury.

In Florida in the winter, in fields and marshes, this species is easy to find! Scan the air for small flying, acrobats flashing their white bellies, or search along utility wires and shrubs for perching birds. Listen for their sweet, chirping call as they whirl around to forage for favorite insects. Visit a wetlands area: I often see Tree Swallows at the Orlando Wetlands Park near Christmas, a favorite hiking and birding venue. You will surely find them where water and insects are abundant. Check it out! There is so much to enjoy in Florida's amazing wildlife.

Linda Carpenter



Tree Swallows. Photos: Mary Keim.



NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL Success!

The 8th annual NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL (NSBF), sponsored by Orange Audubon Society (OAS), spanned November 30th through December 4th. Sixty-six trips were led by 45 trip leaders from Central Florida, other parts of Florida, South Carolina and Maine.

Weather was good, and we had a terrific time! Number of participants was up 12% from our best previous year, to 335, and they came from 17 states, Ontario, Canada, and many cities in Florida. Over half the participants had attended previously.

Throughout the trips, most of the leaders and many participants were recording their sightings on Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird. This made compilation easy, for example, to determine who won the Big Day competition on Saturday between four teams with 10 participants and two leaders. The Big Day trip led by Chris Newton and John Thomson tallied 104 species, followed closely by the two other adult teams and the Young Birders team. The festival's first use of rented minivans was made possible by a generous donation by an anonymous fan of our festival.

In the past, the best number of bird species for the 5-day festival was 172. The festival's new trips to Ponce Inlet added a few coastal species, and the total this year was 193 species! Some highlights were American Flamingos on the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge trip, three wayward Eared Grebes in Apopka and a Tropical Kingbird at T.M. Goodwin. Alex Lamoreaux, leading for us courtesy of Wildside Nature Tours, created a festival trip report viewable at [this link](#).

The amazing leaders that are at the heart of this festival included Alex, who now lives in Maine; Craig Watson and Pam Ford from South Carolina; Luis Gles and Mariah Hryniewich from South Florida; David Simpson from Indian River County; John Groskopf from Sarasota; Pete Johnson from Jacksonville; and Brian Cammarano from Panama City. OAS rents the Youth Camp at beautiful Wekiwa Springs State Park for lodging for these out-of-town leaders. Wekiwa is also the site of day and night walks, a tram ride, a nature drawing workshop, and keynote dinners.

Our local leaders from all over Central Florida were spearheaded by Chris Newton, Lorri Lilja, Gallus Quigley, Kathy Rigling, Alan Shapiro, Jack Horton and Mary Soule. Our other great leaders were Bert Alm, Brady Bailo, Michael Brothers, Steve Coleman, Gigi DelPizzo, Paula Duenas, Lynn Folts, Reinhard and Jutta Geisler, Greg Gensheimer, Mark Hainen, Luddy Lambertson, Paul Lammardo, Mike Legare, Ed Maldonado, Lori Mathis, Tricia Newton, Ben Powell, Matt Richardson, Ralph Risch, Robert Sena, Steve Shaluta, Scott Simmons, Rebecca Smith, Joan Tague, Susan Thome-Barrett, John Thomson, Maxfield Weakley, Bob Wexler and Graham Williams. Much appreciation has come from the participants for these great leaders.

The hard-working NSBF Committee consisted of Jack Horton, Brian Miller, Lee Ann Posavad, Kathy Rigling, Susan Thome-Barrett and Teresa Williams. Volunteers who made the lunches and dinners possible were Rick Baird, Jennifer Coleman, Carol Hebert, Gail Holdiman, David Marano and Mary Van Egmond, with help from Jennifer and Maddie Barber. Additional essential volunteer help came from Shawna Resnick joining Jack Horton in early morning hospitality and logistics, with Gwen Ambrose, Julie Auble, Miriam Chambers and Jack Barber, Abbie Clarke, Mo Cortese, Richard Fasse, Leslee Green, Mary Hudson, Marian Lichtler, Anne Merrill, Fred Milch, Elizabeth Osborne, Terry Piper, David Slongwhite, Jeff and Katie Werrmann and Kathleen Wynegar. Thanks to all.

If you have photos to share that we might use for publicity for next year, please email festival@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Join us next year December 5-9, 2024! <https://northshorebirdingfestival.com/> *Deborah Green, Festival Committee Chair*



Great Blue Heron and bur-marigolds, 2023 NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL. *Digiscoped photo: Robert Wilson*

DECEMBER/JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Christmas Bird Counts

- Zellwood/Mt. Dora: Thursday, December 14, 2023. Contact Gallus Quigley at gallusq@gmail.com
- Bay Lake: Saturday, December 16, 2023. Contact John Thomson at john.thomton@gmail.com
- Wekiva River: Saturday, December 16, 2023. Contact Jay Exum at jay.h.exum@gmail.com
- Kissimmee Valley: Sunday, December 17, 2023. Contact Chris Newton at dexterdevon68@gmail.com
- Econlockhatchee: Friday, December 22, 2023. Contact Lorne Malo at lornekmal@gmail.com
- Clermont: Monday, January 1, 2024. Contact John Thomson at john.thomton@gmail.com

December Program: On YouTube LIVE Zero to 9,800: A Lifetime of Birding by Peter Kaestner

December 21, 2023
Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Beginners' Birdwatching Class,

January 6, 21 and 27, 2024
Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Limited Edition Field Trip: Your Biggest Year Yet

January 7, 2024
Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com.

Birds of Prey Identification Trip

January 14, 2024
Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

January Program: Tips to Create Amazing Nature Photos by Reg Garner

January 18, 2024
Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Monthly Field Trip to PEAR Park

January 20, 2024
Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com.