



### This Month's Program: February 20, 2020

## Scrub-Jays — Increasing Populations through Translocation by Lauren Deaner



Florida Scrub-Jay. Photo: Susan Kirby

The Florida Scrub-Jay is the only avian species entirely restricted to Florida.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed the Florida Scrub-Jay as threatened under the Endangered Species Act on June 3, 1987.

Population modeling by researchers indicates a *high probability of these jays going extinct* due to habitat fragmentation and degradation.

Scrub-jays live in families ranging from a single-mated pair to extended families of eight adults and one to four juveniles. Fledgling scrub-jays stay with the breeding pair in their natal territory as "helpers," forming a closely-knit, cooperative family group. These jays disperse only short distances.

Lauren Deaner is a young biologist with a vast knowledge of Florida ecosystems and specialized experience in endangered and threatened species recovery, avian studies, and avian translocation.

Lauren has conducted annual scrub-jay territory surveys for 40 family groups, located nests and monitored productivity. Having a USFWS banding permit, she has banded nestlings and adults and collected blood samples, analyzed data and prepared annual reports on translocation research. The reports include data on jays that remained on the recipient site or adjacent public lands for a year after release, on jays that attempted to breed, and on jays that actively defended a territory as a helper of a breeding group.

Translocation to suitable recipient sites appears on the surface to be a sound strategy to save the Florida Scrub-Jay. Is it actually?

Join Lauren Deaner on February 20th at 7:00 p.m to find out. Orange Audubon Society invites you to another great program. See location below.

*Rick Baird, Programs Chair*

## Birds of Prey Identification Class Lake Apopka February 2, 2020

Orange Audubon Society will hold its final Birds of Prey Identification Class of the season on Sunday, February 2, 2020 on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. The class will be from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Suggested donation is \$5 (Audubon members) or \$10 (nonmembers).

Bob Sanders for many years has taught raptor identification. Before moving to Central Florida, he was co-founder of the Chimney Rock Hawk Watch in Martinsville, New Jersey. No early registration is required. Bob can be reached at (407) 459-5617. See you out there!



Merlin. Photo: Lynn Marie Folts

## Wekiwa Bird Survey February 8, 2020

Orange Audubon Society's Wekiwa Springs State Park bird surveys introduce many people to citizen science in a beautiful state park. You do not have to be an expert birder to join, but willingness to walk in sandy and possibly wet areas is required. To join contact Kathy at [riglingk@aol.com](mailto:riglingk@aol.com) or (407) 488-9559.

## February Monthly Field Trip, February 15, 2020

For our monthly field trip, join one of the many guided trips at the Orlando Wetlands Festival (p.4).

*Larry Martin, Field Trips Chair*

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

Programs are the 3rd Thursday of each month (September–June) and all but January and June start at 7:00 p.m. in the Camellia Room at

### Harry P. Leu Gardens

1920 North Forest Ave., Orlando, FL 32803

For map and directions, visit:

[www.leugardens.org/plan/directions/](http://www.leugardens.org/plan/directions/)





## Climate Action

On October 10, 2019 National Audubon Society

(NAS) released [Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink](#), an in-depth report shedding light on how 389 out of 604 North American bird species are being adversely affected by climate change.



## Save Globally Important Arctic Habitat

NAS opposes increasing oil and gas development in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A) on Alaska's North Slope. NPR-A contains world-class wilderness areas and wildlife habitat, including the globally-significant Teshekpuk Lake wetlands complex, one of the premiere habitats in the entire Arctic. The coastline north of the lake provides denning habitat for polar bears and a haven for molting geese. More than half a million shorebirds nest around Teshekpuk Lake. Just south of the lake loons and ducks find optimal breeding conditions. The Teshekpuk Caribou Herd gives birth to calves, forages, and winters in habitat around the lake. This extraordinary place merits stronger, not weaker, protections.

In the southwestern corner of the NPR-A, cliffs along the Colville River provide important nesting habitat for several species of raptors, including Rough-legged Hawks, Arctic Peregrine Falcons, Golden Eagles, and Gyrfalcons. In an otherwise flat tundra landscape, the relatively tall cliffs provide both safety and better hunting vantage points for these predators.

The oil industry is already undertaking a program of exploration and development in nearby areas at an accelerated rate. Rapid climate

change in the Arctic means that oil and gas development *should be curtailed, not expanded*, in the NPR-A. Maintaining the decades-long protections to the Teshekpuk Lake wetlands and the recognition of the Colville River Special Area demonstrates a core principle of responsible Arctic management for this and future administrations. [Please use Audubon's link to comment to the Bureau of Land Management.](#)

## Lake County Sand Mining

A request by Mexican giant CEMEX to expand its mining operations in the Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern needs to be opposed. The association representing the mines wants Lake County commissioners to drop the open space requirements established in 1974 for the Green Swamp. Please read [Lauren Ritchie's column](#) and consider contacting the [Lake County Commissioners](#).

## Let's Reduce Our Waste

The amount of plastic waste in the landfill is shocking. I had made many landfill visits with my students in the 1990s when I taught environmental science, and the amount of plastic I saw on my recent gull trip (p.6) was many-fold more. Every time a bottle bill (where people return bottles for a deposit) is suggested it is shot down by Florida grocery chains. The same goes for bans on plastic bags. At the landfill, a worker daily pulls out plastic waste with a pole to unclog critical drain pipes. Surely local governments can see the economics of limiting plastic waste? And surely they have more clout than the local grocery chains?

OAS was contacted by a long-time member asking if we could make our North Shore Birding Festival keynotes into zero waste events by partnering with O-Town Compost. This new company provides you with a 5-gallon bucket, compostable liner, and air-tight lid and you fill the bucket with your unwanted food scraps and leftovers.

On pickup day O-Town collects your filled bucket and leaves a clean one and every six months you receive 15 pounds of finished compost, a/k/a O-Town Black Gold. What a great idea if you cannot do your own composting. [See link.](#)  
*Deborah Green*



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](mailto:newsletter@orangeaudubonfl.org).

For other membership information, contact: Mike Daley  
[miked129e@gmail.com](mailto:miked129e@gmail.com)  
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## Declines in Backyard Birds Linked to Use of Nonnative Plants

Most insects that feed on plants can eat only specific native plants. So, the presence of native plants in the landscape is essential *for birds that eat these insects*.

Especially during the breeding season, insect- and even seed- and nectar-eating birds depend on caterpillars, which are high-calorie and high-protein, to feed their young. Our current dominance of nonnative plants in landscapes can limit this food availability.

A study by the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the University of Delaware, funded by the National Science Foundation, is the first to directly link the decline of a common bird species to reduced insect prey from the use of nonnative plants in landscaping.

The study showed that the Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*) raises fewer or no young in landscapes dominated by nonnative plants. Chickadee populations can only be sustained if native plants make up more than 70 percent of plant biomass.



Carolina Chickadee. Photo: Mary Keim

The study's lead author Desiree Narango from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute explained "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." For more details, see [this link](#) and [this link](#). Mary Keim, OAS member and native plant gardener

## Actions to Help Birds

Bird populations are plummeting. Loss of habitat is the primary cause. Three activities to help are:

One: Remove your lawn and replace with Florida plants that occur naturally in your area. *Don't have a lawn?*, see *Two and Three*.

Two: Reduce, preferably eliminate, your consumption of meat. Much less land

## The Beautiful Red-shouldered Hawk

No binoculars, nevertheless I saw a large Red-shouldered Hawk not far off on the green feasting on prey in Phelps Park. I could identify its barred tail, pale orange breast, and checkered wings. It raised its tail, pooped, took another bite, then flew to an enormous pine tree, a favorite perch.

I often see these hawks, at times in pairs, in this city park, only a stone's throw away, oblivious to me, perched on a basketball hoop or massive pine or oak tree. They may nest here because I often hear them calling to each other and see them circling above. Red-shouldered Hawks return to the same nesting area year-after-year. If you learn their distinctive high-pitched cry (keeyur), you can easily find them.

A common forest raptor, these birds also inhabit suburban areas where houses are mixed into woodlands, areas like Winter Park where ample mature trees have survived. They can be found throughout the Southeast U.S. and beyond all year long. Red-shouldered Hawks eat small mammals, lizards, snakes, amphibians, and birds, hunting from perches below the forest canopy or at the edge of a pond. They sit quietly until sighting their prey, then descend swiftly to snatch a small mammal, toad, snake or crayfish.

Medium size, about 17 inches long with a 40-inch wingspan, these birds exhibit beautiful markings depending on maturity, sex, and subspecies. The adult has a finely barred reddish breast fading into a pale orange abdomen, an owl-like facial disc, distinctive white upper tail coverts, white rump, strongly banded tail, and black-and-white checkered wings. A gorgeous raptor with character galore!

Although I have observed this bird for decades, I had not, until recently,

is required to produce a meatless meal than a meal with meat. The Amazon forests are being burned to create pastures for cattle.

Three: Join the local [Florida Native Plant Society](#) and help promote the use of plants that occur naturally in your area. The birds will thank you. Will you help?

*Richard Poole, Past OAS President*

seen the red "shoulder" markings. As a result I assumed the bird was misnamed, or that ornithologists were referring to its reddish-orange upper chest and throat. How delightful to finally observe the beautiful "red shoulders" of this species!



Red-shouldered Hawk. Photo: Mary Keim

Fortunately Red-shouldered Hawks can live long lives—as long as their wooded habitat survives. The oldest one known was a female at least 25 years old when she was recaptured and re-released during a banding operation in California in 2000. Red-shouldered Hawk populations increased throughout most of their range between 1966 and 2015. Partners in Flight estimates a global breeding population of 1.1 million with 97 percent spending some part of the year in the U.S.

You may have seen one in your neighborhood; you surely have heard one; but you probably haven't fully appreciated the many marvelous qualities of the Red-shouldered Hawk. Check out this captivating raptor!

*Linda Carpenter*



**Orlando Wetlands Festival  
February 15, 2020**

The Orlando Wetlands Festival February 15, 2020, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., hosts guided hikes for birders, photographers, and plant aficionados. There will also be bus tours, presentations, games, live animals, exhibits, vendors, and native plant give-aways (while supplies last).

Since 2001, the Orlando Wetlands Festival has promoted community awareness of the Orlando Wetlands Park (OWP) and water and ecological resources. Volunteers from Orange Audubon Society (OAS), Florida Native Plant Society and OWP lead bird and plant walks and bus tours.

Parking, vendors and exhibits are at nearby Fort Christmas Historical Park, and buses transport participants to the OWP. Bring the whole family for a day of outdoor fun and learning! There are activities for kids, including animal stage presentations, plus live music, prize drawings and a silent auction. OAS, a festival sponsor, will be selling its nature merchandise and, if we have enough volunteers, offering a kids' art activity. If you can help, contact Teresa at (407) 644-0796 or mwilliams@cfl.rr.com. Thanks!

**Limited Edition Field Trip to Lake Harney Wilderness Area, Geneva, February 12, 2020**

The Lake Harney Wilderness Area is an approximately 300-acre Seminole County property located along the St. Johns River at the northwest shore of Lake Harney. It contains Native American shell middens, oak hammocks and mixed hardwood swamps. This site also contains extensive floodplain marshes along Lake Harney that provide a natural filter that improves water quality in the lake as well as provides feeding grounds for wading birds. White Pelicans, Bald Eagles, Limpkins, shorebirds, Bonaparte's Gulls, Black Skimmers, and various songbirds may be seen there.

This trip is limited to 15 people and has a cost of \$10 per person per trip for members and \$15 per person for non-members. Reservations are required and will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis the week prior to the trip. For trip questions or reservations, call Bob Sanders at (407) 459-5617.

**Sunrise Photo Shoot  
Orlando Wetlands Park  
February 22, 2020**

Renowned professional photographer, author and instructor of nature photography Milton Heiberg will teach a sunrise photo workshop on Saturday, February 23rd from 6:00-10:00 a.m.. Participants will photograph the sunrise with water reflections at one of the most scenic locations in Central Florida—Orlando Wetlands Park. The park's many gray sun-bleached tree branches make interesting, photogenic perches for avian subjects.



Orlando Wetlands Park's distinctive flooded palms at sunrise. Photo: Milton Heiberg

The rest of the morning will be spent photographing flying and perching birds and other wildlife. Participants should have a working knowledge of digital SLR photography. Bring a tripod and a 300 mm or longer lens (tele-extendors help). Cost is \$60 (Audubon members); \$75 (non-members), and class is limited to 12 adult participants. To register contact me at (407) 644-0796 or mwilliams@cfl.rr.com.

*Teresa Williams*

**Orlando Wetlands Park  
— Full of Wildlife**

Orlando Wetlands Park's (OWP) primary purpose is to provide advanced treatment of reclaimed water before it is discharged into the St. Johns River. But, there is a lot more going on at this constructed wetland in Christmas, Florida than nutrient uptake. Approximately 44,000 people visit the park annually.

While visitors come for a variety of reasons, one of them is the 241 species of birds [reported on eBird](#).

A couple of birds that visitors ask about are Limpkin and Purple Gallinule. Rarely do visitors leave disappointed.

Visitors can walk or bike the 19 miles of berms seven days a week. In addition, on Fridays and Saturdays there are first come-first served tram tours from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. run by the volunteers.

Tours are free, but donations are accepted. See [this link](#) for more information

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) in the late 1990s "adopted" OWP and has since partnered with the park on environmental education efforts, including on the Orlando Wetlands Festival. The park has provided OAS with classroom space for classes and has allowed OAS to distribute its brochures at the park.

To preview the birds, butterflies, dragonflies, trees, and more, see the list of "Park Maps and Guides" at [this link](#). To learn more about volunteer opportunities at the park, see [this link](#).

*Mary Keim, OWP Volunteer*



Lake Harney Wilderness Area. Photo courtesy Seminole County





## Count Backyard Birds!

The next Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is February 14-17, 2020. The GBBC was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time. In 2019, GBBC participants turned in 210,388 checklists reporting 6,876 species of birds. This creates an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count (February 14-17), simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. First create [a free online account](#) to enter your checklists. If you already have an eBird (or another Cornell Lab project) account, use your normal login name and password. A slide show about how to participate can be accessed at [this link](#). Join the fun and contribute to this great citizen science project! You may find a new bird in your “backyard.”

*Mary Keim, OAS Member and GBBC Participant*

## Wind Beneath Our Wings, February 9, 2020

Join Audubon Florida for its annual [Wind Beneath Our Wings event](#), an evening of dinner, drinks, auction and special raptor meet-and-greets to benefit its Center for Birds of Prey, on Sunday, February 9, 2020, 4:30-7:30 p.m., at the Lake Maitland Civic Center, Maitland. Mac Stone, award-winning photographer will present. Contact Alison Neiscier at 305-371-6399 ext. 127 or [alison.neiscier@audubon.org](mailto:alison.neiscier@audubon.org).

## Oakland Nature Preserve



OAKLAND NATURE PRESERVE

In 1992 a group of concerned citizens organized to become the Friends of Lake Apopka (FOLA), with the initial purpose of halting the pollutant discharges into Lake Apopka. The founders of FOLA knew that development around the lake would increase as it was restored, so they searched for land along the shoreline that would provide a window to the restoration process and a place for the restoration to be interpreted for the public.

Purchasing and restoring the property was a bigger project than FOLA could manage, so it created a separate group to continue the project. Oakland Nature Preserve (ONP) was established in 1997 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation and began the daunting task of gathering the resources to complete the land acquisition. In 1999 with a grant from the Florida Communities Trust, using Preservation 2000 funds, contributions from the St. Johns River Water Management District and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and over one-half million dollars in donations, the purchase was completed.

The site had been used for citrus farming, and restoration to the original sandhill habitat is ongoing. Exotic species were removed (a continuous process) and native plants installed. Gopher tortoises were introduced and as the plant community improved, native bird and mammal species began to reappear.

The Preserve encompasses 128 acres — 48 acres of uplands and 80 acres of forested wetlands — and includes a boardwalk to Lake Apopka with a classroom-sized pavilion on the lakefront and a pavilion on the West Orange Trail. Interpretive signs help visitors identify plants.

In addition to providing a window to the ongoing restoration of Lake Apopka, ONP offers recreational and educational opportunities in a living classroom, perfect for learning about the ecology of Florida. To learn more, visit [the ONP website](#).

## Oakland Nature Preserve Bird Survey February 29, 2020

Save the date for a one-time bird survey at Oakland Nature Preserve, west of Winter Garden on February 29, 2020. If you wish to join us, contact Kathy at [riglingk@aol.com](mailto:riglingk@aol.com) or (407) 488-9559.

## Green PLACE Nature & Photography Hike February 29, 2020

Orange Audubon Society is offering a FREE guided Nature & Photography Hike on Saturday, February 29, 2020 from 9:00-11:30 a.m. at Savage Christmas Creek Preserve. Beth Jackson, Orange County naturalist, and Lee Ann Posavad, wildlife photographer, will co-lead this hike, ideal for youth and families. Learn about the easy-to-photograph plant and animal inhabitants of this 890-acre Orange County Green PLACE property, north of SR 50. Address is [11046 NW Christmas Rd., Christmas, FL 32709](#). Email [Beth.Jackson@ocfl.net](mailto:Beth.Jackson@ocfl.net) or call 407-836-1400 to register.

## Your Biggest Year Ever

Going to Orlando Wetlands Park with Gigi DelPizzo, Larry Martin and Lori Mathis on January 4th helped jump-start the 2020 bird lists for me and 36 other participants. Together we turned up 56 species and had a lot of fun. We watched a Peregrine Falcon hunt over the cypress dome, had a slow fly by of an American White Pelican and Roseate Spoonbill, got good looks at a small flock of Green-winged Teal and to top it off a white morph Short-Tailed Hawk flew over us as we were getting ready to leave. Thanks Gigi, Larry and Lori for your help with this fund-raiser. Hope everyone's 2020 list continues to grow.

*Kathy Rigling, Trip Organizer*



Your Biggest Year Ever field trip at Orlando Wetlands Park. Photo: Kathy Rigling

## Gulls, the Beach and Landfills

Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) North Shore Birding Festival (NSBF) had its annual Gull Trip to Daytona Beach shores led by Michael Brothers, along with Bruce Anderson, David Hartgrove and Greg Miller.

A few days later through the Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival, Kathy Rigling and I attended a Gulls Trip to the Brevard County Landfill, led by Alex Lamoreaux of Wildside Nature Tours, OAS' NSBF Friday keynote speaker and trip leader, along with Amar Ayyash, a Chicago math professor with a passion for gull identification.

Gulls are challenging to identify due to different plumages at different ages (called cycles). Our largest gulls, the Herring (HERG), Great Black-backed (GBBG) and Lesser Black-backed (LBBG), are particularly difficult. Only in their 4th year do they gain their full adult plumage, and the earlier stages are not always neatly demarcated.

The GBBG is considered native (Henry Stevenson and Bruce Anderson's *The Birdlife of Florida* says John James Audubon recorded it in Florida in the 1830s). In contrast, the LBBG was first recorded in North America in 1931 and in Florida in 1938. There were only a few Florida records until the 1970s when sightings began to increase. The LBBG breeds in Greenland and northern Europe.



Gulls at Daytona Beach Shores.  
Photo: Susan Kirby

### The Beach

Michael Brothers discovered and now regularly shares that at this time of year you can see 30,000 to 50,000 gulls at Daytona Beach Shores two hours before sunset—just before they settle for the night on the water offshore. Most common on the beach

are Laughing Gulls. He informed us that Laughing Gulls nest along the east coast in the St. Johns River marshes of Jacksonville and other areas north into Canada, and that Daytona Beach Shores hosts the largest winter concentration of this species anywhere.

The abundance of gulls of different species on the beach is aided by their feeding during the day at the Tomoka Regional Landfill in Daytona Beach. To see the gull fly-in while it is still winter, visit Frank Rendon Park, 2705 S. Atlantic Ave, Daytona Beach Shores between about 4:00 to 6 p.m.

Ring-billed Gulls, the next most common species at Daytona Beach Shores, are the noisiest at this time of year. This medium-sized gull's habit of hanging around fast-food restaurants has earned it the nicknames McGull, Dumpster Gull, and French-fry Gull.

A few large HERG, many in their brown first cycle stage, were scattered among the Laughing and Ring-billed gulls. In adult plumage, the HERG has a clean white head, yellow bill with a red spot, and pinkish legs. Winter adults have "dirty" heads.

Since many characters of Ring-bills and HERGs are similar (they are both gray-backed, white-headed and white-bellied), in the past I may have erroneously called a bigger Ring-billed a HERG. I learned from Bruce Anderson that Ring-billed Gull males can be much larger than females.

On the beach we saw a handful of GBBGs. Adults have black backs and pink legs. A few similarly-colored adult LBBGs were present, slightly smaller than HERGs and with yellow legs.

### The Landfill

The landfill with its constantly replenished food supply is one of the best places to observe and identify gulls. Bald Eagles, not above scavenging wherever possible, are also regulars at the landfill. Unfortunately, few landfills allow individual visitors, so it's worth taking a birding tour whenever available.

Over 90% of the gulls at the Brevard County Landfill are Laughing Gulls. While Amar and Alex were searching for rarities, they shared with us the biggest identification challenge:



Above: First cycle Lesser Black-backed Gull. Photo: Michael Brothers. Below; First cycle Herring Gull. Photo: Joyce Stefancic

Distinguishing first cycle GBBG, LBBG, and HERG, particularly the latter two, since they are similarly-sized.

### Distinguishing

First cycle birds are generally dark (possibly for camouflage). First cycle LBBGs look like HERGs but are slimmer with longer wings extending beyond the tail. First cycle LBBGs have a dark "eye mask" and the rump is lighter than the back, according to Michael. The LBBG's bill is usually uniformly black, like that of the larger GBBG. The other characters used by Michael and other gull experts are more difficult to see.

### References

Amar recommended a book by the late Bill Thompson III of *Birdwatcher's Digest* entitled *Identify Yourself*. Amar's website/blog is [anythingLarus.com](http://anythingLarus.com).

He also participates in the Facebook Group [North American Gulls](https://www.facebook.com/NorthAmericanGulls) that you can request to join. The most frequent question posed by novices in that group is *how to distinguish juvenile LBBGs and HERGs*.

Thanks to the experts a complicated subject becomes just a little less so.

Deborah Green



## Wekiva Basin Bird Banding Station Visit

The trip to the Wekiva Basin Bird Banding Station at Lake Lotus Park in Altamonte with Knighthawk Audubon was an amazing experience! It was so cool being able to see these birds so close up, sometimes even being able to touch them, and all the volunteers there were extremely knowledgeable about all the birds that were banded that day as well as the ones bouncing between the branches and soaring overhead.

Even though we had to start really early to get out there and band these birds, the volunteers were there at least an hour earlier to set up the mist nets and start making the rounds to check for netted birds.

I was really surprised by the way the nets worked and it was great to be able to learn how they are able to catch the birds without injuring them, but something I didn't expect was to see a Barred Owl hanging out near one of the nets hoping to catch a netted bird as its prey without being caught. Overall it was a very memorable experience and I can't wait to get back out there to volunteer again.

*Maxfield Weakley, B.S. Biology Graduate, University of Central Florida*



## Ocklawaha River Drawdown Boat Trips, February 9 and 22, 2020

A winter drawdown of the Ocklawaha River at the Rodman Dam for aquatic vegetation control is conducted only every 4 years and lasts 3-4 months. On February 9th and 22nd, Orange Audubon Society has 12 seats reserved each day to boat from Eureka boat ramp and explore the river, and a few seats are still available. The cost is \$35 payable to the boat captain. Anyone who is interested can email [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org) to be put on the participant list and receive more details.

*Deborah Green*

## Hearing a Black Rail

One of the most popular field trips at the Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival is the Black Rail Trip to the [St. Johns National Wildlife Refuge](#). This 6000-acre refuge north of SR 50 west of Mims is not open to the public, and according to Kimberly King-Wrenn, Supervisory Park Ranger of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex, visitors enter only on the two Rail trips from Space Coast. The refuge was established to protect the Dusky Seaside Sparrow, which was officially declared extinct in December 1990.

Now it is one of the last strongholds of the Eastern Black Rail, a secretive marsh bird no bigger than a sparrow. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was petitioned in April 2010 to list the Eastern Black Rail under the Endangered Species Act as endangered or threatened. The process is ongoing. With trip leader David Simpson playing a tape, our group was lucky enough to hear the rail call. The well-burned refuge is a complex of marshes, beautiful as dusk approached.

*Deborah Green*



Black Rail trip at Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival. Photo: Deborah Green

## Year End: Check Status or Update Your Membership

The beginning of the year is a great time to renew your 3-way membership in Orange Audubon Society (OAS), Audubon Florida and National Audubon Society (NAS).

A few tips to help OAS: Whether it is a renewal or not, make your check to Orange Audubon Society, and we will forward to NAS. Also, that way if you want to include an additional donation to OAS as part of your membership and make sure the donation stays with OAS, you can. Otherwise the rate is \$20 (students \$15). If you renew directly through NAS and include more than \$20, the full amount goes to NAS. It takes a few months for a new membership to show up on our chapter roster provided by NAS. If you have questions about your expiration date, email [membership@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:membership@orangeaudubonfl.org).

Membership is extremely challenging for a large chapter—adding new members to our email blast list, updating emails and expiration dates, and sending reminders. NAS sends reminders very early. This is understandable since NAS does not want your membership to lapse causing you to stop receiving magazines and news of Audubon happenings, and added paperwork when you renew or rejoin after being removed from the membership roster. But confusing. I have discussed with another large Audubon chapter here in Florida how they handle membership

and was told that they just let members sign up and update their emails on their own. However, we think there is local political clout associated with being a large chapter and, although extremely time-consuming, we continue to work to keep our membership rosters up-to-date. Please help us out and renew directly through OAS, either by sending a check to Orange Audubon Society, P.O. Box 941142, Maitland, FL 32794-1142 or by clicking on the [Join Now link](#) and paying through the Buy Now button. Thank you!

*Deborah Green, Membership Co-chair*

## Fort De Soto Park Trip

The first Limited Edition Field Trip of 2020 was to Fort De Soto Park where 48 bird species were seen. Our first stop was the East Beach turnaround. With an extreme low tide due to the recent full moon, the area facing the Sunshine Skyway Bridge was filled with hundreds of birds feeding in the shallow water: White and Brown pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Red-breasted Mergansers, many waders including a very cooperative Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and at least nine Wilson's Plovers.

Later at North Beach we found Royal and Sandwich terns, Black Skimmers, and 200-300 Red Knots, an endangered shorebird. The Bald Eagles, nesting on the communication tower near North Beach, had two recently hatched chicks.

*Bob Sanders*



## 2020 North Shore Birding Festival

So many people to thank—Maria Zondervan and others from the St. Johns River Water Management District; Lake County for use of many parks and University of Florida for use of their facility for keynotes. Thanks to trip leaders from Wildside Nature Tours: Alex Lamoreaux and Greg Miller (of *The Big Year* fame); João Jara, Birds & Nature Tours Portugal; Jason Ward, Atlanta Audubon and *Birds of North America*; our from-elsewhere-in-Florida leaders: Gian Basili, Michael Brothers, Mitchell Harris, David Hartgrove, Alice Horst, Audrey Whitlock, and Robert Wilson.

And our local talent: Bruce Anderson, Andrew Boyle, Steve Coleman, Gigi DelPizzo, Lynn Marie Folts, Jutta and Reinhard Geisler, Melissa Gonzalez, Greg Gensheimer, Mark Hainen, Karen Hamblett, Milton Heiberg, Paul Lammardo, Lorri Lilja, Lorne Malo, Larry Martin, Carol McCorkle, Mark Meifert, Sam Mitcham, Chris Newton, Gallus Quigley, Lee Ann Posavad, Kathy Rigling, Ralph Risch, Tom Rodriguez, Jack Rogers, Bob Sanders, Steve Shaluta, Scott Simmons, Rebecca Smith, Bill and Joyce Stefancic, Renee Thomas, John Thomson, Bob & Mary Wexler, and for behind-the-scenes birding intel, Paul Hueber.

Many thanks to the NSBF committee: Linda Gaunt, Melissa Gonzalez, Charlie and Susan Kirby, Loretta Satterthwaite, Bob Stamps, and Teresa Williams; and to other volunteers: Rick Baird, Jenny Bouchenot, Brian Cammarano, Marah Green, Gail Holdiman, Carole Johns, Terrie Leibler, Deb Machamer, David Marano, Jennifer McCleary, Tricia Newton, Lori Parsons, Terry Piper, Tina Pruitt, Mary Soule, Sonia Stephens, and Leesa Sward.

Thanks also to sponsors (p.9) and donors to OAS' scholarship fund who enabled students to attend from the University of South Florida and Florida Southern College. It has been such a collective effort, for love of the Lake Apopka North Shore and the birds. Next year's festival will be January 21-25, 2021. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and/or sign up for the festival email list at [this link](#).

*Deborah Green, Festival Chair*



Clockwise from top left: Greg Miller answers questions after *The Big Year* movie. Photo: Milton Heiberg; White Ibis on sunrise trip. Photo: Lynn Marie Folts; Trip participants birding on the Apopka-Beaclair Canal bridge. Photo: Elza Phillips; Young photographer enjoying Youth and Family Trip. Photo: Tina Pruitt; Birding by tram at Wekiwa Springs State Park. Photo: Tina Pruitt; Sunset trip. Photo: Lynn Marie Folts; Michael Brothers telling about gull habits. Photo: Tina Pruitt; The Villages Waterfowl by Golf Cart trip lined up to start. Photo: Wendy Milstein; Sedge Wren. Photo: James Hill; Birding for Millennials and Others trip. Photo: Marah Green; Eastern Screech Owl from Pine Meadows trip. Photo: Steve Shaluta.



## Birding Ecotourism & the North Shore Birding Festival

Orange Audubon Society's 2020 North Shore Birding Festival (NSBF) was a big success. The goals of the NSBF are to spotlight the wonders of the Lake Apopka North Shore area and demonstrate birding ecotourism. The 2020 festival had participants and leaders from 17 states: CA, FL, GA, KY, MD, ME, MI, NC, ND, NY, OH, OR, PA, SC, TN, UT & VA, plus over 60 Florida cities, Canada and Portugal. Out of town participants contribute to the local economy and may visit again after the festival.

This year we attracted younger participants. At least 20 of about 300 participants were college age. After attending a birding festival once, we hope they will see the fun and attend again. The half-price student registration rates, travel scholarships and publicity through new campus Audubon chapters helped. We also had a successful Youth and Family Photo Trip. It takes a village. Thanks so much to the many leaders and other volunteers (see p. 8). *Deborah Green*

## Thanks to the 2020 North Shore Birding Festival Sponsors



ARCHAEOPTERYX BIRDING & NATURE TOURS



Brown-headed Nuthatch, Savage Christmas Creek. Photo: Mary Keim

## Beginners' Bird Watching Class

March 7, 14 & 21, 2020

Orange Audubon Society offers a Beginners' Bird Watching Class taught by Bob Sanders this spring. An "outdoor" classroom session and mini-field trip will take place on March 7th at Orlando Wetlands Park (OWP) and two field sessions will follow on March 14th and 21st at OWP and Lake Jesup, respectively.

All sessions are 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. If you miss a spring session, you may make-up the class in fall 2020. The class is limited to 20 students.

Total cost for all three sessions is \$30 for Audubon members, \$45 for non-members and \$10 for children through age 12 with a registered adult. Non-members wishing to join will be given instructions upon registration. Contact Teresa at (407) 644-0796 or mwilliams@cfl.rr.com. For questions about the class, contact Bob at (407) 459-5617.

## Ethos 5% Day

March 28, 2020

On Saturday, March 28th, Ethos Vegan Kitchen will be donating 5% of its sales throughout the

day to Orange Audubon Society (OAS). Simply dine in or take out and 5% of your check will go to our chapter. This is the seventh year that Ethos has selected OAS to benefit from their generous 5% Day. [Ethos Vegan Kitchen](#) is located at 601-B South New York Avenue, Winter Park, FL 32789, phone (407) 228-3899.

**32nd Annual Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest, Deadline April 16, 2020**

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) announces its 2020 (32nd Annual) Kit and Sidney Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest, themed: Florida Native Nature.

Competing will sharpen your photo skills, increase knowledge of Florida's amazing wildlife and wild places and teach valuable ethical field practices.

In addition, there are prizes valued up to \$1,300 from OAS and co-sponsors Colonial Photo & Hobby and Tarflower Chapter, Florida Native Plant Society (Tarflower).

Eligible photos may not include humans, human artifacts or introduced plant or animal species—subject matter must be native to Florida—and entries must be taken in compliance with the NANPA code of conduct.

The deadline is April 16, 2020 (postmarked or electronically submitted by date). Disqualified entries may optionally be replaced for no additional entry fee by following

instructions provided upon notification.

The contest is open to all photographers (members of OAS' board and Chertok contest committee excluded) and there are three skill level competition categories: Youth—for photographers age 17 years or younger by April 16, 2020; Novice—for new and less experienced photo hobbyists; and Advanced Amateur/Professional—for experienced

photographers who have practiced and honed their skills over time. Entry forms are available on the OAS website at [this link](#). Contact me at [mwilliams@cfl.rr.com](mailto:mwilliams@cfl.rr.com) or (407) 644-

0796 if you have questions. *Teresa Williams, Chertok Photography Contest Chair*



Baby Manatee Doo Doo Doo—Manatees. 2019 Chertok Photo Contest, Honorable Mention Winner, Novice Category. Photo: Steven Madow

**FEBRUARY/MARCH CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**February Wekiwa Bird Survey**

February 8, 2020  
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

**Birds of Prey ID Class, Lake Apopka**

February 2, 2020  
Contact Bob at (407) 459-5617

**Great Backyard Bird Count**

February 14-17, 2020  
[www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc)

**February Field Trip: Participate in Orlando Wetlands Festival, Christmas**

February 15, 2020  
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

**Orlando Wetlands Festival, Christmas**

February 15, 2020  
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

**February Program: Translocating Florida Scrub-Jays - Lauren Deaner**

February 20, 2020  
Contact Rick at (407) 277-3357

**Sunrise Photo Shoot, Orlando Wetlands Park**

February 22, 2020  
Contact Teresa at (407) 644-0796

**Limited Edition Field Trip to Lake Harney Wilderness Area, Geneva**

February 23, 2020  
Contact Bob at (407) 459-5617

**Green PLACE Nature & Photography Hike**

February 29, 2020  
Contact Beth at (407) 836-1400

**Oakland Nature Preserve Survey**

February 29, 2020  
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

**Beginners' Bird Watching Class: Orlando Wetlands Park and Lake Jesup**

March 7, 14 & 21, 2020  
Contact Teresa at (407) 644-0796

**March Wekiwa Bird Survey**

March 7, 2020  
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

**March Program: Twenty Years of Freshwater Turtle Sampling - Eric Munscher**

March 19, 2020  
Contact Rick at (407) 277-3357

**March Field Trip: Little Big Econ State Forest, Geneva**

March 21, 2020  
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

**Limited Edition Field Trip to Orlando Wetlands Park**

March 28, 2020  
Contact Bob at (407) 459-5617

**Ethos Vegan Kitchen, Winter Park, 5% Profit Day to benefit Orange Audubon Society**

March 28, 2020