



**This Month's Program: March 19, 2020**

### **Cultivating the Wild: William Bartram's Travels by Robert Wilson**



The newly released documentary *Cultivating the Wild* will be Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) March 19th program.

Robert Wilson, who contributed much of the bird photography in the film, will host this very special presentation.

This thought-provoking one-hour film examines

what William Bartram, one of America's first naturalists, saw in the 1770s and what has come to pass in the more than 220 years since he wrote *Travels*.

Beautifully filmed throughout the southeast, the documentary culminates producer Eric Breitenbach's four years searching for what Bartram saw and what six modern Bartrams see today: Manatee researcher Wayne Hartley, former Altamaha Riverkeeper James Holland, artist Philip Juras, ornithologist Drew Lanham, writer Janisse Ray, and native American educator Jim Sawgrass.

Breitenbach teaches at Daytona State College's Southeast Center for Photographic Studies and has directed films for National Geographic Television, the Sundance Channel, national and regional PBS, and a variety of museums and non-profit organizations.

Co-producer Dorinda Dalimeyer directs the Environmental Ethics Certificate Program at the University of Georgia and is a past president of the Bartram Trail Conference. In 2010 she published the highly regarded biography: *Bartram's Living Legacy: The Travels and the Nature of the South*.

Wilson is a retired 30-year staff photographer for Lockheed Martin, currently U.S. Brand Ambassador for Kowa Sporting Optics, and recognized as one of the country's top digiscopers. Kowa has been a sponsor of OAS' North Shore Birding Festival for the past three years, and at our festival he teaches digiscoping (using one's cell phone camera through a spotting scope).

Of interest to environmentalists, photographers, birders and plant lovers, the film examines the relationship we have with our beloved planet and gives thought to a better future.

Join OAS for a great program on March 19th, 7 p.m. See location below.

*Rick Baird, Programs Chair*

### **March Field Trip: Historic Little Econ Property March 21, 2020**

Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) March monthly field trip will be to a very special property along the Little Econlockhatchee (Econ) River. Called the Historic Little Econ Property or Harrod Tract, this 30-acre property is being acquired by Orange County for a passive recreation park.

With beautiful oak hammocks, old growth cypress swamps, freshwater marshes, and unique 18-foot river banks, this is the last natural section of the Little Econ. Owner Wayne Harrod had been trying to sell it to Orange County for preservation and was finally successful last year. The park will eventually open to the public, but this is a unique sneak peek, guided by Mr. Harrod.

The site is full of history, including Iron Bridge Road, the first paved road in Orange County, an 1890s Iron Bridge and a cypress wood bridge, thought to date back to the 1730s.



Harrod Tract on Little Econ. Photo: Wayne Harrod

We will look for early-arriving Swallow-tailed Kites, early spring songbirds, and others.

Meet at the northwest corner of University and Rouse roads in the Wendy's parking lot at 8 a.m. Since parking is limited, we will form carpools. This trip will be mostly walking. Bring water and snacks. If you have any questions, contact me at [lmartin5@msn.com](mailto:lmartin5@msn.com) or (407) 647-5834 in advance or (407) 252-1182 on the morning of the trip.

*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.



As follow up, Audubon Florida is working with chapters to build climate advocacy and is developing training sessions to empower Audubon members to be the most effective advocates for science-based solutions to Florida's climate and conservation challenges. Those who want to get more involved will ideally work with local governments to support or pass local climate legislation as well as educate others to best actions. If you would like to be a part of this effort, email [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org).

## State Legislative Session Ends Soon

The Florida Senate and House regular session will adjourn on March 13, 2020.

Audubon Florida has policy staff in Tallahassee working diligently on all issues of environmental concern. The *Audubon Florida Advocate* newsletter contains calls to action and is sent weekly during the legislative session (monthly most of the year). Please sign up [at this link](#). [Audubon Florida's Facebook](#) page is another source for current news.

Senator Linda Stewart has steadfastly kept up her efforts for annual Florida Forever funding with her bill, SB 0332, called the Land Acquisition Trust Fund bill, and Audubon Florida is working behind the scenes.

Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations

remain an important issue in this session, and House Bill 0579, Public Financing of Construction Projects, requires a sea level impact projection study for state-financed construction projects.

The Army Corps and the South Florida Water Management District are finalizing a plan that will guide where, when, and how much water will flow south to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. Through March 16th the public has a final opportunity to comment on the plan, which will ultimately influence the future health and sustainability of Florida Bay. Follow the easy link to comment and follow other calls to action on the [Audubon Florida Advocate](#).

## Help Educate on Fertilizing Responsibly

A recent Orange County stakeholder meeting sought input prior to developing a marketing campaign to educate Orange County residents on the county's fertilizer ordinance.

Since *OASis* readers are already sensitized to the damage to water quality in our springs and rivers from excess fertilization, here is some background to help you explain it to others:

Florida has a rainy season between June and October in which rains can wash fertilizer into surface or groundwater.

Plus many areas of Florida have phosphorus in the soils already—Phosphorus mining is a big industry in Florida. Florida presently provides about 75 percent of the nation's supply of phosphate fertilizer and about 25 percent of the world supply.

In Orange County, you must always get a soil test before applying fertilizer that contains phosphorus – all year long, not just during the rainy season.

Orange County's ordinance states that no fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorus may be applied in Orange County *from June 1 through September 30*, unless users have taken an online training course or are licensed commercial operators.

Here is the [Orange County's Fertilize Responsibly page](#) and the actual Orange County [fertilizer ordinance](#).

Thank you for doing your part to protect our springs and rivers.

OAS Conservation Committee



Orange Audubon Society (OAS) mission: To promote public understanding of, and an interest in, wildlife and the environment that supports it; foster the recognition of the tangible and intangible values in the remaining natural areas of Florida and the world, and our responsibility for the conservation of the Earth's natural ecosystems.

Orange Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 941142  
Maitland, FL 32794-1142  
[www.orangeaudubonfl.org](http://www.orangeaudubonfl.org)

President and *OASis* Editor:  
Deborah Green  
[info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org)  
(407) 637-2525

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)  
(407) 417-7818

JOIN OAS' [MEETUP](#) GROUP  
LIKE OAS' [FACEBOOK](#) PAGE

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

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE, 1-800-435-7352, WITHIN THE STATE. FROM OUTSIDE OF FLORIDA CALL 1-850-410-3800. VISIT [www.800helpfla.com](http://www.800helpfla.com) FOR HELP. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. REGISTRATION NO. CH2330

## Recreate Bird Habitat in Your Yard

Do you live in a typical post-1970s Florida subdivision that is dominated by homes with lawns? Are you uncertain how but desire to create wildlife habitat? Start by adding native plants to your back yard and side hedges. Once you are done with that, work to expand landscape beds adjacent to your house and reduce your lawn. Curved mulched beds of native flowers and grasses with medium-sized shrubs behind them, look nice. As long as you maintain your landscape, no one in your Homeowners Association should be able to complain and you can set a good example. Lawns are not only a desert for most birds but they require input of fertilizer that is a significant contributor to pollution of springs and waterways (p.2).

In last month's *OASis* Mary Keim, an avid native-plants-for-birds gardener, profiled a new study showing that you will not have Carolina Chickadees (and a variety of other birds) in your yard if you do not have most of your landscape planted with natives. The reason, which bears repeating since it is a foreign concept to most people, is that native plants are eaten by little caterpillars that are the food for birds. We have to be prepared to tolerate plant-feeding insects, *for the birds*. Our friends, the local Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) chapters, sell native plants at special events which are fund-raisers for the societies. For example, the Tarflower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society will do a lively business at the Leu Garden Plant Sale, March 14th and 15th, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Arrive early when knowledgeable FNPS members may have time to advise on best plants

for your general soil type and shade or sun conditions. In Seminole County, on March 21st there is a Garden Tour and Plant Sale that includes two native plant landscapes that were on the yards tour co-organized by Orange Audubon Society (OAS) several years ago. For more information, see [this link](#) or contact [cupletfern@gmail.com](mailto:cupletfern@gmail.com).

In March the Ruby-throated Hummingbird is moving north from tropical wintering grounds to its breeding grounds throughout the Eastern U.S. A native shrub called coral bean or Cherokee bean has red tubular flowers that bloom precisely as these hummingbirds migrate north.

Other tubular red-flowered plants like firebush, coral honeysuckle, trumpet creeper, tropical sage, and red buckeye also provide nectar for hummingbirds. If you plant enough of these plants to keep red flowers going throughout the year, you can provide food for hummingbirds without ever putting up a feeder.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird on Coral Bean. Photo: Mary Keim

To attract Northern Parula warblers to your yard, put up clumps of Spanish moss. These beautiful blue-backed yellow-breasted warblers actually make their nests in Spanish moss.

Great Crested Flycatchers will be migrating back to our area from their tropical wintering grounds. They are cavity-nesters, so putting up wooden nest boxes is important. Woodpeckers make cavities in snags (dead trees) and may abandon these after a season, allowing secondary cavity nesters to colonize. Since snags are taken down in most neighborhoods, nest boxes provide cavities. Eastern Screech Owls and Flying Squirrels, like the Great Crested Flycatcher, are also cavity-nesters and appreciate nest boxes.



Northern Parula. Photo: Mary Soule

Past OAS president Richard Poole is our local expert on nest boxes (see his article [at this link](#)). One of Richard's well-designed and constructed boxes, sized appropriately for a Great Crested Flycatcher, will sell for \$25 with proceeds to OAS. Email [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org) if you want us to bring one to a meeting for you, while supplies last.

The book that explains why caterpillars are so important to birds and that lists the best trees to plant for birds is [Bringing Nature Home](#) by University of Delaware professor Doug Tallamy. His new book, *Nature's Best Hope*, shows how homeowners everywhere can turn their yards into conservation corridors that provide wildlife habitats.

Native plant gardening requires more work than just hiring a lawn company but the rewards — for the birds, the environment, and ultimately you — are worth it.

Deborah Green

## Beginners' Bird Watching Class

March 7, 14 & 21, 2020

Popular instructor Bob Sanders will teach Orange Audubon Society's Beginners' Bird Watching Class this spring. On March 7th an "outdoor" classroom session and mini-field trip will be at Orlando Wetlands Park (OWP).

Two field sessions follow on March 14th and 21st at OWP and Lake Jesup, respectively. 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. Non-members wishing to join will be given instructions upon registration. We welcome children through age 12 for \$10 with a registered adult.

To register, contact Teresa at (407) 644-0796 or [mwilliams@cfl.rr.com](mailto:mwilliams@cfl.rr.com). If you have questions about the class, contact Bob at (407) 459-5617.

*In case you missed it ...*

**Translocating Florida Scrub-Jays**

Once again, we were privileged to hear rare good news in the world of birds. For Orange Audubon Society's February 20th program, biologist Lauren Deaner presented the results of her research with translocation of Florida Scrub-Jays (FSJ) from Mosaic phosphate mining areas to protected areas on large tracts of public land in Sarasota and Manatee counties where the upland, fire-dependent, low-growing scrub habitat jays need is available.



Florida Scrub-Jay .Photo: Mark Meifert

Lauren introduced the FSJ as a monogamous, social, threatened species endemic to Florida. They live in family groups that include the breeding pair, juveniles, and second-year "helper" jays that stay with the family to help raise juveniles and defend territory. For long-term survival, jays need connection with 30+ family groups called meta-populations. With fewer than 10 family groups, survival rates are poor.

The FSJ project translocates entire families of jays. The process involves trapping the jays, banding them, and attaching a transmitter so they can be found after release. They are first held in an enclosure (a "hacking" cage) to acclimate them to their new surroundings, then they are released into their new home and their movements tracked.

The timing of the translocations was important. Originally researchers chose February to capture and release. Subsequently, researchers determined that January was a

**2020 Orange Audubon Society Board Elections**

The Orange Audubon Society (OAS) annual election of directors and officers will be held during the general membership meeting on April 16, 2020. The slate of nominations for April's election will be announced at the March 19th OAS meeting. I, Larry Martin, have the pleasure of chairing the nominating committee with committee members Maureen (Mo) Cortese (mocar1129@gmail.com) and Jack Horton (jhorton@mac.com).

The OAS board is comprised of twenty volunteer members: 5 officers who serve two-year terms and 15 non-officer members of the board of directors who serve staggered 3-year terms. All officer positions—president, 1st vice president, 2nd vice president, secretary and treasurer—are up for election/re-election in April 2020. All board members of the 2020–23 term are up for election/re-election, and OAS has one unfilled seat for the 2018–2021 term (one year remaining) and two unfilled seats for the 2019–2022 term (two years remaining).

To serve on the board, you must be an OAS member, have an interest in wildlife and the environment, and be able to attend monthly, one-hour board meetings on the third Thursday of each month (except July and August) at Leu Gardens. There is also an all-day summer planning meeting, usually in late July, that board members are expected to attend.

As "a baby step" prior to applying for the board, we encourage you to join one of OAS' committees. OAS' greatest need is for help with conservation, education, and outreach. Other committees are Birdathon, brochure, Chertok photography contest, climate, field trips, finance, hospitality, membership, nature and environmental education center, nominating, *OASis* (newsletter), programs, publicity, sanctuaries, silent auction, speakers' bureau, website, and wildlife surveys.

The OAS board application informs applicants of volunteer options and OAS' service and donation expectations and collects information about your interests and skills to align them with the OAS' needs. If you wish to give back to your community through the conservation and nature education initiatives of OAS, contact me at [lmartin5@msn.com](mailto:lmartin5@msn.com).  
*Larry Martin, Nominating Committee Chair*

better translocation month. The birds had more time to adjust to the new area, and suffered fewer defensive behaviors from resident birds. When the timing of release was changed, the rates of success increased significantly.

Lauren's translocation project has had impressive success overall. Of the 51 birds that have been translocated, 21 have adopted their new location and survived, a retention rate of approximately 40%. (A 33% retention rate is considered successful.)

Those 21 birds have reproduced and reared more than 130 juveniles. The nestlings are also being banded so their progress can be followed.

The good news continues. Additional FSJ translocation projects are also under consideration. Jays from the stable populations in the Ocala National Forest could be translocated to Jonathan Dickinson State Park in Martin County and the Seminole State Forest in Lake County.  
*Terry Piper*

**Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey March 7, 2020**

Monthly field surveys continue at Wekiwa Springs State Park. The next survey is Saturday, March 7th, starting at 7:30 a.m. This park contains some of the best examples of the endangered sandhill habitat in the



Bachman's Sparrow at Wekiwa Springs State Park. Photo: Kathy Rigling

South, and is a great place to add otherwise rare species to your life list. New participants are welcome. Contact Kathy at [riglingk@aol.com](mailto:riglingk@aol.com) or (407) 488-9559.

## Fort De Soto—A Jem

Located on the west coast of Florida and jutting out into the Gulf of Mexico lies beautiful Fort De Soto Park, a premier birding destination. What makes Fort De Soto unique is that it provides a stopping place for tired migrating birds that have just crossed the vast Gulf of Mexico. This Pinellas County park is made up of 5 interconnected islands consisting of 1,134 acres. More than 328 bird species have been documented there.



Reddish Egret Photo: Joyce Stefancic

Spring migration is particularly exciting. A phenomenon known as a *fallout* can occur when weather conditions force migrants to land as soon as they can. Even without fallout conditions, Fort De Soto is an outstanding location to observe migrating warblers and shorebirds.

Orange Audubon Society offers two opportunities this April for a guided Fort De Soto experience: Saturday, April 18th on the Birdathon field trip (see adjacent article) and Sunday, April 19th with Bob Sanders on his Limited Edition trip. *Kathy Rigling*



## 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.

## Birdathon—April 18, 2020!

Birdathon is similar to a Walkathon, but donors pledge money based on total number of bird species seen during a 24-hr period instead of miles walked by an individual. People can pledge 10¢, 25¢, 50¢, etc. per species, or a flat amount (and write their check on the spot). Let people know that species seen will most likely be between 150 and 200 as they figure out their donation. [The pledge sheet is posted on the Orange Audubon Society \(OAS\) website.](#) Please consider asking for pledges from your friends, neighbors, relatives, doctors, vets, family members, etc.



Limited Edition Field Trip January 2019.  
Photo: Joyce Stefancic

As part of Birdathon we will be having a special field trip to Fort De Soto Park on Saturday, April 18th during the peak of migration. Join leaders Joyce and Bill Stefancic, Gigi DelPizzo and Lorri Lilja as we bird this beautiful

park. A suggested donation of \$10 will benefit the OAS nature center fund.

Note that this trip is the day before Bob Sander's Limited Edition Field Trip to Fort De Soto, and you can plan to stay over and do both (contact Bob during the week before to reserve a spot in his trip). During migration Fort De Soto's birds change from day to day following weather patterns. Staying two days can be a smart move.

Aside from those people counting at Fort De Soto, individuals or teams *can count anywhere in Florida*. To get the best coverage and highest number of species overall, please let me know where you plan to bird. All Birdathon 2020 funds are earmarked for OAS' nature and environmental education center fund. To participate, contact me at [riglingk@aol.com](mailto:riglingk@aol.com). *Kathy Rigling, Birdathon Chair*

## Connecting Children, Nature and Fun This Summer

For the children in your life, check out these summer nature camps. Wekiva Youth Camp is an overnight camp while the others are day camps. They fill up fast, so don't delay!

**Mead Botanical Garden Young Naturalist Summer Camp, Winter Park**, has week-long camp sessions, starting the week of June 8th and ending the week of July 24th. Hours are 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Open to children ages 5-12. New camper registration begins March 3rd. For information, visit [this link](#) or email [camp@meadgarden.org](mailto:camp@meadgarden.org).

**Oakland Nature Preserve Environmental Day Camp, Oakland**, offers week-long environmental day camps for ages 5-17. Hours are 9 a.m.-4 p.m., for four weeks starting June 15th. For information, visit [this link](#), call (407) 905-0054 or email [education@oaklandnaturepreserve.org](mailto:education@oaklandnaturepreserve.org).

**Raptor Camp at Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, Maitland** has Raptor Camp in one-week sessions, each day from 9:00 a.m.-2 p.m. Session I (rising 1st-3rd graders) will be held June 1-5. Session II (rising 4th-6th graders) will be held June 15-19. The Center has added a new 4-day camp session (rising 2nd-5th graders) June 29-July 2. The camp is fun and educational. For information, see [this link](#) or email [auduboncbop@audubon.org](mailto:auduboncbop@audubon.org).

**Wekiva Youth Camp** is a residential nature camp for 3rd through 8th graders, sponsored by the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. Campers stay at Wekiwa Springs State Park in the Youth Camp for a one-week session, of which there are six available during June and July. Kathy Rigling, Orange Audubon Society board member, is nature director for the Wekiva Youth Camp. Only limited spaces are available at this point. Visit [this link](#) or contact the registrar at [WYCRRegistrar@gmail.com](mailto:WYCRRegistrar@gmail.com).

Connecting children, nature and fun is what it's all about!

## Ocklawaha River Drawdown

With the Rodman Dam currently open for winter drawdown, four years since the previous drawdown, the water level of the Ocklawaha River is several feet lower than under closed dam conditions. This makes the Ocklawaha appear closer to its original, free-flowing state, with springs visible.



February 9th Drawdown Trip, stopping at Cannon Spring. Photo: Deborah Green



February 22nd Drawdown Trip, group in front of large dead cypress. Photo: Linda Gaunt

With areas around the river no longer submerged, plant life has quickly grown back since the winter drawdown started in October. Cypress and maple seedlings were able to sprout, and the lowered water levels provided plenty of habitat for sunning alligators, wading birds, ospreys, eagles, and sandhill cranes—normally an uncommon sight on the river.

Once the dam is closed again, new habitat will be submerged, drowning the plants that have grown. This raises the issue of dying forests adjacent to the river, composed mostly of cypress trees no longer able to be replaced by new seedlings. Because of this, parts of the submerged Ocklawaha Valley are littered with the towering gray husks of dead cypress trees. Eventually, the rest of the adjacent forest will go down the same path if the issue of the dam remains unaddressed.

*Jeremy LaPlanche*

Editor's Note: Jeremy is a Rollins College freshman and Conservation Leadership Initiative participant. See the [November 2019 OASis](#) (p.5) for action on the Ocklawaha.



Peregrine Falcon with Blue-winged Teal at Orlando Wetlands Festival. Photo: Kathy Rigling

## Orlando Wetlands Festival

A great time was had by all at the 2020 Orlando Wetlands Festival on February 15th. Approximately 3500 people attended this City of Orlando festival, co-sponsored by Orange Audubon Society (OAS), to promote Orlando Wetlands Park (OWP) and water and ecological resources.

The restored wetlands take nutrients out of treated wastewater before it enters the St. Johns River. We are proud that this pioneering effort is the model for other treatment wetlands/ birding hotspots around the state.

OAS thanks Cynthia Kay, Wayne Kennedy, Lori Parsons and Teresa Williams who sold nearly 90 T-shirts and other merchandise. Thanks for outreach help go to Angela Gan, Kathy Putnam, Kathy Rigling, Sonia Stephens, and Susan Thome-Barrett.

Along with past Orlando Wetlands Festival trip leaders (many of whom are OAS members) and other OWP volunteers, bird walks were led by OAS' Larry Martin and Kathy Rigling along with Brian Cammarano of Kighthawk Audubon. The group saw a Peregrine Falcon on the ground with its prey, a Blue-winged Teal, and watched the teal be snatched by a Bald Eagle. Several other UCF students participated, and Jenny Bouchenot of Kighthawk helped Andrew Boyle and the other bird banders at the banding station. A Yellow-breasted Chat was netted for the second festival in a row.

Rick Baird and I led bus trips. Our best sighting was at the end of the trips: Roseate Spoonbills resting in the cypress dome. Their numbers at OWP have increased over the years. The next festival will be on the third Saturday in February of 2022, but we'll be back birding at this great park before then.

*Deborah Green*

## Limited Edition Field Trip to Orlando Wetlands Park March 28, 2020

Enjoy Orlando Wetlands Park on March 28th with Bob Sanders on the March Limited Edition Field Trip. 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.

## Lake Harney Wilderness Area, Geneva

A very fortunate group of birders enjoyed spectacular weather at the Lake Harney Wilderness Area for the Limited Edition Field Trip on February 23rd. Sixty-five species were identified.

The crown jewel of this site is the elevated boardwalk that leads to a lookout platform with views of Lake Harney and its floodplain. In a small pond we observed 45 American White Pelicans feeding with various waders, 8 Bonaparte's Gulls, Forster's Terns, and swarms of Tree Swallows. A male Northern Harrier glided by and at the base of the lookout we spotted Savannah and Swamp sparrows, Common Yellowthroats and Painted Buntings.

Bald Eagles seemed to be everywhere. One very visible nest held two well-developed chicks.

One trail ends at the St. Johns River where eight Wild Turkeys flew across. The Seminole County Natural Lands Program is to be congratulated for purchasing and creating access to this excellent place.

*Bob Sanders*



Lake Harney Wilderness Area. Photo courtesy Seminole County

## Spotting a Barn Owl

At this year's North Shore Birding Festival, the most exciting sighting was not a rarity as in past years but a bird known around the world, the Barn Owl.

This owl's pale heart-shaped face and black eyes are distinctive. The face's concave shape collects sound waves and directs those waves towards its ears, so this species has superb hearing. The Barn Owl is fully nocturnal and flies low, back and forth over open fields, hunting small rodents primarily by sound. Because few of us have been out in these habitats at night, many had never seen a Barn Owl or, if so, only its ghostly form in flight.

This cavity-nesting owl inhabits holes in trees, fissures in cliff faces, large nests of other birds and old buildings. Many birding trips on the Lake Apopka North Shore, long before the festival, would watch a Barn Owl fly out of an abandoned farm building near Clay Island. The group would creep up on the barn until the owl noticed the visitors and flew out.

This year we were informed by St. Johns River Water Management District (District) staff that the owl was sitting on 4 eggs. Obviously, we should not disturb it.

An interesting thing was always finding owl pellets in the barn. Barn Owls swallow their prey whole—skin, bones, and all. About twice a day they cough up pellets instead of passing undigested material through their intestinal tracts. Pellets record what owls have eaten; hence scientists (and some lucky schoolchildren) dissect and study them.



Owl pellets found at the 2019 North Shore Birding Festival. Photo: Deborah Green



Barn Owl under bridge. Photo: Mark Meifert

A boat trip from the McDonald Canal the day before the festival introduced the area to trip leaders Jason Ward and Audrey Whitlock. Two boaters, noticing our binoculars, called us over to suggest watching for an owl pair under the bridge. They informed us that one owl would fly out while the other stayed on the nest. In fact, studies show that the female Barn Owl does all the incubation. She and the young chicks rely on the male for food.

After our initial sighting of the male flying out, almost every trip during the festival that was based out of the McDonald Canal included an attempt to see these owls. The Birding by Kayak trip had the best opportunity. On the Birding for Millennials and Others trip, while the group was near the bridge looking for a Least Flycatcher, resourceful Jason detected an airboat zipping down the canal and everyone rushed over and saw the male owl fly out.

Unlike Barred Owls and Great Horned Owls, Barn Owls do not hoot. Instead they produce an eerie, long-drawn-out shriek.

Barn Owls are an important species on the Lake Apopka North Shore. In fall of 1999 an outbreak of mice in homes in the adjacent area was blamed on the changes in vegetation after the farms were abandoned after being bought out by the District to restore Lake Apopka. An [Orlando Sentinel article](#) explores the complexity of this mysterious mice outbreak but doesn't mention the role of Barn Owls.

After the farms were bought out by

the District, Barn Owls nested in the many abandoned farm buildings. As these buildings were taken down, a local Audubon chapter put up appropriately-sized and positioned nest boxes.

Next year's North Shore Birding Festival, January 21-25, 2021, will include several new trips and among them we hope to have a pre-dawn owling trip. How a creature can live, reproduce, and thrive in darkness is extraordinary, and most of us would be thrilled to catch even a glimpse of these marvelous birds.

Deborah Green



Barn Owl on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive near sod fields at dusk. Photo: Stephen Ramsden

## Swallow-tailed Kite "Apopka" Heading Our Way

The Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) in Gainesville now has 14 Swallow-tailed Kites mounted with solar-powered GSM/GPS transmitters.

These communicate through the cell phone network, but when birds are beyond cell-tower range, the transmitters do not upload their GPS data. Data are stored until the birds move within range of a cell tower. For this reason, ARCI may go for long periods not "hearing" from birds as they migrate through and/or winter in remote areas.

How the Swallow-tailed Kite named Apopka was tagged and released is profiled [at this link](#) (p.6). Apopka wintered in Rondonia, Brazil, and has started north.

You can follow the journeys of Apopka and the other kites through ARCI's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ARCIInst/>.

**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.



Oz—Sweat Bee on Dune Sunflower. 2019 Chertok Photo Contest, Honorable Mention Winner, Youth Category. *Photo: Claire Goodowens*

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.

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



Little Runner—Snowy Plover Chick. 2019 Chertok Photo Contest, Honorable Mention Winner, Advanced Category. *Photo: Kristian Bell*

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*

**MARCH/APRIL CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**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: Cultivating the Wild: William Bartram's Travels - Robert Wilson**

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

**March Field Trip: Historic Little Econ State Property**

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  
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

**Apopka Art & Foliage Festival, Apopka**

March 28-29, 2020  
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

**Spring Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walks, Winter Park**

April 4, 11, 18 & 25, 2020  
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

**April Wekiwa Bird Survey**

April 11, 2020  
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

**Chertok Nature Photography Contest**

Deadline to submit all entries:  
April 16, 2020  
Contact Teresa at (407) 644-0796

**April Program: Comeback of the Snail Kites - Tyler Beck**

April 16, 2020  
Contact Rick at (407) 277-3357

**April Field Trip: Mead Botanical Garden, Winter Park**

April 18, 2020  
Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

**Orange Audubon Society Birdathon and Fort De Soto Trip**

April 18, 2020  
Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

**Limited Edition Field Trip to Fort De Soto Park, Pinellas County**

April 19, 2020  
Contact Bob at (407) 459-5617

**Central Florida Earth Day, Lake Eola, Orlando**

April 25, 2020  
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525