



Left, Map of 69.5 acre Apopka Birding Park. Entrance (bottom right) is at the entrance to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. Top right, the 1960s-era concrete building that Orange Audubon will renovate for a nature center. Bottom right, architectural plans for the nature center.

*Photos: Deborah Green*

### This Month's Program

**September 19, 2024**

## Orange Audubon Nature Center at Apopka Birding Park — OAS and Little Diversified Architectural Consulting

In March 2024, the City of Apopka passed a long-term lease to Orange Audubon Society (OAS) for the 69.5 acre former nursery site at the beginning of the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. OAS is now working diligently toward an Orange Audubon Nature Center at the Apopka Birding Park.

Having committed to renovation of the 1960's-era concrete block building onsite into our long-awaited nature center, OAS chose our architectural firm in early May. Little Diversified Architectural Consulting is dedicated to sustainability, and the building will be energy-efficient, use solar and rainwater harvesting and other features about which we can educate. A sneak preview was presented on July 18th, and this will be an update. OAS needs participation of our members and community. Join us September 19th at 7 p.m., and please get involved! Thank you.

*Alan Shapiro, Programs Chair*

**ORANGE AUDUBON SOCIETY programs are free. No reservations necessary.**



**ORANGE  
AUDUBON**

Programs are the 3rd Thursday of each month (September–June) at 7:00 p.m. and all but 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/](http://www.leugardens.org/plan/directions/)

## Lake Apopka North Shore Bird Surveys

The St. Johns River Water Management District's 20,000-acre Lake Apopka North Shore was the site of systematic bird surveys from 2002 to 2015. Participating in these surveys—in areas closed to the public—was very popular among local birders. Orange Audubon has requested to the District that they revive the surveys, and it is now happening. Email [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org), if you are interested in joining.

## Apopka Birding Park Bird Surveys

### Last Saturdays of the Month

Back in 2017, Orange Audubon trip leader and avid birder Bob Sanders led bird surveys at the Apopka Birding Park, which we called Hickerson, since the site had been the Hickerson Flowers Nursery. They saw over 100 species on the property or flying over.

As we work to restore the former nursery site to native vegetation and bird habitat, we will document the anticipated increase in bird species. On the kickoff survey, we saw 50 species.

Learn about our Birding Park project and improve your birding skills on these early morning surveys. Contact me if interested in joining us. I will make sure you know where to meet and fill out the waiver. Email me at [alexdebear@icloud.com](mailto:alexdebear@icloud.com)

*Alex DeBear*



Bird Surveyors at the Apopka Birding Park, August 2024. Photo: Deborah Green

## Welcome to Orange Audubon's 2024-25 Season!

Orange Audubon has an enormous number of activities, particularly field trips, that we invite you to join. And a nature center to work on and fund-raise toward (see p. 1). Field trip sign ups are now open on our website **at this link**. Use the calendar on p. 10, and the articles throughout this issue on our September and October activities and sign up!

Also included in this issue is announcement of winners of the 36th annual Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest (p.8). Upcoming deadline is April 17, 2025.

Our beautiful new brochure has been mailed and should be arriving at members' mailboxes in early September. If you *do not receive the mailing*, email membership@orangeaudubonfl.org to check your membership status. We hope we see you frequently this season! Thanks for your support. *Deborah Green, Orange Audubon Society President*

## FDEP's 2024-25 Great Outdoors Initiative "Half-Baked" Idea

On August 19, 2024, a Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) press release announced the launch of its 2024-25 Great Outdoors Initiative, allowing for golf courses, hotels, pickleball courts and other recreational activities with the intention of opening state parks to "increase outdoor activities."

That initiative, largely withdrawn due to public outcry, covered only nine state parks, but, changes could be coming to a state park near us, like Wekiwa Springs State Park (which has entrance lines for several miles in the warmer months). With visitation greater than many national parks, Wekiwa is the poster child for how much people appreciate our parks.

Florida's park system has won awards for its natural beauty and diversity. When in 2019 it won the National Gold Medal award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management by the American Academy for Parks and Recreation Administration in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association, Governor DeSantis said, "I am proud of Florida's efforts to conserve and protect some of the state's most treasured places." Let's hold the governor to his word.

Audubon Florida and other groups provide comment letter templates with an automatic delivery to key state officials. Sign up for the [Audubon Florida Advocate](#) for calls to action to protect our parks and other natural areas.

## Not Emeraldal!

Here in neighboring Lake County, local environmentalists noticed a rezoning proposal which could affect the St. Johns River Water Management District's Emeraldal Marsh Conservation Area by allowing dense development near it. Emeraldal Marsh, on the eastern side of Lake Griffin near the headwaters of the Ocklawaha River, was utilized for muck farming, like Lake Apopka. It is now a 7,089-acre restoration area.

The Emeraldal Marsh Rural Protection Area is adjacent. Rezoning to create 808 gated residential units, a golf course, a yacht club, and a marina, leaving only 327 acres of open space, is a developer's proposal for 1,424.27 acres of this Rural Protection Area. The restoration of Lake Griffin has followed many practices used for the restoration of Lake Apopka, but there is still a long way to go, so how does it make sense to develop a yacht club?

There may be public meetings at the Lake County Admin Building, 315 W. Main St., Tavares. Follow events and opportunities for input in [the Daily Commercial newspaper](#).

Read about the development at <https://legacygroupflorida.com/> and about the protected area: <https://www.sjrwmd.com/lands/recreation/emeraldal-marsh/>

OAS Conservation Committee



Orange Audubon Society (OAS) mission: 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](mailto:newsletter@orangeaudubonfl.org).

For other membership information, contact: [membership@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:membership@orangeaudubonfl.org)

JOIN OAS' [MEETUP](#) GROUP

LIKE OAS' [FACEBOOK PAGE](#)

OAS welcomes those who wish to volunteer and become more involved in our efforts. Email [volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org).

Orange Audubon Society, Inc. is a Florida not-for-profit organization, tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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## Orange Audubon joins National Audubon Effort to Diversify Christmas Bird Counts

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) has joined a National Audubon study by North Carolina State University, funded by the National Science Foundation. The project focuses on Audubon's oldest and most important community participatory science program, the Christmas Bird Count (CBC).

The "Inclusive, Diverse, Equitable, Accessible, Large-scale (IDEAL) Participatory Science" study looks at who is participating in local community science programs and how, if needed, groups can increase the representation in their programs to more closely represent the communities in which they serve to gain greater community support.

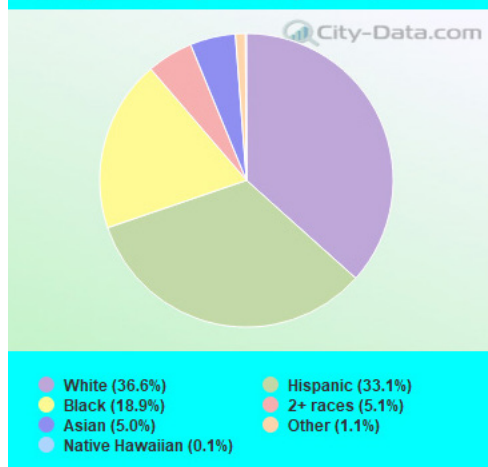
As part of the study, OAS surveyed participants in the Zellwood-Mt. Dora CBC, in which the new Apopka Birding Park and OAS Nature Center will be located. Compiler Gallus Quigley has agreed to support our efforts. If you received a survey and responded, you helped put Orange Audubon up there with larger Audubon organizations in getting some of the top percentage of responses.

National Audubon will also be sending out those surveys through all CBC compilers in the next few months, so don't be surprised if you receive one, even if you were not in the Apopka/Zellwood CBC. OAS members Deborah Green, Kathy Rigling and Susan Thome-Barrett participate in bi-weekly training using the IDEAL (Inclusive, Diverse Equitable, Accessible) Handbook.

Our first actions were to survey who is taking part in the CBC and to compare that to who makes up our community. Per City-Data.com, Orange County's ethnic make-up is 36.6% White, 33% Hispanic, 18.9% Afro-American, 5% Asian with other races making up the remainder.

In a survey to participants in the Zellwood-Mt. Dora CBC, OAS discovered that the racial makeup was 90.6% white (non-Hispanic), 1% biracial with the rest abstaining from the question. Statistics by Florida Demographics by Cubit compiled from US Census data, 2020 to 2023, show the average age in Apopka to be 38.9. The average age of surveyors in the Zellwood-Mt.

### Orange County Demographics (2021)



Dora CBC is 61. OAS has chosen two paths to address the discrepancies. Kathy will be working with her school contacts in the area, to help bring school children into the CBC.

Strategies include teacher training to involve more schools, amending school gardens with more native plantings and adding feeders/water sources to bring more birds to schoolyards. If you have worked with children and are willing to help with this effort to increase participation by underserved audiences, contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com.

We will also be working with our contacts in the Apopka area to elicit greater community involvement. We are collaborating with Audubon Florida on a Bird Walk at the Orlando Wetlands for Latino Conservation Month and will be hosting a Bilingual Bird Walk at the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive aimed at the families of students in area schools. Our annual Buscando Pajaros trip at Orlando Wetlands will again be in March.

We are hoping to involve the community in the monthly surveys at the Apopka Birding Park, led by Alex DeBear. Participating in a survey will be great orientation prior to the CBC. And we hope to have programs and printed materials for the community. National Audubon will be awarding grants to help fund some of these projects, and we hope we can secure some funding to help with our goals.

OAS is stretching its wings to go beyond the status quo and is helping bring the love of birds and the environment to the community. If you wish to help with any aspect of this program, contact info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Susan Thome-Barrett



Zellwood Elementary Birding Club members learning to use spotting scope. Photo: Kathy Rigling

## Latino Conservation Week Paseo a Orlando Wetlands September 22, 2024

To celebrate Latino Conservation Week, which has been moved from July to September, due to heat in many areas of the country, Orange Audubon is joining with Audubon Florida on a walk at Orlando Wetlands.

This event will be Sunday, September 22 starting at 9 a.m. and ending around 11 a.m. We will meet in the parking lot and walk the boardwalk. The walk is free but please sign up on [our field trips link](#). If you have any questions, call (407) 637-2525.

## Bilingual Family Bird Walk Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive October 5, 2024

As part of Orange Audubon's participation in the IDEAL program (see article on left), we are offering a bilingual family walk on Saturday, October 5th. It is free and will be held on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. Loaner binoculars will be available. We hope to engage some new people in birding that might join us for bird surveys and the Christmas Bird Count.

Deborah Green, Kathy Rigling and Susan Thome-Barrett

## Thanks for Help Labeling

Orange Audubon's labeling party on August 29th went very well with 19 volunteers. Many hands made light work.



Thanks for your help to: Rick Baird, Peter and Bonnie Berry, Glenn Blaser, Claudia and Whitney Breese, Laurie Carlson, Mike Daley, Marian Lichtler, Norma Linden, Ann Mixson, Elizabeth Osborne, Brent Mobley, Kathy Rigling, Mary Van Egmond, Jeff and Katie Werrmann and Teresa Williams.

If you do not receive your brochure in the mail by about September 6th, email [membership@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:membership@orangeaudubonfl.org).

*Deborah Green*

## Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey September 8, 2024

Orange Audubon Society's bird surveys at Wekiwa Springs State Park help park biologists by documenting the healthy populations of fire-dependant bird species, like Bachman's Sparrows, Brown-headed Nuthatches and Red-headed Woodpeckers.



Bachman's Sparrow. Photo: Joseph Mileyka

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 me at (407) 488-9559 or [riglingkathy@gmail.com](mailto:riglingkathy@gmail.com).

*Kathy Rigling*

## Carolina Chickadee: A Curious Acrobat

Common year-round in U.S. woodlands, swamps, and parks, the tiny Carolina Chickadee has a black cap and throat, stark white cheeks, gray wings and back, white belly and beige undersides. Almost identical to the Black-capped Chickadee, the two are separate species and can often only be identified by their regional locations. The Carolina species, named by John James Audubon when visiting South Carolina, is found primarily in the Southeastern quadrant of the U.S. The Black-capped species is found across the Northern U.S., Canada and Alaska. The two species interbreed and hybridize in places where they overlap and imitate each other's songs. The hybrids can sing the songs of either species and create new variations. How remarkable is that?

Carolina Chickadees forage by gleaning insects and spiders from foliage and tree bark, often hanging upside to snatch prey. They also come to bird feeders for sunflower seeds, peanut chips and suet. The visitors to my yard do not seem picky about what I offer, whether a sunflower-seed mix or suet. (Rumor is they prefer black oil and black-striped sunflower seeds, shelled peanuts and other protein-rich nuggets.)

They often take turns at the feeder, and ...after grabbing a single seed or nut fly to a nearby tree where they hold the seed down with one foot and hammer an opening in the shell. You can explore their food preferences by visiting the Project Feeder Watch at [FeederWatch.org](http://FeederWatch.org) and check out their Common Feeder Birds bird list. To attract a breeding pair of Carolina Chickadees, install nest tubes or nest boxes in your yard. Be sure to attach a guard to keep predators from raiding eggs and young.

Although this species is common throughout the U.S., their populations declined by 16 percent between 1966 and 2019. The oldest known Carolina Chickadee was almost 11 years old when it was recaptured and rereleased during banding in West Virginia in 1974. Check out these adorable inquisitive birds. You will fall in love as I have with this petite acrobat!

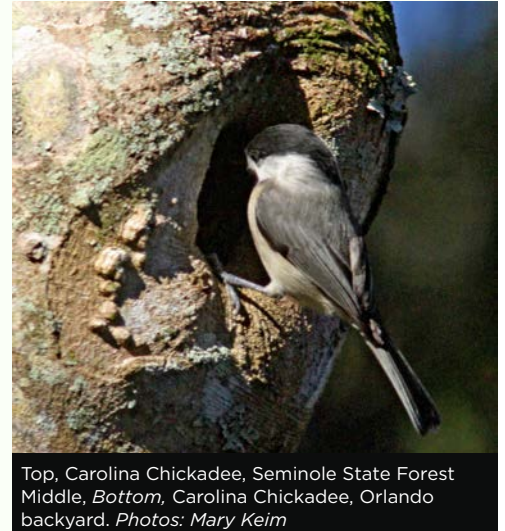
*Linda Carpenter*

## Plants For Birds: The Caterpillar Connection

As followers of the work of the entomologist and author Doug Tallamy, Orange Audubon has been promoting the importance of our native trees and shrubs to birds through their role as host plants to small caterpillars. Caterpillars are critical to the survival of songbirds, particularly to feed their young. One of Tallamy's graduate students demonstrated this, monitoring reproduction and survival of Carolina Chickadees within residential yards. Desiree Narango of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute found that chickadee populations could only be sustained in yards where native plants make up more than 70 percent of plant biomass.

"By using native plants, we can provide food for not only our common North American species, but we're also providing vital stopover habitat and resources for migratory birds during their perilous journeys," she stated.

For best plants for birds for our area, see Orange Audubon's [Bird- and Butterfly-Friendly Plants for Central Florida link](#).



Top, Carolina Chickadee, Seminole State Forest  
Middle, Bottom, Carolina Chickadee, Orlando backyard. Photos: Mary Keim





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

## Limited Edition Field Trip: Joe Overstreet Road and Landing, Osceola County September 14, 2024

Limited Edition Field Trips will be kicking off Saturday, September 14th 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, 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

## Merritt Island Birding Hotspots Trip

September 21, 2024

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge is consistently rated as one of the top birding destinations in the United States with 357 species recorded.

On September 21st, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) plans a trip, timed to allow us to find migrant songbirds, shorebirds and the first of the overwintering waterfowl, as well as resident birds like Roseate Spoonbills and Reddish Egrets.



Roseate Spoonbills and Egrets at Black Point Wildlife Drive. Photo: Mary Keim

As for all our trips, you will sign up on our website at [this link](#). This is OAS' regular monthly field trip and is free. Contact me if any questions at [riglingkathy@gmail.com](mailto:riglingkathy@gmail.com).

*Kathy Rigling*

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.

Meeting place will be provided after registration. 7:30 AM. Bring drinks, snacks, lunch and sunscreen. Limited Edition field trips are limited to 12 participants. The cost is \$15 for OAS members and \$20 for nonmembers.

To register, [follow this link](#). If you have any questions, email me at [riglingkathy@gmail.com](mailto:riglingkathy@gmail.com).

*Kathy Rigling*

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life last.

*Rachel Carson.*

## Oakland Nature Fest September 21, 2024

The third annual Oakland Nature Fest is being held Saturday, September 21st, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., 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](mailto:volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org).

## Dragonfly Identification Field Trip September 28, 2024

Two of Orange Audubon's most gifted naturalists, Mary Keim and Randy Snyder, will again share their knowledge of dragonfly identification at Orlando Wetlands on Saturday, September 28th, 9 a.m. to noon. You will learn to identify dragonflies by their habitats, habits and flight patterns. Participants should bring binoculars, plenty to drink and lunch. Prepare for the field with sun protection, insect protection and close-toed shoes that can get wet. This trip is limited to 15 people and costs \$15 per person for Audubon members and \$20 per person for non-members. Reserve your spot through [this link](#). For trip questions, contact Randy and Mary at [rsmmhk@gmail.com](mailto:rsmmhk@gmail.com).



Roseate Skimmer. Photo: Mary Keim

## Donor Thank You

Since Orange Audubon Society (OAS) announced the long-term lease from the City of Apopka for the Apopka Birding Park this April (p.1), two large donors have stepped up.

OAS would like to recognize our first donor specifically for this cause, the W.T. Bland Charitable Trust of Mount Dora. Thanks in particular to OAS member Clare (Chip) Garner for bringing our project to the attention of this generous Trust.

In August, after our presentation about the Apopka Birding Park, the Winter Garden 100, a non-profit that also funds other non-profits through the donations of its members, made a significant donation toward OAS' nature center. Thank you so much WG100!

Orange Audubon's 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. Creating the Apopka Birding Park furthers this mission. OAS has been fund-raising toward a nature center of its own since the early days of its 57-year history, and we now step up our efforts.

Donations will be used toward restoration of the Apopka Birding Park property, towards construction of our energy-efficient solar-powered renovated building and toward a sustainable endowment for operations.

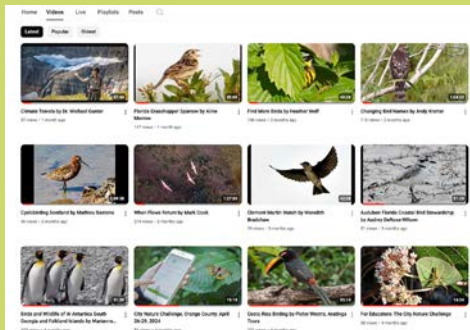
Donations to OAS are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. For some of our members with IRAs, making qualified charitable distributions (QCD) directly to non-profits may count towards the required minimum distribution, thereby providing a significant tax benefit to you. Please consult your personal tax advisor and IRA custodian to see if making a QCD will benefit you, and consider donating to Orange Audubon Society, Inc., a 501(c)(3), an eligible nonprofit. We would be deeply grateful to receive your donation to further OAS' tax-exempt mission. Thank you!



Golden Arch—Reddish Egret. 2024 Chertok Photo Contest Honorable Mention Winner, Advanced Category. Photo: Tim Barker

## Bird Chats with OAS

Bird Chats are Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) weekly Zoom programs that include identification of mystery birds, discussion of new arrivals, and a topic of the week—generally a guest presentation. Past Bird Chats are archived on [OAS' YouTube channel](#). We started these online offerings during the pandemic and seem to have found a niche, intermediate-level birders who love natural history.



Our programs receive hundreds and in some cases thousands of views, and we now have over a thousand Subscribers to our YouTube channel (it is free to subscribe and just is a way to show your appreciation for the channel).

Bird Chats are normally held the each Thursday at 7 p.m., except the 3rd Thursday which is OAS' in-person program. Kathy, Susan and I run the Bird Chats, and since we are also participating in the IDEAL program and planning the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL, the start of our Bird Chat season is a little delayed. Register at [this link](#) to watch and participate live and to be notified about upcoming programs. Please send suggestions for speakers and topics to [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org).

Meanwhile, there are many past programs archived on OAS' [YouTube channel](#) that you may not have seen or that you may want to see again.

As just a sample, Kathy recommends [Shorebird Migration by Chris Newton](#); [Our Florida Big Year by Natasza Fontaine and Robert Gundy](#) and [Sparrows by Adam Kent](#). Susan recommends [Shorebirds of Florida by Michael Brothers](#); [Birding Ecuador by Tammy Martin](#) and [Burrowing Owls by Brittany Piersma](#). I recommend [Life History of the Florida Sandhill Crane by Steve Nesbitt](#), [Wildlife of the Kissimmee Valley by Paul Eisenbrown](#) and [How the Migratory Bird Treaty Was Passed by Will McLean Greeley](#). We have been honored to have many great speakers.

Deborah Green

## Disappearing Island Boat Trip, New Smyrna Beach September 29, 2024

Disappearing Island is a sandbar island at the mouth of Ponce Inlet, inbetween the towns of New Smyrna Beach and Ponce Inlet. The tidal flat becomes dry at low tide and provides a relatively safe place for birds to rest between foraging. Its rich bird life was discovered by gull expert Michael Brothers when he was Executive Director of the Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet. Orange Audubon is very lucky that Michael enjoys showing off this area and how to identify the gulls, terns and shorebirds. He will lead this trip along with David Hartgrove of Halifax Audubon.

We will travel to Disappearing Island in the Marine Discovery Center's pontoon boat and along the way learn about the Mosquito Lagoon. This 3-hour cruise (including getting out and scoping birds) will be 11:00 a.m. - 2 p.m. Maximum participants: 25. Register on the website [at this link](#), and if any questions, contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525



Disappearing Island with gulls and terns. Photo: Deborah Green. Past Orange Audubon trip. Photo: Glenn Blaser. Icelandic Gull on March 2024 Disappearing Island Trip: Photo Kathy Rigling



## Education Coordinator Update

Orange Audubon Society's Education Coordinator Kathy Rigling is available to visit local schools. As a retired middle school science teacher, Kathy has 35 years of classroom experience in the Orange County Public Schools as well as 9 years as the nature coordinator at the Wekiva Youth Camp.

Her visits provide standards-based science lessons, community science field experiences and guidance for planning and implementing native plant gardens—all free of charge. Programs are grade level appropriate.

This year we are offering a limited number of monthly before or after school STEAM birding clubs. Our education coordinator will visit your extracurricular club providing an engaging bird-related curriculum, loaner binoculars and other related resources. These have been successfully piloted at Zellwood Elementary, Eccleston Elementary, Rock Springs Elementary and Eustis Elementary.



Above, Zellwood Elementary Birding Club, August 2024. Photo: Kathy Rigling

Orange Audubon is also offering a limited number of free class subscriptions of the engaging *Audubon Adventures*, a high interest magazine that not only supports standards-correlated science content but also aids literacy education with both print and digital resources.

Our monthly free educational webinars will resume on September 18th from 7:00-7:30 pm with a program about using the Feathered Friends curriculum from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's K-12 educational programs. The link to sign up: <http://eepurl.com/imGskM>

Please email [education@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:education@orangeaudubonfl.org) to sign up for classroom or after school visits, or to request a class subscription to *Audubon Adventures* magazine.

OAS Education Committee

## Young Birders Club Trip October 5, 2024

Orange Audubon Society's Young Birders Club will be going on a field trip on October 5th to Brownie Wise Park in Kissimmee. We will look for migrants at this migratory bird hotspot. 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](mailto:riglingkathy@gmail.com) to reserve a spot for you and your Young Birder or **use the link**. Loaner binoculars will be available upon request.

Kathy Rigling

## Fall Bird Walks at Mead Botanical Garden October 5, 12, 19, & 26, 2024

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

Each walk will be led by a skilled 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, 1300 S. Denning Drive, Winter Park. We will meet in the parking lot. Here is the [registration link](#). If you have any questions, contact me at (941) 704-1189.

Linda Gaunt

## Backyard Biodiversity Day October 19, 2024

The Florida Native Plant Society, Tarflower Chapter, again hosts Backyard Biodiversity Day to benefit habitat restoration projects at Mead Botanical Garden. It will be on Saturday, October 19, 2024 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Mead Botanical Garden. [Link](#).

## Green PLACE Nature & Photography Hike October 13, 2024

Orange Audubon is offering a FREE guided Nature & Photography Hike on Sunday, October 13, 2024 at Crosby Island Marsh Preserve, east Orlando in east Orange County. This walk is ideal for youth and families. OAS appreciates the Orange County conservation lands protected under the Green PLACE program and collaborates in promotion of these important preserves.

Alicia Baxter, Orange County Green PLACE manager and naturalist, along with Lee Ann Posavad and Alexander DeBear, wildlife photographers, will lead this hike. Learn about the easy-to-photograph nature of this 272-acre Orange County Green PLACE property. Time and date: October 13, 2024 from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. The address is 13601 Moss Park Rd, Orlando, FL 32832. The trip is free but limited in number of participants. To reserve your spot, call Alicia Baxter at (407) 407-836-1456 or email [GreenPLACE@ocfl.net](mailto:GreenPLACE@ocfl.net).

## Beginners' Bird Watching Class

**Oct 19, 27 and Nov 2, 2024**

Would you like to improve your bird identification skills? Take Orange Audubon's Beginners' Birdwatching Class starting October 19, 2024 and continuing October 27 and November 2, 2024.

If you have to miss one of the three Saturday mornings, you can make it up in the winter series (Jan 5, 11 and 23, 2025). 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 19th at Orlando Wetlands Park. On October 27th and November 2nd 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: \$60 members; \$75 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](mailto:mwilliams@cfl.rr.com). For questions about the class, contact me at [riglingkathy@gmail.com](mailto:riglingkathy@gmail.com) or (407) 488-9559.

Kathy Rigling



Jumping for Joy—Sandhill Crane Colts. 2024 Chertok Photo Contest. Second Place, Novice Category. Photo: Cairtrine Hellenga

## 2024 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest Results

Winners of Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) 2024 (36th Annual) Kit and Sidney Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest were announced on June 20th at Harry P. Leu Gardens. A recording of the awards program is posted on [OAS' YouTube channel](#).

The contest theme was Florida Native Nature, with three competition categories—YOUTH, NOVICE and ADVANCED AMATEUR/PROFESSIONAL. Winners' names and image titles, by category, are listed below. Images with an asterisk (\*) are featured on OAS' 2024-2025 Annual Brochure.

### YOUTH CATEGORY

#### 1st PLACE

**Lauren Chin**, Windermere  
*Gift-wrapped Tricolored Heron*

#### 2nd PLACE

**Matthew Chin**, Windermere  
*Full Spread—Belted Kingfisher*

#### 3rd PLACE

**Lauren Chin**, Windermere  
*Delicious Dragonfly Snack—Great Egret with Halloween Pennant*

#### 4th PLACE

**Lauren Chin**, Windermere  
*Roseate Nesting Décor—Roseate Spoonbill*

#### 5th PLACE

**Ethan Landreville**, Melbourne  
*Familiar Pileated Woodpecker*

### HONORABLE MENTIONS

**Ethan Landreville**, Melbourne (3)  
*Brilliant Migrant—Common Yellowthroats*  
*Nondescript Rarity—Ash-throated Flycatcher*  
*Hunter Clad in Slate—Snail Kite*

**Matthew Chin**, Windermere  
*\*Egret on Final Approach—Snowy Egret*

**Lauren Chin**, Windermere  
*Osprey with a Fresh Catch*

### NOVICE CATEGORY

#### 1st PLACE

**Tracy Dreyfus**, Ocklawaha  
*\*Pest Control—Ruby-throated Hummingbird*

#### 2nd PLACE

**Caitrine Hellenga**, Orlando  
*Jumping for Joy—Sandhill Crane Colts*



*Roseate Nesting Décor—Roseate Spoonbill*. 2024 Chertok Photo Contest. Fourth Place, Youth Category. Photo: Lauren Chin

#### 3rd PLACE

**Tracy Dreyfus**, Ocklawaha  
*Third Place: Rising Up—Great Egret*

### HONORABLE MENTIONS

**Tracy Dreyfus**, Ocklawaha (2)  
*Takeoff—Red-shouldered Hawk*  
*On the Lookout—Vermillion Flycatcher*

**Janine Reed**, Winter Garden (2)  
*Redhead Drake Reflection*  
*Singing His Heart Out—Prairie Warbler*

**Jack Berkstresser**, Winter Garden  
*Gulf Fritillary*

**Scott Ball**, Winter Garden  
*Pretty in Yellow—Prothonotary Warbler*

**Jeanne Polarolo**, Windermere  
*Just a Little Snack—Yellow-crowned Night-Heron*

**Roger Simmons**, Orlando  
*\*Backlit Indigo Bunting*

**Jeanne Polarolo**, Sarasota  
*Hail, Hail, the Gangs All Here—Ring-billed Gulls*

### ADVANCED AMATEUR/PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY

#### 1st PLACE

**Allison Richards**, Ottawa, Canada  
*Spring Cleaning—Burrowing Owl*

#### 2nd PLACE

**Bobby Van Mierop**, Palm Coast  
*Parent and Child—American Oystercatchers*

#### 3rd PLACE

**Robert Gloeckner**, Dunedin  
*All Tucked In—Sandhill Cranes*

### HONORABLE MENTIONS

**David Rose**, Cocoa Beach  
*Sally Lightfoot Crab with Sea Lettuce*

**Daryl Roston**, DeLand  
*Early Morning American Flamingo*

**Amber Favorite**, Winter Garden  
*Romance Rendezvous—Barred Owls*

**John Ruggeri**, Howey  
*In Your Face—Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake*

**Daryl Roston**, DeLand  
*Black-necked Stilt Rousts a Minnow*

**Susan Kirby**, Orlando  
*\*Portrait of an Anhinga*

**Tim Barker**, Orlando  
*Golden Arch—Reddish Egret*

**Carol Darling**, Cocoa Beach (2)  
*Glamour Drake—Wood Duck*

*Little Stick—Prothonotary Warbler*

**Bobby Van Mierop**, Palm Coast  
*Hi, Neighbor—American Flamingo and Roseate Spoonbill*

**Ruth Pannunzio**, West Palm Beach  
*Pied-billed Grebes*

Thank you to all the photographers who entered. We look forward to your participation in 2025 for OAS' 37th Annual Kit and Sidney Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest, entry deadline: April 30, 2025.

The 2025 awards program will be June 19th, 7:00 p.m., at Harry P. Leu Gardens in Orlando, Florida. See you there!

*Teresa Williams, Chertok Photography Contest Chair*



## Thanks to the Chertok Photo Contest Judges

Winners of Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) Kit and Sidney Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest were selected by a panel of three independent judges, Susan (Sue) Kiss, Mark Sees and Reinhard Geisler, professionals in the fields of art, nature and photography, respectively, whose backgrounds are shared in this article.

Artist Sue Kiss considers herself self-taught, although she has studied with other artists and with master pastelists. In her current focus areas, she uses oil and pastel mediums. Sue has exhibited her art in Florida and in juried national exhibitions. She has won numerous awards, including the distinction of a finalist in the Artist Magazine Annual Art Competition. A member of the Pastel Society of America and Pastel Society of Central Florida, Sue has participated in plein air events in Florida and was recently juried into annual exhibitions of the Pastel Society of America and the International Association of Pastel Societies.

Naturalist Mark Sees' name is synonymous with Orlando Wetlands. When serving as vice president on OAS' board of directors (circa 1990s), Mark was a wetlands analyst for what was then called Orlando Wetlands Park. He is now wetlands manager there. In addition to having extensive land management credentials and having written on related subjects, Mark has participated in numerous wildlife surveys and volunteered in local schools to provide educational and instructional programs on environmental topics. In a 2018 ceremony in Washington DC, Mark received the National Wetlands Award and Congressional Service Award for his wetlands work. More recently, Mark received the McNamara Employee of the Year award in recognition of his extraordinary commitment and service to the City of Orlando.

Photographer Reinhard Geisler is a manager in a large corporation. He started photography over 40 years ago mainly using a Canon single-lens reflex film camera. After moving to digitalization and focusing on bird photography, he switched to Nikon and continues to use Nikon equipment,

## NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL December 5-9, 2024



The NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL on Lake Apopka highlights the St. Johns River Water Management District's 20,000-acre Lake Apopka North Shore and other Central Florida birding hotspots. For Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) ninth annual festival, over 60 field trips extend over 5 days, Thursday through Monday, December 5 through December 9, 2024. We suggest you visit the festival website at <https://northshorebirdingfestival.com/> and sign up for the mailing list to be notified of the start of registration, since many trips will fill quickly.

Our great birding locations and our incredible trip leaders are what makes this festival grow and participants return year after year. Although we do not have an exhibit hall for vendors, the festival does bring together a critical mass of leaders and participants to catch up on their common interest—birding.

Out-of-town participants contribute to the local economy and may visit again after the festival. The 2023 festival had participants from 18 states and Canada, plus over 60 Florida cities.

The start location for most field trips is the McDonald Canal Pavilion, 24600 CR 448A, Mount Dora, FL 32757. Proceeds of the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL support OAS' nature center fund and related educational programs. If you have any questions, email [festival@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:festival@orangeaudubonfl.org) or call (407) 637-2525.



*Early Morning American Flamingo. 2024 Chertok Photo Contest. Honorable Mention, Advanced Category. Photo: Daryl Roston*

currently a mirrorless camera. He is a volunteer for the City of Orlando at its Orlando Wetlands. He is also a Florida Master Naturalist who, with his wife Jutta, created the book *Birds of Orlando Wetlands*, and has taught bird photography workshops. To benefit OAS, Reinhard leads field trips for the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL. His images have been featured in *American Birding Association* publications and in various other publications here and in

## What's New This Year

The Saturday Dinner Keynote is by flamingo expert Steven Whitfield from New Orleans. Whitfield tells what he learned about flamingos being native to Florida and about Conchy, a flamingo from the Key West Naval Station that had to be rehabilitated and released.

If the flamingos flung by Hurricane Idalia are still at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, we will host kayak trips to see them.

An additional new trip is to Blue Springs State Park to see Florida Scrub-Jays and manatees. We have a half dozen excellent new trip leaders.

[Check it out](#) and sign up! Being on the [mailing list](#) is the best way to receive notification of the opening of registration.

*Deborah Green*

Europe. Enjoy highlights of Reinhard's work here: [birdnut.net/gallery.php?&gal=highlights](http://birdnut.net/gallery.php?&gal=highlights).

OAS is sincerely grateful to Sue, Mark and Reinhard for contributing valuable time and talent to benefit its much-loved Chertok nature photography contest!

*Teresa Williams, Chertok Photography Contest Chair*

## SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka**

September 8, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

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

September 14, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

### **September Program: Orange Audubon Nature Center at the Apopka Birding Park by OAS and Little Diversified Architectural Consulting**

September 19, 2024

Contact Alan at [alanguardiflora@gmail.com](mailto:alanguardiflora@gmail.com)

### **September Field Trip, Merritt Island Hotspots**

September 21, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

### **Nature Fest at Oakland Nature Preserve**

September 21, 2024

Contact Alan at [alanguardiflora@gmail.com](mailto:alanguardiflora@gmail.com)

### **Latino Conservation Week Paseo at Orlando Wetlands**

September 22, 2024

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

### **Dragonfly Identification, Orlando Wetlands**

September 28, 2024

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

### **Disappearing Island Boat Trip**

September 29, 2024

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

### **Young Birders Field Trip, Brownie Wise Park**

October 5, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

### **Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walk, Winter Park**

October 5, 2024

Contact Linda at (941) 704-1189

### **Bilingual Walk at the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive**

October 5, 2024

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

### **Oakland Nature Preserve Quarterly Survey**

October 6, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

### **Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walk, Winter Park**

October 12, 2024

Contact Linda at (941) 704-1189

### **Limited Edition Field Trip: Ferndale/Green Mountain**

October 13, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

### **Green PLACE Nature & Photography Hike**

October 13, 2024

Contact Alicia at (407) 836-1481

### **October Program: Bats, Myth and Reality by Shari Blissett Clark**

October 17, 2024

Contact Alan at [alanguardiflora@gmail.com](mailto:alanguardiflora@gmail.com)

### **Backyard Biodiversity Day, Mead Botanical Garden, Winter Park**

October 19, 2024

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

### **Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walk, Winter Park**

October 19, 2024

Contact Linda at (941) 704-1189

### **Beginners Birdwatching Class**

### **Orlando Wetlands Park, Mead and Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive**

October 19, 22 and November 2, 2024

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

### **Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka**

October 20, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

### **Rock Springs Reserve Survey Quarterly Survey**

October 23, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

### **Apopka Birding Park Bird Survey**

October 26, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

### **Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walk, Winter Park**

October 26, 2024

Contact Linda at (941) 704-1189

### **NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL, Lake Apopka**

Dec 5- 9, 2024

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525



Did you receive Orange Audubon's mailing with the beautiful new brochure? It should arrive in your mailbox after Labor Day. If not, check on your membership by emailing [membership@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:membership@orangeaudubonfl.org).