



Above, Chertok Awards Program, 2019. Right, Photo Contest Committee Chair Teresa Williams after the framed prints of past winners were mounted at Magnolia Park. Photos: Deborah Green

This Month's Program, June 20, 2024 36th Annual Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) will again celebrate the end of its season with an exclusive showing of eligible entries in the 2024 Kit and Sidney Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest.

Please join us to see images of Florida's amazing native flora, fauna and natural areas captured beautifully by nature-loving shutterbugs who entered this year's contest.

As we show images photographed throughout Florida, from the Panhandle to the Everglades and Florida Keys, members of the audience will pick their favorites and suspense will mount. At the end of the presentation, winners of the Youth, Novice and Advanced Amateur/Professional categories will be announced, and prizes worth a combined \$1,350 in cash, gift cards and ribbons will be awarded.

The event is open to the public. All are encouraged and welcome to attend and bring friends and family as we celebrate the 36th year of this much-loved Chertok photo contest and OAS's 58th year as your local chapter of Audubon.

We hope you will join us at 7:00 p.m. on June 20th. We look forward to seeing you in person at Leu Gardens (address below)

Teresa Williams, Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest Chair



Orange Audubon's Online Auction Opens June 13th!

From private birding experiences with experts to landscape consultation to gift certificates for restaurants and attractions, there is something for everyone on the 2024 Orange Audubon Society (OAS) Online Auction. All proceeds will benefit OAS' Nature and Environmental Education Center Fund and educational programs. The Online Auction will open for bidding Thursday, June 13th at noon, and we will provide the link to view items a few days before in the June mid month update.

As new items are donated, they will be added to the easy-to-use BiddingOwl platform that has been utilized for the past three years.

Register on the BiddingOwl website or use your previous year's login, select items to bid on and submit bids. The auction closes on Monday, June 24th at 7:00 p.m.

Linda Gaunt, Online Auction Chair

Summer Planning Time

Orange Audubon Society programs go on hiatus in July and August as the board plans for our next program year. We want your input as we plan activities. Do you have suggestions for speakers or field trips? For our nature center? Please fill out our very short survey at [this link](#). Thanks for your participation.



Splashes of Pink—Roseate Spoonbill. Honorable Mention, Advanced Category, 2023 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. Photo: Jan Addison.

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 (which are 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/



Apopka Birding Park Update



On March 20th, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) secured a long-term ground lease from the City of Apopka, to create the Apopka Birding Park, located at the entrance of the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (see the [April OASis](#), p.2). In late April, OAS applied for a Tourist Development Tax (TDT) grant, which — if we win it —will pay for renovation of the old Truck Shop on the property into a nature and environmental center. Because this grant was highly competitive and required shovel-ready projects, we sent out a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) due late April. We circulated the RFQ in local green building circles, since we want to make our project a model of green building. Three highly qualified firms sent in qualifications, and members of our Apopka Birding Park Working Group carried out interviews and made our selection, approved unanimously by our board. **Architect Philip Donovan of Little Diversified, with several net zero energy buildings under his belt and a strong emphasis on sustainability, will be working with us. We are planning a July 18th meeting for our members at Leu Gardens to provide input to our Birding Park plans.** Put that on your calendar.

OAS recently heard that we have been awarded an Audubon in Action grant from National Audubon for habitat restoration. Through that grant, we will work to engage people who do not normally participate in Audubon activities. OAS 1st Vice President Jack Horton is planning trails, and we will be contracting professional help on restoring native plant habitats. One of the first efforts must be removing many of the concrete pads that were bases of the old greenhouses, and it was good news that the St. Johns River Water Management District needs concrete and will remove at least some. Ahead is a lot of volunteer work, a capital campaign and setting up an endowment, of which the interest will provide funds to operate the nature center. If interested in helping in any way on our exciting long-awaited project, email me at info@orangeaudubonfl.org. Thank you!

Deborah Green, OAS President

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive 9th Anniversary

In May 2015 the St. Johns River Water Management District opened the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD). Orange Audubon Society appreciates LAWD and has been celebrating the anniversary of its opening each year.

LAWD Volunteers Needed

The LAWD Ambassador Program is an OAS program in coordination with the St. Johns River Water Management District. By volunteering 2 1/2 hours on a Saturday or Sunday, once a month, the Ambassadors help keep the large number of LAWD visitors touring without incident.

An Ambassador had requested to serve with her nature-loving son, since he needed volunteer hours for college scholarships. OAS now accepts students under age 16, accompanied by their parents, and students over 16 on their own with parent signature on the Ambassador application form. Email info@orangeaudubonfl.org to find out more.



Above, female Softshell Turtle visiting the LAWD Ambassador shelter. *Photo: Felecia Bryant.* Right, Young LAWD Ambassador at work. *Photo: Deborah Green*



Orange Audubon Society (OAS) mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

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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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LIKE OAS' [FACEBOOK PAGE](#)

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City Nature Challenge Orange County 2024 Results

The City Nature Challenge (CNC) is a bioblitz or biological survey event that attempts to record all the species within a designated area. As a community science effort, the CNC is made possible by the easy-to-use mobile app iNaturalist. Read about how iNaturalist was first developed and the City Nature Challenge started in [April's OASis, p.4](#). The CNC is held the last weekend in April.

For the past three years, The Nature Conservancy has led our City Nature Challenge in partnership with Orange Audubon Society (OAS). The Tarflower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society also publicized this fun opportunity, along with Orange County, the City of Orlando, Hispanic Access and several other environmental groups.



This fun bioblitz and competition, that started in 2016, has really grown worldwide! Observations this year numbered 2.4 million, species numbered 69,990 and participants numbered 85,755. While the CNC's originators, San Francisco and Los Angeles, had 2,566 and 1,973 participants respectively, other cities around the world and in the U.S. have now passed them.

So who won the 2024 City Nature Challenge? Highest in number of species of all participating municipalities was La Paz, Bolivia, followed by Monterey, Mexico, then San Antonio, TX. Following these leaders were Cochabamba and Trinidad, both cities in Bolivia, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston-Galveston and Washington D.C.

It is particularly exciting that an inventory of species is being done in Bolivia, the small South America

country with terrain spanning the Andes Mountains, the Atacama Desert and Amazon Basin rainforest.

In Florida, Orange County's participant results were surpassed by South Florida which had 843 participants, Northeast Florida with 347 participants, North Florida & South Georgia with 222 participants and Alachua County with 222 participants. Orange County had [2388 observations, 753 species and 193 participants](#).

Among our 193 participants, who was at the top this year? The most eligible observations (during the count period, made on iNaturalist and within Orange County) were by OAS member Kerry Paddock, iNat username: kerryppad, with 219 observations. Congratulations, Kerry!

Next was Sandy Bauerschmidt, iNat username: sandy bauerschmidt, with 206 observations. Sandy is a long-time OAS and Florida Native Plant Society member and active volunteer at Orlando Wetlands Park. Congratulations for your fourth year in second place. (For the last three years, Jeffrey Gammon has placed first, but he wasn't able to participate fully this year).

Third this year was Anthony Brais, iNat username: syrherp 171, who likes lungless salamanders, riverine turtles, fossorial snakes and the green anole. By the way, the most commonly submitted organism this year was the Brown Anole, followed by the Great Egret and American Alligator.

Fourth was Jacquelyn Kaucher, iNat username: jackiek415, with 140 observations. Fifth was Mary Keim, iNat username: marykeim with 123 observations. Mary and her husband Randy, who was 8th in number of observations, have been using iNaturalist for many years. As a volunteer at Orlando Wetlands, Mary posts her great photos on FLICKR and iNaturalist. Mary contributes to many "projects" on iNaturalist and helps identify images posted by others.

Sixth was Brenda White, iNat username: brendajwhite, with 113 observations. Brenda who just joined iNaturalist this past December, reports that participating was a lot of fun. Karen Guin, who was 5th in number of species, reported "I targeted a favorite two-mile hiking trail in the Charles H. Bronson State Forest that I knew



"Bee-Safe" Claim False

Insects are so critical for birds. Even allegedly "low-toxicity" flupyradifurone (insecticide) and azoxystrobin and difenoconazole (fungicides) are found to pose adverse health effects to solitary ground-nesting squash bees (*Xenoglossa* spp.), according to researchers from the University of Ottawa and the University of Guelph's School of Environmental Science.

Fungicide exposure leads to less pollen collected per flower, while exposure to flupyradifurone (FPF) produces larger offspring (more challenging to fly). Exposure to these three pesticides simultaneously "induced hyperactivity in female squash bees relative to both the control and single pesticide exposure, and reduced the number of emerging offspring per nest compared to individual pesticide treatments."

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) sponsored #WorldBeeDay in late May. Advocates are calling for the elimination of toxic insecticide classes, such as neonicotinoids and butanolides, and their wholesale replacement with organic land management principles. Organic food systems' long-term economic and ecological benefits are reinforced by the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances, which renders toxic petrochemical-based pesticides, including neo-nicotinoids, obsolete. See more at the website of the non-profit [Beyond Pesticides](#).

had a lot of biodiversity. I recorded observations of 97 different species during one hike on that trail."

If you don't already use iNaturalist, start this summer, so you'll be ready for the 2025 CNC!

Deborah Green with Christianah Oyenaga

Education Coordinator Update

Reflecting on the Orange Audubon Society (OAS) educational programs for 2023-24, we have had a very successful season. Since August 2023, I have completed 78 visits to schools, from preschool through 8th grade.

Eighteen of these visits have included student participatory bird counts, for 67 classes of students from grades 3-8. Working with students to survey their schoolyards is made possible using OAS' class set of KOWA binoculars. These were half paid for through a National Audubon Collaborative Grant and half purchased by the OAS board. A discount was provided by Land, Sea and Sky of Houston, a NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL sponsor. Having good optics for the students has been so critical.

Students have been so excited to be doing actual field observations. Many would comment that they wanted to stay out all day watching birds! When a student would find a bird and successfully get it into focus, he or she would shout "I found a bird!" One third grader—who was so surprised to see such a variety of birds on her campus—asked me if I brought the birds with me!

In addition to public school visits, I also visited homeschool groups, one "forest school," one college program for Audubon Florida and six adult programs.



Education Coordinator Kathy Rigling with OAS table at Dommerich Elementary Garden EcoFair. Photo courtesy Kathy Rigling

This year we added 3 afterschool birding clubs for which I provided different bird-related programs monthly. Including Zellwood Elementary for which started a club



Timber Springs Middle School May 2024. Photo: Kathy Rigling

last year, I completed 28 afterschool visits. Providing consistency for these children really helped to build their connection to nature. The students would often share about birds that they saw inbetween club visits, like real birders do.

As part of the afterschool clubs, young birder trips and the Beginning Bird Watching Class, Orange Audubon piloted a program with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Wings Over Florida program. We were able to provide the "25 Florida Life Bird" certificates to students who observed 25 Florida native birds over the course of our programs All together we were able to award 36 students and adults these beautifully illustrated certificates.

I also provided outreach at 8 schoolwide community events, in which we interacted with 700 students and 425 adult at various locations across Orange County.

I held 8 webinars for educators on various topics, which have had 273 views on our Orange Audubon [YouTube Channel](#).

We were also able to provide 25 class subscriptions to National Audubon's *Audubon Adventures* magazines to 3rd-5th grade teachers in Orange County.

All together we reached 4,295 students and 839 adults this past season. Some of comments we received in a recent follow-up survey sent to educational program participants include:

"Thank you for giving us your time. I will be introducing students to Participatory science projects in the future as a result of your introduction. We enjoyed your visit immensely."

Young Birders Club

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) had a wonderful season with our Young Birders Club (ages 9-17). Last year, Alex DeBear from our chapter and Charles Law, a 16-year old from Lakeland, presented a [Bird Chat about the club](#). This was publicized to Audubon chapters around the state to encourage them to also start Young Birders Clubs. OAS plans more trips and experiences starting in the fall. Meanwhile your young birder can participate in the June Challenge. See p.6.

For OAS' club, there are no dues, but we encourage you to have your young birders join the Florida Young Birders Club. For the low cost of \$10, your young birder will receive a monthly newsletter and email updates about all the Young Birder events. A discount on Vortex binoculars is also available to club members. Email me at education@orangeaudubonfl.org if any questions.

Kathy Rigling, Education Coordinator



Young Birders Club Trip, April 2024. Photo: Kathy Rigling

"The kids LOVED this program and had a wonderful experience! We will definitely book this again next year. Thank you so much!!"

"Students were engaged during the Bird Beak Investigation and the Bird Field Trip. Many students shared with me that the field study was much more interesting than they thought it would be. Most students had never used binoculars which was exciting for them."

Please email education@orangeaudubonfl.org to sign up for educational visits, to arrange for an afterschool birding club or to learn more about volunteering with the educational programs. We hope to bring school trips to Magnolia Park next year. With more help we can have a bigger impact. Thank you!

Kathy Rigling, Education Coordinator

Thanks to the OASis Contributors

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) would like to thank the following writers whose contributions have greatly enhanced the OASis this year: Glenn Blaser, Linda Carpenter, Mary Dipboye, Linda Gaunt, Rachel Kessler, Mary Keim, Kathy Rigling, Alexa Santoni, Alan Shapiro, Susan Thome-Barrett, and Teresa Williams.

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For careful and timely editing, we are most grateful to Mary Keim, Kathy Rigling, and Susan Thome-Barrett.

We will enjoy our two months off and then be asking for articles and use of your photos again for September. Deadlines are always middle of the month before. If you want to send an article or article idea, send to info@orangeaudubonfl.org. Have a great summer!

Deborah Green, OASis editor

Bird Chats with OAS

The Bird Chats with Orange Audubon Society (OAS) team has created a rich resource of programs archived them on OAS' [YouTube Channel](#), now organized into Playlists to make it easy to find the talks you missed. To register for upcoming Bird Chats so you are sent the Zoom link each week, [click here](#).

June programs are listed in the calendar on p. 6. If you have requests for topics for programs or speakers, please email info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

The Beautiful Burrowing Owl

Tiny and long-legged, the sand-colored Burrowing Owl has large yellow eyes, prominent white eyebrows and a white chin patch. The Florida adult has white wing spots.

Found throughout open landscapes of North and South America, these owls live underground in burrows excavated by prairie dogs, ground squirrels, or tortoises. When ready-made burrows are not available, the owls may roost and nest in PVC pipe, buckets, tubing or other man-made cavities.

Permanent residents of Florida, they perch on the ground or fenceposts near pastures and airports. Unlike most owls, Burrowing Owls are diurnal, or active during the day; however, they forage primarily at dusk or dawn when they can use their expert night vision to advantage. Their long legs enable them to sprint after prey when hunting on the ground.



Burrowing Owls eat insects, mammals, lizards, and birds, and often stow extra food while nesting and brooding young. When prey are plentiful, their underground caches can reach enormous size. One larder in Canada contained more than 200 rodents! Prior to laying eggs, Burrowing Owls line the entrances to their homes with animal dung which attracts beetles and other insects they like to eat.

Burrowing Owls are numerous; however they have sharply declined in Florida, the Dakotas, the Midwest, and coastal California. The species is listed endangered in Canada, threatened in Mexico, a state-threatened species in Florida and Colorado, and a California species of special concern.

Agriculture and development have diminished the colonies of prairie dogs and other burrowing animals where Burrowing Owls once nested by the hundreds. Pesticides, collisions with vehicles, hunting by domestic cats and dogs are also major sources of mortality.

Where to find this remarkable species? Look for them in open treeless areas with little vegetation such as prairies, ground-squirrel colonies, airports, golf courses, pastures, vacant lots, culverts or ditches. Chances are better in the early morning or late afternoon when they are actively foraging. Search for dirt mounds around burrow entrances where the owls often stand when not hunting.



Or travel to Cape Coral, Florida which has 1,000 pairs of Burrowing Owls, many nesting on residents' lawns. Check out these charming owls! There is much to learn about Florida's wildlife. *Linda Carpenter*

Above, Sour Puss—Burrowing Owlet. Honorable Mention Winner, Advanced Category, 2023 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. Photo: Marina Scarr. Left, Burrowing Owl Flight. Honorable Mention Winner, Advanced Category, 2021 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. Photo: Jeanne Polarolo

June Challenge

The June Challenge begins on June 1st and extends through the month. June is historically one of the slowest months for birding in Florida. Twenty years ago, Alachua Audubon originated this friendly competition, meant to build your birding skills and keep you engaged in nature. Each birder picks a county, any county in the state, and tries to compile the biggest list of species for that area during the month.

All native birds are countable and follow the [American Birding Association \(ABA\) checklist](#). If your local population of an exotic species is recognized as established by the ABA, then any member of that population is an ABA-countable bird. Otherwise put it on your non-countable list. For instance, a bird belonging to an established population of Monk Parakeets would be ABA-countable, but an escaped Monk Parakeet or a Mute Swan at Lake Eola, would not be.

List your ABA countable species first, and then your non-native non-ABA birds. An important twist for the June Challenge is that you must see the bird, not just hear it. For a complete set of rules and instructions, [please visit this link](#).

June Challenge participants who would like to be part of a group chat to share sightings, please email me at riglingkathy@gmail.com to be added.

Assistant to the Festival Coordinator Position

Do you love the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL (NSBF) and could use a little extra income this fall? Orange Audubon Society's 9-year old festival has been run entirely by volunteers to date. With the festival's success, we are in need of a paid assistant to help the NSBF Committee Chair. You will be carrying out tasks including the following: Coordinate signups and assignments of volunteers, make lists for lunches and dinners, assist with trip rosters, send trip location directions to participants, monitor festival website

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is offering a trophy to the OAS adult and youth (18 and under) member who sees the most ABA birds between June 1st and June 30th in one Florida county.

In order to qualify please submit your list [to this link](#) by midnight July 6th. Also email me your ABA countable/noncountable total and the county that you birded in by June 30th at midnight to riglingkathy@gmail.com.

We will hold a June Challenge Celebration and bird walk on July 28th at shady Trimble Park. We hope you participate in the June Challenge!

Kathy Rigling

and registration for inconsistencies, bird-dog all festival details, compile eBird lists and similar tasks. You will attend festival committee meetings weekday evenings on Zoom. Most work will be done at your own computer with flexible hours.

Requirements:

- Be an Orange Audubon Society (OAS) member and preferably have also volunteered with OAS in the past, for example, as a Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive Ambassador, bird survey volunteer or field trip co-leader
- Have attended the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL at least once in the past three years, preferably more than once
- Be detail-oriented
- Be computer-savvy, comfortable learning new computer programs and have your own computer
- Be available to work highly variable hours, with additional hours in the week before and of the festival (Festival dates are December 5-9, 2024)

Email info@orangeaudubonfl.org by June 17, 2024 with a statement of interest. Interviews will be on Zoom and notification will be in late June. Position will start after July 1, 2024.

JUNE/JULY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Chats with OAS via Zoom

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

- Changing Bird Names by Andy Kratter

June 6, 2024

- Find More Birds by Heather Wolf -

June 13, 2024

- The Florida Grasshopper Sparrow by Aline Morrow

June 27, 2024

June Challenge Kickoff, Orlando Wetlands Park

June 1, 2024

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

June 2, 2024

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Oakland Nature Preserve Bird Survey

June 9, 2024

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

OAS Online Auction

June 13 - June 24, 2024

Contact Linda at (941) 704-1189

36th Annual Chertok Nature Photography Contest Awards Program

June 20, 2024

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

July 14, 2024

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Apopka Birding Park Design Charette

July 18, 2024

Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

OAS Summer Board Planning Meeting

July 20, 2024

Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

Rock Springs Run Bird Survey, Apopka

July 21, 2024

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

June Challenge Celebration and Bird Walk Springs

July 28, 2024

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com