



Top left, Belted Kingfisher. Right, Spoonbill Landing. Photos: Wayne Bennett. Left, Wayne Bennett Photo: Courtesy Wayne Bennett

Wildlife and Nature Photography... Little Things Mean a Lot by Wayne Bennett November 21, 2024

Have you ever looked at a photo and thought, I wish I could make an image like that? Well, you can! Wayne Bennett, Orange Audubon Society's November speaker, says it's a matter of learning how to see things with a creative eye...how to understand what it is you want to accomplish and how to get there...understanding which lens to use...how to think "out of the box"...looking for the little things that can make a big difference in your imagery. This presentation leads up to the 37th annual Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest, which has a deadline of April 30, 2025.

Wayne is an award-winning professional nature photographer whose images have been recognized by the likes of *Nature's Best Photography Magazine* and displayed at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. A charter member of North American Nature Photography Association and a past president of Orlando Camera Club, Wayne teaches nature photography, gives presentations, leads workshops and has judged our Chertok photo contest several times. See his incredible nature photography on his website: waynebennettphotography.com/. In the Orlando Camera Club's annual photo competition, the "photo of the year" earns the Wayne Bennett Award in his honor.

We will be back at Leu Gardens on November 21st, 7 p.m. Join us for a great program of interest to photographers and non-photographers alike. Leu Garden details below.

Alan Shapiro, Programs Chair

Joint Field Trip to Wekiwa Springs State Park November 17, 2024

Orange Audubon Society is pleased to be joining with the Tarflower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society for our second annual field trip to Wekiwa Springs State Park, which is known for its large areas of fire-maintained natural sandhill and pine flatwoods habitat.

Wekiwa is the crown jewel of the state park system with an impressive diversity of unique plants and habitats with a wide variety of birds. Join this special joint field trip in which you will observe wildlife and the distinctive plant life.

In the well-burned sandhill habitat, many specialty species may be found including Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bachman's Sparrows, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Pine Warblers, Blue-headed Vireos, Carolina Chickadees, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Northern Bobwhite and Red-tailed Hawks.

Other wildlife includes White-tailed deer, Sherman's Fox Squirrels, and Fence Lizards. Our co-leaders from the Tarflower Chapter will point out some of the native plant species that thrive here. Bring your cameras as you enjoy the beautiful landscapes here.

This trip is free but pre-registration is required by signing up on [the OAS website](http://theOASwebsite.com).

You are responsible for the regular park entry fee of \$6 for more than one person, \$4 for a single person. For questions, contact me at riglingkathy@gmail.com.

Kathy Rigling



The well-burned sandhill habitat at Wekiwa Springs State Park abounds with wildflowers and native grasses. Photo: Deborah Green

ORANGE AUDUBON SOCIETY programs are free. No reservations necessary.



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Programs are the 3rd Thursday of each month (September–June) at 7:00 p.m. and all but December are at **Harry P. Leu Gardens in the Camellia Room** at 1920 North Forest Ave., Orlando, FL 32803

For map and directions, visit:
www.leugardens.org/plan/directions/

Positive Agreement on Deseret Ranch Reached

Thanks to Audubon Florida, Sierra Club and other environmentalists as well as Rick Baird, chair of Orange Audubon's Conservation Committee, for speaking out on September 23rd about the impacts of the City of Orlando's proposed annexation of the Deseret Ranch properties. Thanks also to all our members who engaged on this issue. [The Orlando Sentinel](#) reports that the City of Orlando and Orange County have come to an agreement on several issues that will avert the City's annexation of 82 square miles of wetlands, flatwoods, scrub, and ranch in eastern Orange County. As we reported last month, the City seemed poised to annex prior to possible passage of Orange County Charter Amendment 10 establishing a process for voluntary municipal annexations and land use in rural areas.

Under the new interlocal agreement between Orange County and the City, whether Amendment 10 and the other two environmental Charter Amendments (8 and 9) pass or not, the terms of any future annexation will be negotiated under authority shared by the County and the City. Thank you to Orange County for standing firm on this issue on behalf of wetlands and the public interest. And thank you to Mayor Dyer and the members of the Orlando City Council for hearing our concerns and striking an agreement that creates the conditions for more protective comprehensive planning.

Vote For the Environment



Federal, state and local elections will have an impact on the future of our communities, habitats, and the birds we love. Those taking office will have an important influence on the ways that laws are written and enacted at every single level of government. The best way to protect birds and the places they need is to make sure that you research the issues and candidates and vote on or before Election Day on Tuesday, November 5, 2024. Birds can't vote, but you can.

Duck Hunting Issues

The OAS Conservation Committee urges voters to vote no on Amendment 2 on the statewide ballot, entitled "The Right to Fish and Hunt." We recognize the importance that duck hunting has had in the history of the National Wildlife Refuge system, through funds generated through purchase of duck stamps (and birders should and do buy duck stamps). And we know that birders have much in common with duck hunters, in enjoying the early morning tranquility of our wetlands. An [Orlando Sentinel guest editorial](#) on October 22, 2023 by Clay Henderson, Volusia County environmental attorney and past Audubon Florida board member, laid out reasons why this amendment is unnecessary and misleading. Two more recent editorials taking the same position on Amendment 2 are in the [Orlando Sentinel](#).

When I was requested to represent OAS and birders on the St. Johns River Water Management District Lake Apopka North Shore Land Management Plan Advisory Group, an opportunity to work with staff on updates of the 10-year management plan, I had no idea I would be in the middle of a duck hunting controversy. Starting in March 2024, this District Advisory Group met, provided input, was presented summary documents and had the opportunity to email comments. Leading up to public meeting on October 24th, it became clear that hunting, by kayak, would occur, in a remote area on the western side of the 20,000-acre North Shore. So I tried to make the situation less dangerous to the many people cycling, birding and doing nature photography on the North Shore, and to the birds. The solution we arrived at was to insist that FWC have check stations. The stakes are too



First meeting of the Advisory Group, March 2024. Photo: St. Johns River Water Management District

high for the honor system. The hunting interests had expounded on the economic benefit of hunting. But the North Shore is not like T.M. Goodwin or other District properties that are remote and need economic input. The Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive contributed \$6 million to the local economy in 2023. The North Shore presents management challenges due to its enormous public visitation. If hunting brings so much economic impact, FWC should be able to afford to operate check stations. The hunters themselves acknowledged that check stations would be good, as "one bad apple" could spoil it for the others. The official

comment period is over but feel free to email Brent Bachelder, Land Resource Specialist, at bbachelder@sjrwmd.com. *Deborah Green, OAS President with the Conservation Committee*



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

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

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

For other membership information, contact: membership@orangeaudubonfl.org

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OAS welcomes those who wish to volunteer and become more involved in our efforts. Email volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org.

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The Apopka Birding Park Progress Report

After many years of waiting, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is finally moving forward with its long-term nature and environmental education center plans.

As you will have heard, OAS now has a long-term lease from the City of Apopka for most of the 69.5-acre old nursery site to the north of the entrance to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. We had worked since 2016 toward the 2018 surplus donation of this property by the St. Johns River Water Management District to the City of Apopka, with deed restrictions specifying it was to be used for nature-based recreation and education. After two Memorandums of Understanding with the City (2017 and 2023), we worked back and forth with the City crafting the long-term lease that was signed in March of this year ([September OASis, p.1](#)).

OAS announced, interviewed and selected a wonderful architect, Philip Donovan of Little Diversified Architectural Services, by May of this year. There were brainstorming sessions with our board about what we wanted in the building, visioning sessions downtown in Little's 8th floor offices, and an opportunity to show our members our architect's initial plans



Brainstorming session with board members following a clean up of the old Truck Shop; Apopka Birding Park Working Group member Rick Baird at visioning session at our architect's offices; Attendee of our July 18th members program discussing design with our architect. *Photos: Deborah Green.*

If you missed our September program on this project, I kicked off the presentation by explaining why we have worked so hard for this site. Its location adjacent to the entrance to the increasingly popular Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive and the fact that this old nursery site is upland, a disappearing habitat in Central Florida that is rare on the Wildlife Drive, were the primary reasons. Our vision, which is incorporated into our lease, is to restore native grasses and other native plants as habitat for birds and other wildlife.



Birders looking for rare winter sparrows in a "sparrow field" that was subsequently destroyed for other purposes. This is the type of habitat that will be recreated in parts of the 69.5 acre Apopka Birding Park. *Photo: Deborah Green.*

I also explained why we had chosen to renovate the one existing building on the site, an old "Truck Shop," rented out by the nurseryman for farmers to repair their trucks. The building is concrete block filled with cement and sturdy, as originally confirmed by the City's building inspector. To renovate is more ecological than to tear down and build anew, in that it saves all the greenhouse gases emitted in the production and shipping of the building materials, and the ecological problems associated with disposal of demolition waste. Our architect was eager to work on this project for the ecological angle. Following my comments, Philip Donovan shared his team's plans and how they had evolved. On October 16th, we shared our plans at the Apopka City Council meeting to enthusiastic response by the Mayor and Council members. More to come.

Deborah Green, President



Orange Audubon's Apopka Birding Park architect Philip Donovan presents at the City of Apopka Commission meeting. *Photo: City of Apopka YouTube*

Donor Thank You

Since Orange Audubon Society (OAS) announced its long-term lease from the City of Apopka for the Apopka Birding Park this March and showed its initial plans in July, our donors have begun to step up.

OAS is profoundly appreciative of the generous donations toward our nature center in October from Ryan Garrison, Delsy Rodriguez, Michelle Grossman, Traies Roe, and others. Past president Bob Stamps had been on the board of the Florida Conservation Foundation, led by the late Bill Partington. That organization sunsetted years ago and had designated its remaining funds to OAS for its nature center. Thank you, Bob, for shepherding the the organization's generous final donation.

OAS has been fund-raising toward a nature center of our own since the early days of our 57-year history. Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. Creating the Orange Audubon Nature Center at the Apopka Birding Park furthers this mission.

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

Large donations can fund parts of our building, such as the annex or classroom, and come with naming rights. If you, or anyone you know, might want to explore possibilities, please email info@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Donations to OAS are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. For some of our members with IRAs, making qualified charitable distributions (QCD) directly to non-profits may count towards the required minimum distribution, thereby providing a significant tax benefit to you.

Please consult your personal tax advisor and IRA custodian to see if making a QCD will benefit you, and consider donating to Orange Audubon Society, Inc., an eligible 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

We would be deeply grateful to receive your donation to further OAS' tax-exempt mission. Thank you!

*Deborah Green, President
Teresa Williams, Treasurer*

Apopka Birding Park Bird Surveys Last Saturdays of the Month

As Orange Audubon Society (OAS) works on the former nursery site, now called the Apopka Birding Park, that we are transforming to native vegetation and bird habitat, we are documenting the anticipated increase in bird species.

On our kickoff survey in late August, we saw 50 species. The late September survey was cancelled in the aftermath of Hurricane Milton, but the late October survey went really well with 60 species recorded.



Above, Apopka Birding Park August Survey, Photo: Deborah Green. Bell's Vireo, Apopka Birding Park October 2024, Photo: Sam Mitcham. Below, Swainson's Hawk, Apopka Birding Park, October 2024, Photo: Leesa Brown.

Two amazing bird finds occurred. A Bell's Vireo was found by Sam Mitcham. This is a southwestern bird that was a lifer for many of us. And a Swainson's Hawk was seen flying over. Bob Sanders who led the earlier bird surveys on the site in 2017 reported that a Swainson's Hawk had been regular at that time.

I have been working with OAS Vice President Jack Horton on making trails and suggesting projects. Learn about our Birding Park project and improve your birding skills on these early morning surveys. Contact me if interested in joining. I will make sure you know where to meet and fill out the waiver. Email me at alexdebear@icloud.com

Alex DeBear

Bilingual Bird Walk November 3, 2024

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is collaborating again with Observatorio Ambiental Hispano to offer a bilingual family walk on Saturday, November 3rd. It is free and will be held on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. Loaner binoculars will be available. We hope to engage some new people in birding that might join us for bird surveys and the Christmas Bird Count.

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

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

As part of the study, OAS surveyed participants in the Zellwood-Mt. Dora CBC, in which circle the new Apopka Birding Park and OAS Nature Center will be located. Compiler Gallus Quigley has agreed to support our efforts. National Audubon will also be sending out those surveys through all CBC compilers in the next few months, so don't be surprised if you receive one, even if you were not in the Apopka/Zellwood CBC.

OAS members Deborah Green, Kathy Rigling and Susan Thome-Barrett have participated in bi-weekly training using the IDEAL Handbook. See the September OASis, p. 3 for more on this program.

We are hoping to involve the community in the monthly surveys at the Apopka Birding Park, led by Alex DeBear. Participating in a survey will be great orientation prior to the CBC. And using our IDEAL grant, we are buying additional binoculars and printing Spanish language bird ID cards. To work more closely with some of our schools, with underserved populations, we are using the IDEAL grant to fund schoolyard habitat improvements.

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

Limited Edition Field Trip: Birding by Bike on the Lake Apopka North Shore November 9, 2024

Join Alan Shapiro and Pete Johnson on a Biking and Birding Expedition starting at the Green Mountain Scenic Overlook and Trailhead. We will meet at 7:00 a.m. and pedal through beautiful parts of the North Shore that you cannot access by car. Traveling in early morning by bike, we can cover more territory than if hiking, so we are likely to see a greater number of bird species and other critters like otters, gators and bobcats.



Birding by Bicycle. Photo: Alan Shapiro. River Otter. Photo: Robert Sena.

Bring your own bikes and plenty of water, sunscreen, bug spray, a snack, a good hat, binoculars, camera, and anything else you may need for a 3-4 hour bike ride. We will be going slow and stopping frequently, so you need not be an expert cyclist to participate. Pedal-assist bicycles are acceptable. All the roads are packed lime rock and somewhat bumpy, so skinny-tired bikes could be troublesome.

If you have questions, contact Alan Shapiro at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Limited Edition Field Trips are limited to 12 people. Cost per trip is \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. To reserve a spot visit our website at <https://orangeaudubonfl.org/activities/field-trips/> and click on the orange block where at the top where it says Pay here.

Kathy Rigling

Fall Bird Walks at Mead Botanical Garden

To celebrate fall migration, Orange Audubon Society hosted bird walks at Mead Botanical Garden each Saturday in October, except October 12th, the weekend of Hurricane Milton. Attendees, not including the 5 leaders for each walk, numbered thirty-five on October 5th, forty-three on October 19th and twenty-one on October 26th, a total of 99. Forty percent of the attendees were new to the Mead walks. They had heard about the walks from friends or from our education coordinator Kathy Rigling.

Quite a few attendees came from cities outside of Orlando: Daytona Beach, St. Cloud, Lake Worth, Ft. Meyers and Brooksville were a few. Also we had attendees from Arizona, Alabama, Georgia, Ohio and Colorado, and, amazingly, from India, Brazil, Argentina, and Germany!

Alex DeBear and Haden Klinger started birding with OAS' Young Birders Club (were founding members) and are now OAS field trip co-leaders. Alex was the overall Lead of the 10/19 walk and said it was the best birding he had in a long time. We had so many warblers, it was hard to keep the count. This was an excellent migration season for warblers and other birds.

We are grateful to have Mead Botanical Garden access for birding, and thank Larry Martin for his many years of leading these trips and advocating for the birds at Mead. Thanks to Linda Carpenter for being our current Mead liaison.

Linda Gaunt

Meanderings from a Native Plant Gardener and Bird Watcher

The small lavender flowers of my non-native Tea Bush is addictive to bees. There are 30-40 bees in one bush all morning long. Of course, it is also visited by small butterflies (bees chase off the larger ones) and a hummingbird. The House Finches have been seen snacking on my bees in the Tea Bush. Didn't know that was something they would do, but I learn something everyday from the garden. Luckily, Cardinals are very territorial and chased them out. Speaking of territorial, a Hummingbird found a Cardinal eating the seeds of its Coral Honeysuckle vine and chased that bird to the ground. Hummingbirds are fierce.

Painted Buntings not only come to millet feeders but snack on my Tropical Sage seeds. Plant native salvias for the hummingbirds and bees but also to feed Painted Buntings on the spent blooms. The buntings love to hide in the low branches of my Elderberry bush. If you purchase an Elderberry bush, plant it by an area you will mow as they can spread. It is a quick growing bush that bees love and berry-eating birds love, too. If you are looking for a fast-growing place for birds to hide, the bushy Elderberry makes great cover.

Buntings also love the protection of a native Wild Lime with its thorny limbs

(not for gardens with small children). That's where the buntings hide between munching on salvia in my yard. Wild Lime is the host plant for the Giant Swallowtail butterfly. One came by to lay eggs on it before it was even planted. Carolina Wrens were checking it out this spring but decided not to put a nest there. As it gets a bit thicker, I'm sure there will be a cardinal or wren nest in it.

Native Porterweed is the perfect height for hiding dollarweed and covers all but a few very tall stalks of the dollarweed which I pull out as I walk by. It is also loved by bees and butterflies. Dollarweed is itself a native plant that filters water, so I feel I am doing nature a favor by just covering it up (it has a very poor reputation in the home garden).



Sunshine mimosa. Photo: Mary Keim

Sunshine Mimosa puts down deep roots and would be a great ground cover on sunny slopes or areas you may have erosion. I tried digging some out to pass to a friend. After 12 inches of root I gave up. I've since learned to let it grow a bit over the driveway or sidewalk, cut that off, plant that and water it continually and it will take root. Just make sure no one in your family pulls it out too soon because it may look dead in the beginning.

If you want to get rid of a Crape Myrtle and don't want to use poison, get ready for some serious digging. Every little bit of twig or root will sprout. It may take years to remove all the sprouts. You can understand why commercial growers must love this stuff, every little bit sprouts. I've replaced that with a Flatwoods Plum. A small flowering tree that will support the ecosystem versus a Crepe Myrtle that takes the place of a beneficial plant.

So, like Doug Tallamy said, replace the lawn, add native plants and give yourself an enjoyable Homegrown National Park.

Susan Thome-Barrett



Painted Bunting eating seeds. Photo: Joseph Mileyka

Backyard Biodiversity Day Volunteers Appreciated

Thanks to Marian Lichtler for staffing Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) display at Backyard Biodiversity Day on October 19th at Mead Botanical Garden, along with me in the morning and Mark Berhardt in the afternoon. For the 9th year, this was a great event, in which OAS supports the Tarflower Chapter, Florida Native Plant Society in their native plant promotion. Proceeds of the plant sales go toward the habitat restoration Tarflower is doing at Mead.

Deborah Green



Marian Lichtler and Mark Berhardt staff Orange Audubon's booth at Backyard Biodiversity Day 2024. The booth featured our architect's renderings of our planned Nature Center (right). Photo: Larry Rosen

Friends of Wekiva River Hosts Dr. Doug Tallamy

On October 20th, Friends of the Wekiva River presented renowned Professor Doug Tallamy for an inspiring talk on the value of planting natives in our yards to sustain and support our native ecosystems and wildlife that are under strain from loss of habitat. Dr. Tallamy, a professor in the Entomology and Wildlife Ecology Department at the University of Delaware, is the author of several best-sellers on the importance of bringing native plant species back into our yards including, *Bringing Nature Home*, *The Living Landscape* and *Nature's Best Hope*. He is co-founder of the nonprofit Homegrown National Park (HNPARK.org).

Dr. Tallamy brings a positive and uplifting message on how we as individuals can help support nature in our own yards (or balconies). Using examples from his own yard, he showed the audience how he and his wife transformed their yard — a one time, single-species hayfield — into a habitat that supports a wide diversity of native trees, bushes, grasses and wildflowers along with the many butterflies, moths and bees that are attracted to those plants. Plant it, and they will come!

In his talk he discussed how we can help save our native wildlife by throwing it a lifeline by making our yards part of a “Homegrown National Park” that ties together native areas and offers food and shelter to insects, birds and wildlife critical to our natural ecosystems.



Friends of the Wekiva's Jay Exum (left) talks with Doug Tallamy (right) during a tour of Deborah Green's yard, along with members of her HOA's Arbor Committee. Photo: Deborah Green

He discussed the scourge of non-native invasive plants which have been introduced over the years, moving from our gardens into the environment, turning healthy habitat into non-functional habitat, resulting in a serious decline in the diversity of species it can

support. He recommends planting not just any natives, but “Keystone Species” — those species that fuel not just one, but multiple insect populations giving us the best value for our native plant dollars. Keystone species of trees include oaks, cherries, willows, birches, cottonwoods and elms. Native goldenrods, asters, blueberries and sunflowers are a few of the flowering plants that support a wide range of insect life.



Top, Goldenrod. Bottom, Monarch on Elliott's Aster. Photos: Mary Keim.

On-line resources from the Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS.com) can help you find the right plant for your location. Keep in mind that there are smaller native species of oaks if you don't feel you have the room for a large tree.

Dr. Tallamy also reminds us that light pollution can also impact insect population. Excess lighting is a factor in insect decline due to collisions, fatigue, and predation. He recommends outdoor lighting that is motion activated, and if that isn't a possibility, then switching to a yellow bulb will help decrease the number of insects attracted to the light at night.

We all hate mosquitoes but did you know that outdoor spraying only reduces 10% of the mosquito population in your yard while also killing the native predators for those mosquitoes? I read recently that a dragonfly feeds on an average of 100 mosquitos a day. Aerial spraying kills those predators as well as butterflies and bees in the area.

Entomologist, Dr. Tallamy offers a solution that he says is much more effective: creating

a “trap” for mosquito larvae using a bucket of water placed in a sunny area, adding hay, then, after several days adding a mosquito dunk tablet to kill the larvae. He says the bucket is irresistible to gravid mosquitos and will not kill other species while killing many more mosquitos. Dunk tablets are available online or at local hardware stores.

Mosquitoes do not like wind, so he also advised placing a fan at your next outdoor gathering to help keep those pests away.

In *Nature's Best Hope*, Dr. Tallamy talks about what each of us can do to make the Homegrown National Park a successful reality. Reducing our turf grass areas by 50% and planting native plants significantly increases habitat for our wildlife, conserves water resources and reduces or eliminates fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. Don't forget to “Leave the Leaves”, under the tree canopy to provide areas for caterpillars and butterflies to pupate (and Ovenbirds to pick at bugs). If large areas of leaves aren't your style, he recommends native ground covers to hide the leaves.



An Ovenbird wintering in Central Florida. If you allow leaves to accumulate, you create the habitat for this species. Photo: Robert Sena

If you ever have a chance to hear Doug Tallamy speak, don't miss it. Take a neighbor or friend to help spread the word about the Homegrown National Park movement. If you didn't get a chance to hear Dr. Tallamy, Orange Audubon hosted him 3 years ago. The video is part of the OAS Library of videos on YouTube, [“Creating a Homegrown National Park with Doug Tallamy”](#)

Susan Thome-Barrett

Congratulations, Peggy Lantz

Peggy Sias Lantz is a special figure in local environmental history who is still doing interesting things at age 91. Although she has been more active over the years in the Florida Native Plant Society, Peggy has been an important part of Orange Audubon Society, serving as president from 1989 through 1991, holding other offices and serving as newsletter editor for many years.

Peggy was recently honored by the Florida Native Plant Society for her “Restoration of Longleaf Pine Woods” at the top of a hill, adjacent to her home. In this project, she restored a badly overgrown five-acre woods to its longleaf pine/sandhill habitat to encourage return of gopher tortoises, scrub lupine and other native species of plants and animals. Peggy engaged Mark Godts of Green Isle Gardens Native Nursery in Groveland to staff the restoration planting, which she designed herself. To assure that the restoration continues, Peggy has set up an endowment, administered by her offspring.



Peggy Lantz visiting her award-winning longleaf pine restoration project. Photo: Mac Camacho

Some of Peggy’s long list of accomplishments include working with the late Dick Deuring on *Florida’s Incredible Wild Edibles*, first printed in 1993. This out-of-print classic was replaced by her *Florida’s Edible Wild Plants: A Guide to Collecting and Cooking*, published by University Press of Florida in 2013. She published *The Young Naturalist’s Guide to Florida* in 1994 and *The Florida Water Story* in 1998, both co-authored by the late Wendy Hale. The latter two target middle school children and have been used in local schools.

Peggy is steeped in Florida history, living in a West Orange County lake community that her grandfather settled in 1914. Among her recent books are *Lake Lucy Tales* and *Adventure Tales from Florida’s Past*. Her latest book is coming out soon. Kudos, Peggy, on your many accomplishments.
Deborah Green

Northern Bobwhite: A Species in Sharp Decline

With a short tail and legs and intricate patterns of rufous and black-and-white, the Northern Bobwhite is a small quail once common in the grasslands of southeastern North America.

Named for the male’s call—a cheerful “bob-white” whistle—it is the only quail native to eastern North America. In the mid-1800s game hunters severely reduced the Bobwhite populations and a hundred years later the conversion of farmland further damaged their habitat and numbers. This negative trend continues and as a result Bobwhite populations today are less than 10 percent of what they were 60 years ago.



Northern Bobwhite. Photo: Brian Miller

Despite their sharp population decline, it is still possible to find Northern Bobwhite in open habitat and pine fields throughout the Southeast. Because their elegant, dappled plumage blends with underbrush, they are not easy to see; however you may hear their clear call. One of the easiest bird calls to learn, the male’s two sharp whistled notes really do sound like “bob-white.” And the call carries a long distance.

Since Northern Bobwhite are highly social you may find them foraging in groups in the early morning and late afternoon. They may peck and scratch on the ground, or amble through leaf litter eating low plants, seeds and leaves, or nibbling insects during breeding season. Both males and females choose a nest site and together dig a shallow scrape about six inches wide in the ground, weaving weeds and grasses into an arch to hide the nest. They are prolific breeders and may produce two or three broods throughout the year, totaling 25 or more offspring. In 2023 a group of birders at Mead Botanical Garden found a Bobwhite nest in Warbler Corner with parents and 10 nestlings. Since then sightings of Bobwhite at Mead Garden, including hearing the species, have been posted often on ebird.org.

Because of its history as a game bird, the Northern Bobwhite is one of the most intensely studied bird species in the world. Scientists have researched the impact of human activities, from pesticide application to prescribed burning, in both wild and captive species. Their severe decline likely results from habitat degradation, urbanization, fire suppression, and the use of more and stronger pesticides and herbicides in agriculture. Once one of the most important game birds in North America, the Northern Bobwhite has declined so dramatically that there are no longer enough of these birds to hunt in many areas. Thus the long-term future of this species in the wild is uncertain according to David Sibley.
Linda Carpenter

Volunteer Thank You

At the St. Johns River Water Management District Recreational meeting, Audubon members were represented by Rick Baird, Jennifer Coleman, Greg Gensheimer, Deborah Green, Lance Hart, Marian Lichtler, Fred Milch, Rosi Mullholland, Gallus Quigley and Mary Soule.

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive Ambassadors in September and October were Gwen Ambrose, Rick Baird, James Barber, Sandrine Brubaker, Miriam Chambers, Harriet Cummins, Paula Duenas, Mary and Travis Hudson, Marian Lichtler, Sharon Mercer, Elizabeth Osborne and Hannah Summersill.

Education Coordinator Update

As we move into the fall season our requests for educational programming have greatly increased. First of all, I did an Introduction to Birds program for elementary students at the South Creek Branch Orange County Library. The children really enjoyed learning about how to identify birds and practice using binoculars.

I visited two different elementary school to conduct participatory science bird counts. At the beginning of October, I did a bird count with six 5th grade classes at Sand Lake elementary school. A family of Northern Mockingbirds sang, posed and then chased each other right around where we started the count. Some very boisterous Blue Jays and early migrant warblers, including Black and White warbler, Northern Parulas and a Yellow Warbler, also enthralled the students.



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

I did another bird count at Independence Elementary for two 3rd grade classes. The stars on that count were some noisy American Crows that were actively feeding around the school yard, an assortment of wading birds at a nearby retention pond, along with newly arrived Palm Warblers. Several students expressed their disappointment at the end of the activity saying, “ I wish I could count birds all day!”

I’ve also led several afterschool programs, including the monthly after-school birding club at Zellwood Elementary. This month’s theme was improving habitat for birds. After learning about the habitat needs for birds, the students went outside and created plans in their nature journals for making the existing habitat even better for birds. Many of these students have been coming to the club for three years and were so excited when they recognized the returning Palm Warblers that were actively feeding in their schoolyard.

I also visited Eccleston Elementary to do an afterschool program about comparing and contrasting birds and bats. The students

enjoyed going out into the schoolyard and finding places where both birds and bats could roost and places where both could feed and nest.

I visited the Green Club of Edgewater High School to help students as they were building bird houses. We explored the nest watch website, and I showed them how to use the “right bird right house” tool to create bird houses for birds of our area.

Later in the October, I visited a 4th-6th class at Innovation Montessori school and did an extended program on bird beak adaptations. I also did a program for the Sandhill Homeschool Collective at Mead Botanical Garden on Birds vs. Bats. The children enjoyed using the toy bat and bird to act out the book, *Stellaluna*, as well as playing the “team bat” versus “team bird” game.

In mid-October I taught the upland bird portion of the Master Naturalist class at Seminole State Forest and taught the fall beginning bird watching class with Susan Thome-Barrett at Orlando Wetlands, Mead Botanical Garden and the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive.

I also continued work with the Florida Young Birders Club planning future activities and responded to a request from Audubon California to help them get a Young Birder program started. and continuing to work on our outreach for the Hispanic community

I presented a session on “Birds, the Gateway to Participatory Science” at the League of Environmental Educators (LEEF) conference in Vero Beach. The educators were excited to learn how to engage students in science by counting birds on their campus

Orange Audubon is offering a limited number of free class subscriptions for OCPs 3rd-5th grade classrooms of the engaging Audubon Adventures print publication. Audubon Adventures is a high interest magazine that not only supports standards-correlated science content but also aids literacy education with both print and digital resources.

Our monthly free educational webinars will continue November 20 from 7:00-7:30 pm with a program about Project Feeder Watch from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s K-12 educational programs. The link to sign up: <http://eepurl.com/imGskM>

Please email education@orangeaudubonfl.org to sign up for classroom or after school visits, or to request a class subscription to

Young Birders Club Trip November 16, 2024

Orange Audubon Society’s next Young Birders Club field trip will be November 16th to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, a well-known birding mega-hotspot, sporting 379 Species on eBird. This field trip is for 8–17-year-old youth who are interested in learning more about birds.

The trip is FREE but space is limited. Loaner binoculars will be available. The exact location will be provided upon registration. Leaders will be Lorri Lilja and Kathy Rigling of Orange Audubon, joined by hotshot Young Birder Ethan Landreville along with his photographer and birder father Brennan Landreville .

We will meet to carpool at Parrish Park and begin our trip at Gator Creek to search for waterfowl, wading birds, gulls, raptors and rails. We will visit Pumphouse to check for similar species there. After that we will visit Scrub Ridge trail to look for Florida Scrub Jays. Next we will go to Haulover Bridge to search for sparrows, followed by Haulover Canal to try to locate the Flamingos. We will also stop at the visitor’s center to walk the boardwalk to look for wintering songbirds.



Young Birders Trip, October 2024. Photo: Melinda Klinger

Please note that sometimes there are road closures in this area, so the locations will depend on current conditions.

Due to the driving nature of this trip and limited parking, carpooling is required. To register [visit our website](#).

You also might want to consider joining the Florida Young Birders Club, a network of Young Birders and their families. Young Birders Club offers some joint field trips, one overnight trip, several Zoom programs throughout the season, and discounts on optics through Vortex. For more information and to join visit [this link](#).

Please email me at riglingkathy@gmail.com to reserve a spot for you and your Young Birder or use the link. Loaner binoculars will be available upon request.

Kathy Rigling



NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL December 5-9, 2024

Registration opened in mid October for the 9th annual NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL on Lake Apopka highlights the St. Johns River Water Management District's 20,000-acre Lake Apopka North Shore and other Central Florida birding hotspots. Seventy field trips extend over 5 days,

Thursday through Monday, December 5 through December 9, 2024. Many trips have filled quickly, but there are still many slots open.

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

We were thrilled when multi-year participant Bud Younts called it one of his top 3 festivals in the country ([link to 3-minute video by Jim Cunningham](#)).

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

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

What's New This Year

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

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

The Friday Dinner Keynote will be a travelogue of our leaders' recent or favorite trips, moderated by popular trip leader Chris Newton.

A new trip is to Blue Springs State Park to see Florida Scrub-Jays and manatees, as well as take a boat trip on the St. Johns River. Connor Wagner, Blue Spring State Park biologist, along with Alan Shapiro, will lead. The trip includes a tram ride into Florida Scrub-Jay territory and is Thursday.

An additional new trip is to Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge in Volusia County. That trip is Friday and is led by new leader Danny Young (from New Smyrna Beach) along with new leader Tim Hardin (from Gainesville).

Another new trip is Birds in Flight, with Luis Gles and Mariah Hryniewich, the Florida Keys Hawkwatchers, and Maxfield Weakley, a photographer/birder. That trip is on Saturday.

Another new trip is St. Augustine Sparrows, put together by 17-year Young Birder Blair Clark, assisted by Susan Thome-Barrett. That trip is Sunday.

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

Deborah Green, Festival Chair



Dr. Steven Whitfield, our Saturday keynote speaker. Photo courtesy Steven Whitfield.

Bird Chats with OAS

Bird Chats are Orange Audubon Society's (OAS) weekly Zoom programs that include identification of mystery birds, discussion of new arrivals, and a topic of the week—generally a guest presentation.

Past Bird Chats are archived on [OAS' YouTube channel](#). We started these online offerings during the pandemic and seem to have found a niche, intermediate-level birders who love natural history.

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

Bird Chats are normally held each Thursday at 7 p.m., except the 3rd Thursday which is OAS' in-person program. Register at [this link](#) to watch and participate live and to be notified about upcoming programs. Please send suggestions for speakers and topics to info@orangeaudubonfl.org.



Scenes from the 2022 NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL. Above, photo: Luis Gles, below, photo: Jack Horton.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Chats with OAS via Zoom

Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

- Birding Central Florida by Maxfield Weakley

November 7, 2024

- Being a Seabird Observer on a Research Vessel by Allison Black

November 14, 2024

Bilingual Walk at the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive

November 3, 2024

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Birding by Bike: Green Mountain

November 9, 2024

Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

November 10, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Young Birders Field Trip, Merritt Island

November 16, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Monthly Field Trip Wekiwa Springs State Park

November 17, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

November Program: Wildlife and Nature Photography: Little things Mean a Lot by Wayne Bennett

November 21, 2024

Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Apopka Birding Park Bird Survey

November 30, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL, Lake Apopka

Dec 5- 9, 2024

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Christmas Bird Counts

• Bay Lake: Saturday, December 14, 2024.

Contact John Thomton at john.thomton@gmail.com

• Wekiva River: Saturday, December 14, 2024.

Contact Jay Exum at jay.h.exum@gmail.com

• Zellwood/Mt. Dora: Thursday, December 21, 2024.

Contact Gallus Quigley at gallusq@gmail.com

• Kissimmee Valley: Sunday, December 22, 2024.

Contact Chris Newton at dexterdevon68@gmail.com

• Econlockhatchee: Saturday, December 21, 2024.

Contact Lorne Malo at lornekmal@gmail.com

• Clermont: Monday, January 5, 2025.

Contact John Thomton at john.thomton@gmail.com



Osprey with a Fresh Catch. 2024 Chertok Photo Contest Honorable Mention Winner, Youth Category. Photo: Lauren Chin

International Shorebird Survey

If you love shorebirds, find out how you can join the International Shorebird Survey (ISS). It's a research program, that uses eBird, and comes from Manomet Bird Observatory in coastal Massachusetts. Lisa Schibley of Manomet told us all about it in our October 24th Bird Chat, which is posted on Orange Audubon's [YouTube channel](#).



Least Sandpiper. Photo: Mary Keim

The ISS is looking for more surveyors in Florida. Your patch can be at the beach or anywhere shorebirds can be seen and counted. Information is used to study population trends and ISS data was used in the research article "3 Billion Birds lost" published in 2019.

If you bird at least once a month in your patch during migration and can repeat that for 3 months (more is even better!), consider joining the ISS, details at www.manomet.org/project/international-shorebird-survey/