



This Month's Program:

May 21, 2020

Birds of Lake County by Gallus Quigley



Gallus Quigley and Beck Smith at 2019 North Shore Birding Festival. *Photo: Deborah Green*

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) plans to present its May 21st program "Birds of Lake County" by Gallus Quigley remotely. As of press time, the link to view the program and ask questions is not available. OAS members will be provided the link and instructions in the mid-month update.

Gallus is a real local bird expert. He works as a planner, biologist and trails coordinator with the Lake County Parks & Trails Division and has been an avid birder for over 25 years. In his spare time, he works as a birding guide and several years ago formed Archaeopteryx Birding and Nature Tours with his wife Rebecca (Beck) Smith.

Gallus is the Cornell eBird regional reviewer for Lake and Sumter counties

and was Lake County's coordinator for the Second Florida Breeding Bird Atlas.

Gallus' 2008 Florida Big Year, with 359 bird species spotted, remains the third highest count on record. He also broke Lake County's Big Year record in 2015 with 243 species. Gallus was a past Orange Audubon Society board member and has contributed to the development of the North Shore Birding Festival where he leads trips. Watch for the link and join us May 21st for a fascinating program. *Rick Baird*

Chertok Photo Contest Event

Thanks to all the photographers who entered the 32nd Annual Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest this year. OAS still has hopes that we can hold our annual June event, revealing the winners, along with our Silent Auction. However, the future of the COVID-19 pandemic in Central Florida in regard to gatherings of this type is not clear. We will keep you posted.

What's Open and What's Not

Please follow county (or state) COVID-19 stay-at-home orders. When these are lifted, OAS will post information on its Facebook page as to places to get out in nature. OAS' Facebook page is at [this link](#).

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/



Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive Fifth Anniversary

On May 1, 2015, the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive was opened to the public after many years of lobbying by birders for access. The former farm fields and wetlands of the North Shore, which are rich in bird life, had been designated an Important Bird Area.

Without any tourism money spent, volunteers — including Orange Audubon Society (OAS) volunteers through our [North Shore Birding Festival](#) and [Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive](#) Facebook page— have put the word out. Now the Drive is so popular that the few [St. Johns River Water Management District](#) staff who manage the North Shore for Lake Apopka restoration feel the strain.

Each year since the Drive opened, OAS has celebrated the anniversary with volunteers on the Drive with spotting scopes, bird books, and information.

Since the Drive is now closed due to COVID-19 concerns, our event has been cancelled, but in this issue we commemorate the wonderful access made available by the District. We also suggest other ways to access the North Shore besides the Drive (by bicycle or on foot). *See page 8.*



Osprey on sign, Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. *Photo: Lynn Marie Folts*



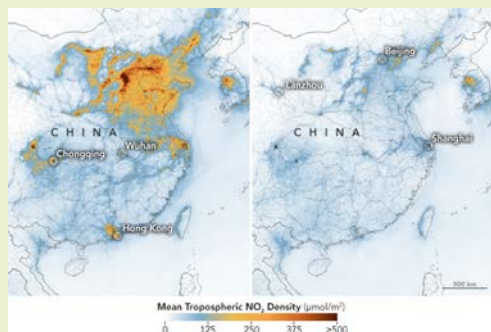
Conservation Must Go On

The 50th anniversary of Earth Day, occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic, has been thought-provoking. What will life be like when the pandemic is over? Hoping that most of our members have escaped severe economic hardship and loss of loved ones, we turn to the environment. Can we modify our lifestyles to be a part of the solution to Climate Change and other environmental problems?

And will personal changes we are making be backed up by positive federal policy changes, or with the focus on COVID-19, will fossil fuel interests work toward weakening our environmental regulations?

Due to the shutdowns and precautions, everyone is already driving less and combining trips. Earth-orbiting satellites have observed significantly reduced emissions of nitrogen oxides, which come primarily from cars, trucks, power plants and factories. California, which was the first state to issue a shelter-in-place order, has seen the most prominent decrease in emissions. Southern Californians are breathing fresh air and seeing blue sky for the first time in a long time.

You have read other stories of emissions reductions worldwide. But we need to be careful about claiming an environmental win. The unprecedented situation we are facing is still unfolding, and [much will depend on what happens next.](#)



February satellite readings in the troposphere (the lower atmosphere) of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), a pollutant primarily from burning fossil fuels, show a dramatic decline compared to early January when power plants were operating at normal levels. NASA Earth Observatory

Do you remember how the Chinese government shuttered factories and limited vehicle traffic before and during the Beijing Summer Olympics in 2008, and how air quality dramatically improved, making the games possible? Unfortunately, studies show that 75 percent of the improved air quality gains were reversed within a year after the Olympics ended. See this NPR report: [Why China's Air Has Been Cleaner During The Coronavirus Outbreak.](#)

There is a lot of work to do to make our emergency air quality changes permanent. National Audubon Society's [Take Action campaigns](#) give us an easy way to contact our legislators as issues come up. Also, please sign up for Audubon Florida [Advocate Newsletter at this link.](#)

Best Personal Actions

For Earth Day's 50th Anniversary, we polled Orange Audubon Society (OAS) board members as to best actions to take to help the environment. Here are a few:

Consume much less of EVERYTHING. Consider how your consumption is affecting the world, every time you purchase something — transportation, appliances, cleaners, pesticides, packaging, landscape plants, everything.

Consume less meat, particularly beef. It takes energy to raise, ship and sell livestock. And meat processing has become dangerous! A single pork processing facility in Sioux Falls, South Dakota is now the biggest COVID-19 hotspot in the country, with more than 600 workers ill.

It's a great time to transition to a plant-based, lower carbon footprint diet. Is anyone still hearing the myth that you need meat for protein? Combining whole grains with legumes or nuts gives you all the essential amino acids you need for your body to make complete proteins, as Frances Moore Lappe (*Diet for a Small Planet*) taught us 50 years ago.

An easy way to start is to give up meat one day a week — meatless *continued next page*



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

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The OASis (Orange Audubon Society information source) newsletter is published monthly, September–June, and posted on the OAS website. A link announcing new issues is e-mailed to subscribers.

Never miss out on OAS happenings. Add or update your email address by contacting newsletter@orangeaudubonfl.org.

For other membership information, contact: Mike Daley
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Best Personal Actions

continued from p.2

Mondays. For a more health-focused intensive one month introduction, try [the Engine 2 Plant Strong diet](#) (first published in 2009).

Buying local produce is a good goal—shipping and packaging take a lot of energy. With limited local agriculture, this is challenging in Central Florida, but we can keep working toward it. One of the last farms near Lake Apopka, [Long and Scott](#), sells sweet corn and other produce. You can pass by on your way home from visiting the Lake Apopka North Shore. [Farm to Table information](#) has been shared by Visit Florida. Growing your own veggies here is really challenging, so joining with others in a community garden can help.

Get your bicycle tuned up and do more bike riding. Central Florida is one of the most dangerous places to ride your bike to work, but we need to keep advocating for improvements. And meanwhile, for leisure, bicycling opens new possibilities. For example, the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive is closed, but you can ride your bike on any of the roads. See [this map](#) for legal parking places at the trailheads.

[Friends of Lake Apopka](#) continues working toward connections between the West Orange/South Lake Trails (both part of the Florida Coast-to-Coast Trail) and Lake Apopka Loop Trail. Bicycling is a real form of ecotourism, bringing in income to the community as cyclists from out of town enjoy our scenic trails.

Audubon Florida Reports

The state budget that was passed by the legislature March 19th has not yet been sent to the Governor, as of press time. Re-analysis regarding shortfalls in revenue, mainly caused by the COVID-19 economic downturn, may make the Governor veto items that would pass in normal years.

Please Request Veto of SB 410

Senate Bill 410, Growth Management, passed by the legislature, contains an amendment which restricts the authority of many county governments to manage growth within their borders. If a county says “no” to a harmful development

proposal, for example as Seminole County did in 2018 to the proposed River Cross development — since the proposal specified dense development outside Seminole County’s voter-approved rural boundary — SB 410 would allow the developer to find a city willing to say “yes,” allow the city to annex the footprint of the development and leave the county no ability to deny it.



The Econlockhatchee River. Photo: Gabbie Buendia

An Audubon Florida (AF) Action Alert makes it easy to sign a letter to Governor DeSantis asking him to veto this bill. Sign up for [Audubon Advocate at this link](#) or write a personal letter or email to the Governor (governorron.desantis@eog.myflorida.com). This is time-sensitive, as the budget and all the bills may be passed to the Governor any time now.

Seminole County Nixes Swap

A legal battle between Seminole County and developer Chris Dorworth made birders, naturalists, and community members tense about the future of Seminole County’s Econ River Wilderness Area. After the Seminole County Commission denied his development plans in 2018 for not complying with the rural boundary, Dorworth sued the county and then proposed swapping the Econ River Wilderness Area for his development site in order to settle the lawsuit.

OAS joined Audubon Florida, Seminole Audubon and other environmental groups and scores of residents in writing to oppose any land swap. Board member Gabbie Buendia helped with the campaign through the website [saveecon.com](#).

At the Seminole County Board of County Commissioners meeting on April 28th, we prevailed! The commission voted 4-1 to cease discussions of the swap.

Florida Legislative News:

- Funding for Florida Forever was budgeted at \$100 million (with Central Florida’s Senator Linda Stewart as the prime advocate). The funding stream is documentary stamp taxes (taxes on real estate sales), and experts predict sales of homes will continue (sadly as people lose their homes), so this funding stream may be impacted less than sales tax, tolls and other revenues. Still, the economic downturn puts purchases of conservation lands on hold.

- SB 712 Water Quality: This bill was passed by the legislature and will be sent to the Governor for approval. While some environmental organizations are pressing for a veto because the bill doesn’t go far enough, AF supports signing this bill because it is an important start. The bill includes provisions for long-neglected regulations in areas such as septic tanks, nutrient pollution, stormwater, Best Management Practices and biosolids. For more details, see the [April OASis](#) (p.3).

Local Climate Efforts

OAS is a member of the First 50 Coalition that convinced Orlando Mayor Dyer in August 2017 to establish a goal to move Orlando to 100 percent clean and renewable energy by 2050. One of the biggest efforts has been to convince Orlando Utilities Commission to close one of its two coal plants and not just substitute natural gas, which is now mined with damaging fracking, but install more solar. Updates to come.

Clean Water Act Upheld

The Supreme Court ruled April 23th that sewage plants and other industries cannot avoid environmental requirements under the Clean Water Act. This 6-3 vote was related to a case from Hawaii about whether a sewage treatment plant needs a federal permit when it sends wastewater deep underground. The decision should prevent sending dirty water on an indirect route to rivers, oceans and other navigable waterways. See [this link](#) for more on this decision.

We all look forward to easier times. Stay safe. Be happy. Birdwatch!!

OAS Conservation Committee

**Global Big Day
May 9, 2020**

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has provided many fun opportunities for people to look for birds and provide valuable scientific data.

The next opportunity will be May 9th in which people worldwide are encouraged to safely observe birds at their home, in their neighborhoods or local parks.

Even if we are on a stay-at-home order, please participate by spending at least 5 minutes observing and recording the birds you see at home. Your observations can be reported to eBird online or with the free mobile eBird app.

If you don't have an eBird account, it is free and easy to create one at ebird.org. By submitting data you are providing valuable information to help scientists to protect diminishing bird populations.

For Global Big Day all that is required is at least one 5-minute observation, but you don't need to limit yourself to that. You can submit checklists of birds throughout the day at different times. Can you find more birds at a particular time of day? Is one place at your home more popular with birds? Observing birds in this way can open up a new world of discovery for you.

The focus of this year's Global Big Day will be the number of checklists collected globally. Last year 35,209 eBirders from 174 countries collected 92,284 checklists in one day! The goal this year is 100,000 checklists — your participation can help the lab set that record.

If you have a bird that you can't identify, use [Merlin Bird ID](#), a free app from Cornell Lab or the free [Audubon Field Guide](#). If you take photos and add them to your checklist, they might end up on the Global Big Day page! You can share what you see on social media with [#globalbigday](#). On May 9th the Global Big Day page will post sightings in real time.

Last year 56 checklists were submitted and 116 species reported from Orange County. This year even with social distancing, let's see if we can have even more participation, even if it is more people reporting their yard birds. Remember to follow recommendations from local health officials. *Kathy Rigling*

2020 Birdathon Results

Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) Birdathon was April 16, 2020. This is one of OAS' major fundraising events. Twenty-three teams consisting of 29 people participated and submitted lists. A total of 148 species were recorded, which is quite respectable considering park closures and stay at home orders. For comparison, we saw 175 species in 2017, which was a high total for many years.



Blue-headed Vireo, Orlando yard, March 2014. Photo: Mary Keim

Thanks to those who birded and sent in their lists: Bruce Anderson, Sherri Brown, Linda Carpenter, Cecie Catron, Gigi DelPizzo, Angela Gan, Linda Gaunt, Deborah Green, Karen Hamblett, Mary Keim, Lorri Lilja, Larry Martin, Lori Mathis, Sam Mitcham, Mary Piercey, Nancy Prine, Gallus Quigley, Kathy Rigling, Brook Rohman, Loretta Satterhwaite, Steve Shaluta, Randy Snyder, Mary Soule, Bob Stamps, Bill and Joyce Stefancic, Leesa Sward, and Teresa Williams.

The highest count was from Lori Mathis with 92 species, second was Kathy Rigling with 51 species and third was Lorri Lilja with 47 species.

In addition to backyards, teams went to the Lake Apopka Loop Trail, Mead Botanical Garden, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, PEAR Park, Lake May Reserve, and Genius Drive area.

Some notable species were Western Kingbird, Gray Kingbird, Cape May Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Canada Goose, Crested Caracara, Barn Owl, Orchard Oriole, White-crowned Sparrow, Chuck-will's-widow, Indigo Bunting and Hairy Woodpecker.

We hope additional pledges will be coming in, and we'll announce the winner in fund-raising in the June OASis.

If you want to make a donation for Birdathon, the yellow Donate button is on OAS' website home page on the top right. At the end of the transaction write a note, Birdathon. If you have any questions, email Teresa Williams at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com. Thanks so much for participating!

Kathy Rigling, Birdathon Chair



World Migratory Bird Day—BIRDS CONNECT OUR WORLD!

World Migratory Bird Day is officially celebrated on the second Saturday of May in Canada and the US (May 9th in 2020) and the second Saturday of October in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean (October 10th in 2020).

To commemorate World Migratory Bird Day, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) encourages you to participate in the Global Big Day, sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology (left column).

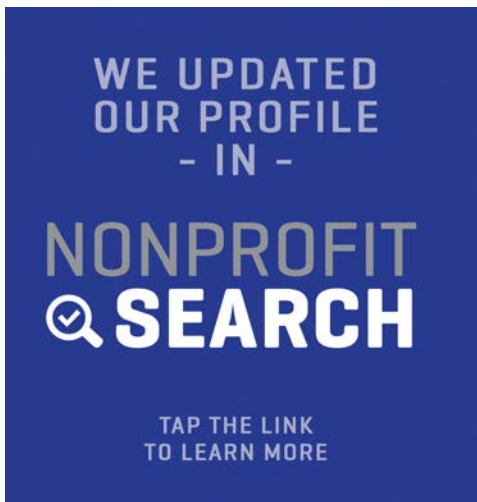
April is the best month for spring migration in Central Florida and although OAS' spring bird walks were cancelled, birders saw many species of songbirds on their own. As of press time, these species are showing up in North Carolina and farther north. It's still worth getting out to see what we can see in May. And with luck shutdown orders will be lifted in time for us to congregate to see these beautiful songbirds on their way south in September and October. Also, enjoy our story of migration of a shorebird (p.7).

Central Florida Foundation Profile Updated

Orange Audubon Society has updated its Central Florida Foundation profile.

The Central Florida Foundation works with nonprofits and across public and private sectors to bring philanthropy to life.

Once the profile is published on the Foundation website, donors can more easily read about an organization. Click on the logo below to read about our all-volunteer organization and what we are accomplishing.



Update Your Membership

Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) membership committee is sending requests to join OAS to people whose memberships have expired and those who have never been members but who regularly open our email blasts.

Please respond by joining us at the rate of \$20 or more (students \$15) for your [3-way membership in OAS, Audubon Florida and National Audubon Society](#). It takes a few months for a new membership to show up on our chapter roster provided by National Audubon Society. So please join now so we will have your correct mailing address for OAS' one print mailing of the year in September. If questions, email membership@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Nature Podcasts

In this time of social isolation, I have explored podcasts as a form of entertainment and nature-related information. The podcast that I will review in this article is both witty, light-hearted and informative.

First of all if you have never listened to a podcast they can be found by searching your podcast app if you have a smart phone, or you can go to each website and listen online. I have really started to enjoy listening to podcasts. They are great fillers when doing menial chores or just relaxing.

[Ray Brown's Talkin' Birds](#) (yes that is the correct spelling) is a light, fun, fast paced weekly podcast all about birds and their conservation. Each week they feature up-to-date bird conservation news, guest experts on bird-related topics, an in-depth look at a particular bird and a fun mystery bird game.

Recent guest experts have included John Nelson, author of *Flight Calls*, Chimney Swift Researcher Dr. Margaret Rubega and "The Birdist" Nick Lund talking about doing a Fantasy Birding big year. Topics featured recently on the show included how "electric eggs" can protect shorebirds (Feb. 2, 2020), a 46,000 year old Horned Lark (March 1, 2020) and help for high frequency sound-challenged birders (April 26, 2020).

If any of those topics intrigue you, no worries, you can go to their website, talkinbirds.com and listen to any of their 777 archived shows. If you listen to the show live online Sundays 9:30-10:00 a.m., you can call into the mystery bird contest to have a chance to win bird-related prizes.

Talkin' Birds has been broadcasting since 2006 and the show also maintains a Facebook page that follows along with each show's featured topics. Ray Brown, the host of the show has been a regular guest on NPR's Weekend Edition Saturday with Scott Simon.

Talkin' Birds is sponsored by the Ocean State Bird Club, Larkwire, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Redstart Birding, *Bird Observer*, Birds and Beans Coffee, *BirdWatching* magazine, *Bird Watcher's Digest* and Droll Yankees Feeders.

Kathy Rigling

Plants for Birds

Doug Tallamy Webinar

The Florida Wildflower Foundation (FWF), co-sponsor for Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) plant kiosks on the Lake Apopka North Shore, celebrates National Wildflower Week in early May.

FWF will kick off its celebration at 2 p.m. Monday, May 4, with a webinar by Doug Tallamy, author of the popular book, [Bringing Nature Home](#). OAS has written about Dr. Tallamy's research in the [April 2020 OASis](#) (p.5), in the [February 2020 OASis](#) (p.3) and in earlier issues.

Dr. Tallamy is nationally renowned as an advocate for restoring landscapes with native plants. As he'll point out in this compelling webinar, *A Guide to Restoring the Little Things that Run the World*, we must bring native plants to our landscapes to preserve the biodiversity upon which our own health and well-being depends.

Join FWF for this free event - just [click here to register](#). Click to follow [Florida Wildflower Foundation](#) on the web.



Rosy Maple Moth, Oakland Nature Preserve.
Photo: Mary Keim

June Summer Reading

In June, we'll provide book reviews for your summer reading, for example, Doug Tallamy's new book *Nature's Best Hope*. Would anyone like to review it? Any recent or older favorites that other OAS members might like can be reviewed. Email newsletter@orangeaudubonfl.org with your idea. Deadline for submittals is May 15th. Thanks!

Not Supposed To Be Here

Gainesville, FL. Christmas bird count. Circa 1960. Me, Edwin Poole, Dr. Allen, a University of Florida ornithology prof, Ph. D. from Pittsburgh. I had drifted from the other three. See Edwin walking towards me shaking his head. "It's a Great Crested Flycatcher. They're trying to make it a kingbird." We walk back. They are still looking at the bird. Allen says "I know how to solve this." Walks to car, opens trunk, out comes a shot gun. Down tumbles a GCFL. You are not supposed to be here. We get together with other counters at Allen's house that night. Allen tells us not to tell anybody he shot the bird, "Good idea," I think. Allen continues, "When Cruickshank (leader of CBC on east coast) sees our results he will call me say you botched this one." I will reply, "Look in my freezer."

Lake N of Eustis, FL. Circa 1996. Me, grandson Logan, Toni Dama, Mrs. Yokel, wife of state president of Audubon Florida, Field trip chairman from Gainesville, one other person. Splash! Splash! About 20 feet away. We turn. Several exclamations of varied composition. "Black-bellied Whistling Duck!" several shout. You are not supposed to be here. Species and number seen were sent to Parks Small, biologist at Wekiwa Springs State Park. Several weeks later I was talking with Parks. "Seen any interesting birds?" he asks. "No, Oh, yeah. We saw a pair of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks." "You saw them?" Yes, and I told him who else saw them. Parks, "I was going to delete them from the count." At that time a few were on the west coast, nowhere near central Florida.

Near Brisbane, Australia. 1993. I usually go for a run before breakfast. One morning I saw a small flock of "Sulfur-crested Cockatoos" in a field pecking at seeds on the grass. Next morning, still there. And the third morning. Finally, the penny dropped. I've never seen a Sulfur-crested Cockatoo on the ground, usually flying. Closer examination of the the birds. They are not Sulfur-crested Cockatoos. Dash back to house, retrieve bird book. Get close, no binocs needed. They are Long-billed Corellas. Found in south Australia about 700 miles south of Cleveland! You are not supposed to be here! Contacted a local birder. Yes, once in a while they show up here.

Richard Poole

Baby Owl Shower

The annual Baby Owl Shower at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey (CBOP) raises funds and awareness during baby bird season. This year the event will be digital on Facebook from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. on May 9th. Join CBOP for a morning of activities on owls and other raptors. Play games, win prizes and see babies! Follow [this link](#) for details.



Barred Owl, Another Treasure of Mead Botanical Garden

"Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?" You have surely heard the distinct call of the Barred Owl. The strong hooting—actually a *hoo hoo, ho-ho, hoo hoo ho-hooooawr*—can be heard in my neighborhood just after sunset. s

If you visit Mead Botanical Garden in Winter Park, you may see one or two Barred Owls in the early morning. A pair has nested there in a large earpod tree for the past 10 years, and they usually produce two or three owlets.

Visitors to the Garden often ask: "Are we going to see the owls today?" There were two chicks this year and they fledged in March, according to Larry Martin, Orange Audubon Society Field Trips Chair.



Wide Awake – Barred Owl. 2015 Chertok Photo Contest, Third Place Winner, Novice Category. Photo: Katie Houvener

Barred Owls live year-round throughout mature forests in North America east of the Great Plains and north into Canada all the way to the West Coast. A stocky, medium-sized owl 16 to 25 inches tall, with a rounded head, prominent facial discs and no ear tufts, the bird is gray-brown above with pale spots and pale below with bold streaks.

Unlike other owls, it has dark eyes. The females are larger than the males and the owlets have thick, white, downy feathers. Territorial and monogamous, Barred Owls raise one brood a year

and usually nest in a natural cavity 20 to 40 feet high in a large, old tree.

They are predatory carnivores and eat a variety of small animals, including birds as large as a grouse and mammals as large as a rabbit. They also eat amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates and use shrewd tactics to capture them.

Relying on their keen vision and hearing, they wait quietly on a tree branch scanning an area to search for prey. They also perch over streams and plunge down to catch fish, or wade in shallow water to pursue crayfish.

Most amazing, they can hunt from the ground by running and pouncing on a victim! Barred Owls swallow small animals whole and larger mammals in pieces; they first eat the head and then the body. Fascinating!

Territorial year-round, Barred Owls will chase away intruders by hooting loudly. During nesting season they can be aggressive and may strike intruders with their feet. While courting, the owl projects a loud series of spectacular vocalizations that sound like maniacal laughter, a startling cacophony I thoroughly enjoy.

Barred Owls are numerous and not threatened at the moment; however, they are forest birds and need large, dead trees for nest sites. These requirements make them sensitive to the expansion of logging, a major industry in the Northwest U.S. and Canada, and to any land development that destroys mature forests.

Consider installing a nest box in your yard, well before breeding season. Attach a guard to keep predators from raiding eggs and young. Or to see nesting Barred Owls, take a walk through Mead Botanical Garden, which has been open during the pandemic. Check it out! There is much more to learn about our beautiful Barred Owls! *Linda Carpenter*

Phalaropes Migrating Through

On April 25th, birders Sam Mitcham and Mary Soule found a unique kind of sandpiper, a phalarope, in some hydrilla-filled wetlands on the Lake Apopka North Shore. The bird was near a few Common Gallinules, a few lingering American Coots and many Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. A Black Tern swooped by.

Phalaropes are unusual in that [while foraging in the water, they often spin in circles to create a whirlpool](#) that sucks up prey items to the surface. They also peck prey from the surface of mud or water, standing still and stabbing at passing flies, and probing inside mud.

Phalaropes breed in the north and migrate all the way to South America with a migration stopover at one of the West's saline lakes.

Smaller than the yellowlegs, the phalarope Sam and Mary found had some red-orange and black color on it. During the day, other birders found both a Wilson's Phalarope and a Red-necked Phalarope at that location. The latter was a real rarity and lifer for most of us.

Phalaropes are unusual in the bird world in that the females are the larger and more brightly colored. And shortly after laying the eggs, adult females begin to migrate south, leaving the males to raise the young.

The Wilson's Phalarope breeds in the prairie pothole region of North Dakota up to Alberta, Canada, in small marshes and shallow wetlands. They inhabit highly saline lakes for much of the year, using those in western North America as staging areas in summer and those in South America, high-elevation lakes in the Andes, as well as the Patagonian lowlands and Tierra del Fuego, as major wintering locales. The annual migration generally involves a round-trip flight of at least 11,000 miles.

The Red-necked Phalarope, in contrast, breeds in the Arctic tundra. After breeding it migrates to the coast to become pelagic, wintering in tropical oceans. At sea, it often concentrates over upwellings or tide rips, sometimes around edges of kelp beds. The third species, the Red Phalarope, with few inland records in Florida, is one of only a couple of truly ocean-going shorebirds.



Wilson's Phalarope in breeding plumage with two Lesser Yellowlegs, Lake Apopka North Shore, April 25, 2020. Photo: Sam Mitcham. Red-necked Phalarope in breeding plumage, Lake Apopka North Shore, April 25, 2020. Photo: Mary Soule. Wilson's Phalaropes in winter plumage at migration stopover, Mono Lake, California, August 2019. Photo: Deborah Green. Wilson's Phalarope in winter plumage at Orlando Wetlands Park, September 2019. Photo: Mary Soule

Wilson's and some Red-necked Phalaropes take advantage of unique stopover places during migration. The Great Salt Lake and Mono Lake have alkaline, highly saline water that supports no fish, yet it teems with other aquatic life. Algae, at the bottom of the food web, support trillions of tiny brine shrimp plus the aquatic larvae and pupae of vast numbers of alkali flies. This simple but highly productive system allows not only countless breeding birds to raise young, but also migrants to refuel. The Great Salt Lake and Mono Lake are fantastic birding sites.

After several weeks of gorging on the lakes' bounty, Wilson's Phalaropes undergo a complete molt from breeding to winter plumage. Molting *during* migration is rare in the bird world. Shortly after the molt Wilson's Phalaropes nearly double their weight on brine shrimp and brine flies. Clad in new feather coats and fueled for their journey, they fly essentially nonstop to their wintering grounds in the highlands of Bolivia, Peru, and all over northern Argentina.

On eBird, there are over 80 records of Wilson's Phalaropes on the Lake Apopka North Shore, besides the recent sighting, the earliest being in 1973. There are many more records on the coast. A winter-plumaged Wilson's Phalarope was seen at Orlando Wetlands Park September 5-8, 2019, delighting birders with its spinning feeding activity.

Much rarer, the Red-necked Phalarope has been recorded fewer than 100 times in Florida, most sightings offshore. On the Lake Apopka North Shore, records were from August 31, 1974, September 23, 1999, May 16, 2000, September 28, 2004, and August 22, 2008. The latter four were by Harry Robinson, who did bird surveys for the St. Johns River Water Management District from 1998 to 2017. It is a thrill to see these birds just passing through.

Deborah Green

Sources: Bruce Anderson, Paul Hueber, Cornell Lab of Ornithology's [All About Birds](#), eBird, and Stevenson, H.M. and B.H. Anderson. 1994. [The Birdlife of Florida](#). University Press of Florida. 261-264.

An Amazing Place

On the fifth anniversary of the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD), Orange Audubon Society (OAS) has a lot to celebrate. Beautiful Lake Apopka is on its way back to health and the Central Florida community knows it. In a dramatic change from the lake's reputation as a dead lake, Lake Apopka is now considered a special place, and real estate values around the lake have soared.

People know a lot more about birds and their migration cycles than they did five years ago, and they are learning to value our wetlands. While a lot of visitors still go to see the alligators, more and more are observing and photographing the birds. They are learning what birds will be leaving and which will be arriving in migration and extraordinary photos are being taken.

The 20,000-acre Lake Apopka North Shore has been designated as a Globally Important Bird Area by the American Bird Conservancy. This large expanse of wetlands abutting a large lake in the middle of the Florida peninsula is easily seen by migrating birds. Approximately 370 species have been recorded, more than at national wildlife refuges and even at the Everglades.

After the St. Johns River Water Management District (District) purchased the farms to restore water quality in the lake; by stopping the

input of nutrients and a variety of other measures, phosphorus levels in the lake have dropped by 60%. The latest effort is by a company called Phosphorus Free Water Solutions that comes from the wastewater industry. It is a performance contract, so the District pays nothing until measurable amounts of phosphorus are removed.



Great Blue Heron and alligator on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. Photo: Jan Pewsey

Even before the current effort, submerged aquatic vegetation like eelgrass is coming back. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission continues working to restore bass fisheries.

Starting about 7 years ago, a big effort was made to plant Spatterdock and bulrushes to provide habitat for fish and birds. Those plantings have filled in and both birds and fish are plentiful there. Now, other native aquatic plants are being planted.

The Lake Apopka Loop Trail (bicycle and hiking trail) along the lake was

opened by Orange County and the District in 2013. When Lake County completed its portion, it formed an 18-mile trail. LAWD was opened by the District in May 2015; it traverses 11 miles of existing berm roads on the southeastern part of the North Shore.

District gate counters indicated that about 124,000 people visited in 2019, up 20% from 2018. Local residents and out-of-town birders and photographers are discovering LAWD. Out-of-towners buy gas, food and incidentals in the area, providing economic benefits to nearby cities.

OAS, which has been pushing for birding access to the North Shore since farm days, reminds everyone that the area is not run by a park service. We consider it a gift that the District gave us these wonderful 5 years of access, and we fully understand that, with COVID-19 in addition to staff's other responsibilities, LAWD cannot be managed safely if opened.

Two things we can do to help are 1) encourage people to hike or bicycle in on the Lake Apopka Loop Trail with access to many existing berm roads, and 2) plan for a docent program that will provide information to LAWD newcomers. Please contact OAS at info@orangeaudubonfl.org if you would be willing to help.

Deborah Green

MAY/JUNE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive 5th Anniversary

- *Postponed to an unspecified date*
May 2, 2020

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Baby Owl Shower, Center for Birds of Prey, Maitland

May 9, 2020- *To be held online (see p.6)*
Follow [this link](#) for details.

May Wekiwa Bird Survey - Cancelled

May 16, 2020

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

May Program: Birds of Lake County - Gallus

Quigley - *To be held online*

May 21, 2020

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

May Field Trip: Bulow Creek State Park - May be cancelled, will be announced in Mid-month Update

May 23, 2020

Contact Larry at (407) 647-5834

Jay Watch Training

May 2020- *To be held online*

<http://fl.audubon.org/get-involved/jay-watch>

Limited Edition Field Trip to Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area, Kenansville - May be cancelled, will be announced in Mid-month Update

May 30, 2020

Contact Bob at (407) 459-5617

June Challenge Kickoff - May be cancelled, will be announced in Mid-month Update

June 6, 2020

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

June Wekiwa Bird Survey - Cancelled

June 13, 2020

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

June Program: Chertok Nature Photography

Contest- *See announcement in Mid-month Update*

June 18, 2020

Contact Teresa at (407) 644-0796