



Left, David Lindo, *Photo courtesy The Urban Birder*. Right, House Sparrow. *Photo: Matthew Plante, eBird*. Starling murmuration. *Photo: Lancashire Wildlife Trust*.

The Urban Birder LIVE from the U.K. by David Lindo December 19, 2024

David Lindo, also known as The Urban Birder, will join us on YouTube LIVE, direct from the United Kingdom on Thursday, December 19, 2024 at 7 p.m..

Born and raised in London, David is a broadcaster, writer, naturalist, photographer, public speaker, tour leader and birder. As long as he can remember, birds have been his obsession.

Being an urban dweller, David is forever on the lookout. He finds it amazing what you can see when you look up. Birds of prey, swirling swifts, migrating thrushes, raucous crows: It's a beautiful world up there, he points out.

David does as much as he can to promote the appreciation and conservation of the birds that share our city lives, trying to inspire people to re-look at their urban environments. "All we have to do is open our eyes, ears, hearts and minds," he points out, "and soon we will be linked into the nature around us."

Join Orange Audubon on December 19th for a fascinating program.

Simply access YouTube, search Orange Audubon Society to find our channel, and log in at 7pm December 19th to see the program live and be able to ask questions.

We will be back at Leu Gardens in January, but join us online this month for an inspiring program.

Alan Shapiro, Programs Chair

ORANGE AUDUBON SOCIETY programs are free. No reservations necessary.



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/

Winter Bird Counts

It's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season! Each year, CBCs are held from December 14th through January 5th, and Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is involved. Going on counts is a great way to experience a variety of habitats with skilled birders and contribute to science.

The first Christmas bird census was held Christmas Day 1900, initiated by ornithologist Frank Chapman (see OAS' [recorded Bird Chat about Frank Chapman](#)). Ninety species were tallied on that first count by 27 birders. Since that time Christmas Bird Counts have provided valuable data about the status of bird species, which helps to inform conservation priorities and decisions.

Listed on page 8 are the Christmas Bird Counts in our area, and even if you are traveling, you can find out about [counts in other areas here](#). To join, email the compiler with your contact information and your birding experience level.

Illustration: Alexander Vidal



Since the CBC is the oldest community science (formerly called citizen science) project, a professor and researcher at North Carolina State University is spearheading an effort to involve more people in it. Dr. Caren Cooper, author of *Citizen Science: How Ordinary People are Changing the Face of Discovery*, secured a National Science Foundation grant and collaborated with National Audubon to recruit chapters around the country in the IDEAL program (see p. 4).

Toward Our Nature Center and Endowment

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) secured its long-term lease from the City of Apopka for the 69.5-acre Apopka Birding Park, at the entrance to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, this March. We have been fundraising toward a nature center of our own since the early days of our 57-year history. Our mission — to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity — will be greatly furthered by creating the Orange Audubon Nature Center at the Apopka Birding Park.

We are fund-raising toward 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 bird observatory annex, 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 year-end donation to further OAS' tax-exempt mission. Thank you!

Deborah Green, President with Teresa Williams, Treasurer



Managing State Lands

Dry prairie stretches as far as the eye can see, the distant oak hammocks just barely breaking the horizon. Grasshopper Sparrows tuck themselves away behind palm fronds to shield themselves from human observers. In the distance, pine flatwoods are littered with cavity-rich pine trees that house Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. All is silent but for the wind gently blowing across the vegetation like a wave in a sea of green..... No, this is not a scene from a

Patrick D. Smith novel, nor is it 1880. This is the Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area (WMA) located in Osceola County and the year is 2024...

Last month, Orange Audubon Society members Brian Brandon and Conservation Chair Rick Baird, had the opportunity to visit Three Lakes WMA with members of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Forestry Service, the St. Johns River Water Management District, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and other public stakeholders. The purpose of this site visit was to participate in the Land Management Review (LMR) process. All state-owned lands over 1,000 acres in size are required to be reviewed every 5 years to determine if they are meeting their conservation objectives as outlined in their respective land management plans (Section 259.036 Florida Statutes). The review team is to consist of 8 voting members and of the following representatives: 1. County or local community in which the parcel is located, 2. Division of Recreation and Parks, 3. Florida Forest Service, 4. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, 5. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection regulatory district office, 6. Private land manager, 7. Soil and Water Conservation District board of supervisors/water management district, and 8. A conservation organization.

Orange Audubon Society is authorized under this statute to participate as a voting member. We have the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations for how the state is managing these public lands, how well they are meeting their conservation objectives, and we get a firsthand look at research and management being conducted on imperiled species within the state. And we get access to some of the most pristine ecosystems in the state and to areas not readily accessible to the public! The LMR process is a unique opportunity for conservation organizations to influence land management activities conducted by the public sector.

This year, OAS has participated in LMRs on Three Lakes WMA, Triple N Ranch WMA, the Little Big Econ State Forest, and Spring Hammock Preserve. Next year we will conduct LMRs at Tosohatchee WMA, Brevard Coastal Scrub Ecosystem, Kissimmee Bend State Forest, and Lake Wales Ridge Wildlife and Environmental Area. There is plenty of opportunity for OAS to participate in this process. If you are interested in participating in these reviews or would like to attend as an observer (space permitting), please reach out to Brian Brandon at (407) 929-1133.

OAS Conservation Committee



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

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

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

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

JOIN OAS' [MEETUP](#) GROUP

LIKE OAS' [FACEBOOK PAGE](#)

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

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

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Re-envisioning Coastal Recovery in an Era of Frequent Storms: Insights from Audubon Assembly 2024

Every year that I've attended the Audubon Florida's Audubon Assembly has been a rewarding and exciting experience. As an alumnus of Audubon Florida's Conservation Leadership Initiative (CLI) this year, it was even more insightful to both reconnect and learn more about the conservation efforts happening all across Florida – especially during the informational panels held at the conference!

One session, in particular, held my interest: the panel on Re-envisioning Coastal Recovery in a Time of More Frequent Storms.

The panelists—Commissioner Henry Dean of St. Johns County, Mike McGarry of Brevard County, and Jason Engle of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—provided invaluable perspectives on the delicate balance between human development and natural coastal processes. Florida's beaches and dunes, shaped by the forces of erosion and accretion during hurricanes, play a crucial role in supporting wildlife and protecting inland areas. Yet, these processes are often disrupted by armoring solutions, like seawalls, that are implemented during storm recovery efforts to stabilize buildings and roads.

We were taught by the panelists the levels of coastal science, data gathering, construction, and policy used to protect what remains of our coastal beaches, and even restore them all across the state! There was an emphasis on the interconnectedness of Florida's coastal ecosystems and the importance of planning for resilience. Traditional approaches to emergency recovery frequently prioritize immediate stabilization over long-term sustainability, harming the very beaches that attract residents and tourists alike. The panelists highlighted the need for better coordination between local, state, and federal agencies to ensure that emergency permitting processes support, rather than hinder, natural recovery.

The discussion was incredibly thought-provoking and informative as to what requirements need to be satisfied in order for political and construction entities to make a move too, whether that meant waiting for the sea level to erode too close to private property, or securing funding to support local dune restoration. As storms become more frequent and intense, the notion of relocating vulnerable infrastructure further inland may become

Snail Kite: An Endangered Raptor

Although rare, Snail Kites are conspicuous and easy to identify in open subtropical wetlands, their specialized habitat. You may see them flying low over fresh water marshes searching for apple snails, their preferred food.

About 17-inches long, these large raptors have a long broad tail and a distinctive sickle-shaped bill designed to fit inside snail shells and pluck out the large mollusks. The handsome male Kite is grey and black; females and juveniles are dark brown with brown-and-white streaked chests. Both sexes have a short square tail with a white bar and large, sharp talons for snatching snails from the water or from reeds and shrubs.

Unlike other raptors, these birds nest in colonies and roost communally, sometimes among other waterfowl such as Herons and Anhingas. After finding a nest site near a feeding area in trees, shrubs or other vegetation, the male proceeds to build a nest—a mass of dry sticks and plant materials about 16 inches across—and females help maintain it.

Snail Kites are common in Central and South America but in the U.S. occur only in the Florida peninsula and they are highly vulnerable to changes in water levels that affect apple snail reproduction. Florida biologists studying Snail Kite nests since 1968 have found that in drought years (such as 1979) as few as 17 percent of Snail Kite nests were successful; however, about 90 percent have been successful during years with stable water levels conducive to apple snails. Over the years, only about 40 percent of Snail Kite nests have produced fledglings in Florida.

The Snail Kite is in trouble according to Audubon Florida. It is listed by both the state of Florida and the Federal government as an endangered species and therefore is protected. Much of its habitat has been drained, other parts inundated to depths that suit neither snails nor the Kites. Water quality has declined and with it Snail Kite populations have declined. For the latest information about Audubon's efforts to save the Snail Kite, visit the Audubon Florida News Blog at fl.audubon.org/news.

Where can you find this remarkable species? The Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, St. Johns National Wildlife Refuge, Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Lake Tohopekaliga, Lake Okeechobee, Lake Kissimmee, and the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. However, Snail Kites can be nomadic and move around to find the best food sources. Check it out! Florida has amazing wildlife to explore!

Linda Carpenter

not just a possibility but a necessity. This shift requires proactive dialogue, community engagement, and careful planning to mitigate the social and economic challenges involved.

As an active member of Audubon, I left the session inspired to advocate for new coastal management strategies, including embracing solutions like managed retreat, revising

emergency permitting, and reducing reliance on harmful armoring. Sharing this message within my chapter and the broader conservation community feels especially important as we navigate the increasing challenges of climate change, and the recovery struggles after Hurricanes Debby, Helene, and Milton.

Alexandra Barath, UCF student and president of Kighthawk Audubon



Male Snail Kite, Marsh Flow-way, Lake Apopka North Shore, 2023 NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL. Photo: Elizabeth Stakenborg

Loving those Rarities

On November 25th, Sam Mitcham spotted a sparrow that looked a little different at the Apopka Birding Park. The small, drab sparrow was subsequently identified as a Brewer's Sparrow, a typically Western sparrow. On October 4th, while visiting family in Ohio, I traveled 20 minutes to see a Groove-billed Ani in Avon Lake, Ohio. Far away from its normal stomping grounds. In Merritt Island, a Snow Bunting, a small white and brown bird, affectionately known as a "toasted marshmallow" has been keeping birders busy hiking out to where it is being seen feeding on the ground.

Did the Groove-billed Ani come north with winds from Hurricane Helene in late September eating seeds patiently by a small pond until discovered by birders? Was the Brewer's Sparrow here because of mis-orientation during migration? Or has the dry weather out West caused the bird to travel East in search of better habitat? The Snow Bunting normally migrates south from the Arctic and Northern Canada in the winter but typically doesn't travel farther south than southern Ohio. Occasional "overshoots" during migration (like the Snow Bunting) bring a bit of excitement to birding.



Snow Bunting at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: Gary Steinberg

Most rarities are found during migration, and most are immature birds. Small warblers travel 1,800 miles non-stop with shorebirds averaging 3,700 miles. Migration can be altered by many factors — weather, a problem with the birds internal systems, stress in the bird's normal habitat. A study in the U.K. estimates that 60% of rare birds are never found. A good reason to take a second look, grab a picture. And keep an eye on those Rare Bird Alerts on eBird.

One of the most enlightening presentations on why birds end up in the wrong place, with some famous examples of these migrants, was at the North Shore Birding Festival in 2022 by Alex Lamoureux, titled "Invaders, Vagrants & Rarities," [available on the Orange Audubon YouTube Channel](#). Alex

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 an anticipated increase in bird species.

Our first survey was in late August. The late September survey was cancelled due to Hurricane Helene, but surveys continued in late October and late November.



Above, Apopka Birding Park November Survey, Photo: Deborah Green. Brewer's Sparrow at the Apopka Birding Park, Photo: Delsy Rodriguez.

On the late November survey, an amazing rarity was seen, found a few days earlier by Sam Mitcham. Brewer's Sparrow is a southwestern bird that was a lifer for almost all of us. Top Florida birder Wes Biggs was there with us that morning and recounted that this was only the 3rd Florida record of this species, and that the other sightings had been "one-day wonders."

Bill Pranty, author of *A Birder's Guide to Florida* in the American Birding Association series, was there to see this species, as were other birders from around the state. This puts our Apopka Birding Park on the map!

Contact me if interested in joining our early morning monthly surveys. I will make sure you know where to meet and fill out the waiver. Email me at alexdebear@icloud.com.

Alex DeBear

goes over Misorientation, Overshooting, Dispersal, Association, Disorientation, False Vagrancy, Human Activities, and Range Expansions with lots of great examples and photos.

Susan Thome-Barrett

Lake Apopka North Shore Bird Surveys

The St. Johns River Water Management District's (District) 20,000-acre Lake Apopka North Shore was the site of systematic bird surveys from 2002 to 2015, coordinated by the District.

Participating in these surveys—in areas closed to the public—was very popular among local birders.

Orange Audubon has requested that the District revive the surveys, to document changes in bird species as the Lake Apopka and North Shore Restoration has proceeded. Interrupted by hurricanes, the surveys will be starting in January. Email info@orangeaudubonfl.org, if you are interested in joining.

Deborah Green

IDEAL Program and Bilingual Bird Walks

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) is participating in a pilot study by North Carolina State University, funded by the National Science Foundation and focusing 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 how groups can improve participation, to more closely represent the communities they serve and gain greater community support.

OAS members Deborah Green, Kathy Rigling and Susan Thome-Barrett participated in bi-weekly training, along with participants from the Audubon network around the country. See the September *OASis*, p. 3 for more on this program. Working on the Zellwood-Mt. Dora CBC with compiler Gallus Quigley, OAS was able to set up a new count section for the Apopka Birding Park.

One of our fellow IDEAL participants who is Community Engagement Manager and Nature Camp Manager for Audubon Seattle, now called Birds Connect Seattle, has spearheaded an effort to change the name of the Christmas Bird Count. Not only is it unfriendly to those who do not celebrate Christmas, but the count is not actually held on Christmas, so it is confusing to people. OAS' team signed on to the letter to National Audubon about this.

continued next page

IDEAL Program, cont.

OAS secured a \$5000 grant through our IDEAL participation to be used over the next two years. We used a portion of it to buy more excellent KOWA kids-sized binoculars. An even more recent collaborative grant, that we secured from National Audubon, is allowing purchase of another 11 of these binoculars. Education Coordinator Kathy Rigling systematically checks out binoculars to trip participants who do not have their own.



Kathy Rigling checking out binoculars on November 3rd Paseo event at the Apopka Birding Park. Participants in the November 3rd walk. Photos: Faruk Bagdah

We printed Spanish language bird ID cards, that were developed for us by North Fork Audubon Society in Long Island, NY, based on ones they had developed for their area. To work more closely with some of our schools, with underserved populations, we are using the IDEAL grant to fund schoolyard habitat improvements.

Following a successful September 22nd Latino Conservation Week event at Orlando Wetlands Park, in conjunction with Audubon Florida, we collaborated again with Observatorio Ambiental Hispano to offer a bilingual family walk on Sunday, November 3rd. Thirty-nine participants, including many children, enjoyed the walk.

As part of our IDEAL effort, using the grant funds, we now have a focus group so we can

Education Coordinator Update

The past month has been jam-packed for Orange Audubon Society (OAS) education programs. I have done bird counts at Independence Elementary, Eustis Elementary and Orlando Gifted Academy. The children really enjoy searching for birds and using our KOWA binoculars that we are able to loan on each visit.

I did a program for the Edgewater High School Green Club about building bird houses for local birds, using upcycled materials. I did programs for the Forest School Playschool Preschool and Elementary School and provided an interactive educational display about bird beaks at the Killamey Elementary Stem night, attended by over 150 students and parents. I did a migration program with the Sandhill Homeschool Collective at Mead Gardens.

At the 2024 Audubon Assembly in Daytona Beach, I was a panelist on a discussion on increasing community engagement for Audubon chapters. I shared our efforts with organizing the Florida Young Birders Club as well as our increasing engagement with our local Hispanic community.

At the Zellwood Elementary after school birding club, the students enthusiastically began research. Each student picked a Florida native bird from the Florida birds field guides that were purchased last year using the FLEDJE grant funds. We also counted birds at Zellwood Elementary and saw some new patch birds—Loggerhead Shrike and six Wilson’s Snipes!

OAS is offering a limited number of free class subscriptions for OPCS 3rd-5th grade classrooms of the engaging *Audubon Adventures* print publication, a high interest magazine that supports standards-correlated science content and aids literacy

secure advice from several members of our OAS community. We thank Delsy Rodriguez, Libertad Anderson and Jimena Aguirre for their help in planning our efforts, as well as Faruk Bagdah of Observatorio Ambiental Hispano, who has recruited participants.

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

Susan Thome-Barrett and Deborah Green, IDEAL Program Participants



Above, Zellwood Elementary Birding Club, November 2024. Photos: Kathy Rigling

education with both print and digital resources.

Our monthly free educational webinars continue December 11th from 7:00-7:30 pm with a program about counting birds for science to prepare for the annual Christmas Bird Count. Here is the [link to sign up](#). November’s webinar was on Project FeederWatch, available on our [YouTube channel at this link](#)

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

Kathy Rigling, Education Coordinator



November 3rd Paseo (walk on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive) event. Photo: Faruk Bagdah

AUDUBON'S
Birds of Florida

Audubon's Birds of Florida

Through March 2, 2025

The Museum of Arts & Sciences' Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art in Daytona Beach is hosting a stunning art exhibit in collaboration with the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail.

The exhibit features the work of John James Audubon (1785-1851), who created exquisite, life-size illustrations in this ground-breaking 435-count compendium, *The Birds of America*.

As part of his twelve-year venture to paint every bird species in North America, Audubon organized a special expedition to Florida (1831-1832) to document its unique birds and their habitats.

Entitled "Audubon's Birds of Florida," the exhibit presents nearly eighty original prints, paintings and related artifacts focused on birds saw or wrote about from Florida in "Ornithological Biography," as well as many birds he painted while in Florida or shortly thereafter.

Audubon's Florida quest began in St. Augustine in November 1831, where he was based for three months.

From there, his crew traveled along the east coast of Florida, following rivers, lakes, and marshes in canoe, schooner and skiff, exploring the St. Johns and Halifax Rivers.

He spent time at Bulow Plantation and Spring Garden Plantation, now called DeLeon Springs. Suffering through swarms of mosquitos and wading through alligator-infested wetlands, the artist recorded bird species and their natural surroundings, which would make their way into the backgrounds of his realistically rendered subjects.

In late April of 1832, he boarded the U.S. Cutter Marion and headed to the Florida Keys, where he was enraptured by the variety, beauty and vast quantity of bird life.

At the end of May, the artist returned to Charleston to complete the drawings for many of the acclaimed works on display in this exhibition.

Guest curator Clay Henderson, environmental lawyer, historian and

President Emeritus of the Florida Audubon Society, wrote *Audubon's Birds of Florida*. With a specific investigation into relevant conservation issues, this project brings an expanded interpretation of the complex legacy of J. J. Audubon, a brilliant yet flawed man of his time, who greatly advanced the world's understanding of ornithological science and the interdependence of wildlife with the natural environment.

Audubon's Florida expedition took him through 21 locations that are now part of the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail (full list below). The Trail allows today's birders to follow in Audubon's footsteps and encounter many of the iconic species he once painted and described. Locations where Audubon traveled are now:

- Anastasia State Park
- Bahia Honda State Park
- Big Talbot Island State Park
- Bulow Creek State Park
- De Leon Springs State Park
- Dry Tortugas National Park
- Everglades National Park
- Fort Caroline National Memorial and Theodore Roosevelt Area
- Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park
- Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Huguenot Memorial Park
- John D. Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park
- Key West Tropical Forest & Botanical Garden
- Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge
- North Peninsula State Park
- Port Orange Causeway Park
- River to Sea Preserve
- St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park
- Tomoka State Park
- Vilano Boat Ramp
- Washington Oaks Gardens State Park

The Museum of Arts and Sciences, founded in 1955, is located at 352 S Nova Rd, Daytona Beach, FL 32114. [Check the website](#) or call (386) 255-0285 to be sure that the exhibit is open to the public that day, as private events are frequently hosted. Audubon's Birds of Florida will be on display through March 2, 2025. Don't miss it.

Adapted from *From KiteTails, Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail Newsletter*



American Flamingo, Plate 431; Roseate Spoonbill Plate 321, from *Birds of America*. John James Audubon

**Biggest Year Yet Field Trip
January 4, 2025**

Don't miss our first limited edition field trip of 2025 on January 4! We will be doing our traditional biggest year yet field trip on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive and possibly some surrounding areas. Our leaders will be Alex DeBear, Jimena Aguirre and Kathy Rigling. We are going to see how many different species we can log, to start the new year, at one of the best birding locations in Central Florida.

The trip is limited to 12 people, so sign up as soon as you can! Cost is \$15 for OAS members, \$20 for nonmembers. Registration is open [on our website](#). If you have any questions, email riglingkathy@gmail.com.



NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL December 5-9, 2024

Orange Audubon Society's 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 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 brings together a critical mass of leaders and participants to catch up on their common interest—birding. We were thrilled when Bud Younts, an attendee for the last three years, called it one of his top 3 festivals in the country ([link to 3-minute video by Jim Cunningham](#)).

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 Left That's Great

Our return participants watch for what's new and swoop in, as soon as registration opens. So there's no need to emphasize what's new.

Kyle Moon is photo techniques workshop instructor, Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. He is a Wildside Nature Tours photo guide in the Yellowstone area and [gets some amazing shots](#). His workshop will be mostly outside.

Our Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area trip with David Simpson, Friday 2, has few registrants, so it's a great chance to learn from David, one of Florida's top birders. The start time has been changed to 7:30 a.m. instead of 6:30 a.m.

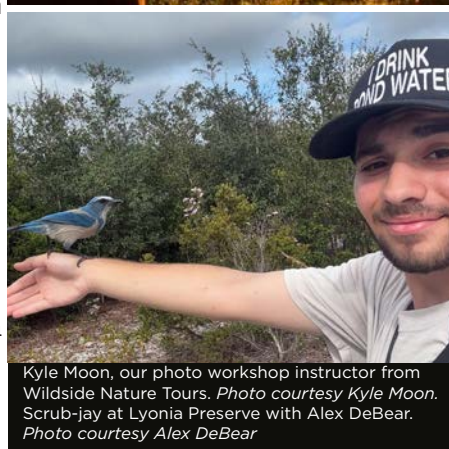
David's T.M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management Area trip (Thursday 7) also is not to be missed, since he lives near that area and birds it regularly. He has relocated the Large-billed Tern that caused a sensation last year, as well as the Tropical Kingbird and Vermilion Flycatcher. This location is far, but worth it.

For Saturday 2, David pairs with Scott Simmons to lead Birding by Ear at the McDonald Canal. Even with aids like Merlin, there's nothing better than learning bird sounds from experts.

Another trip not to miss is Saturday 11 to the Lyonia Preserve to see the Florida Scrub-Jays. Leader is Orange Audubon's own Alex DeBear, a Jay Watch volunteer who knows the property.

Sunday 12 is Waterfowl of the Drive led by Chris Newton. Chris is a real Waterfowl expert so this is a great one to select. Rare ducks like the hybrid Cinnamon/Blue-winged Teal may be seen.

[Check it out](#) and sign up! The festival comes around just once a year. Don't miss it! If any questions, email festival@orangeaudubonfl.org.



Kyle Moon, our photo workshop instructor from Wildside Nature Tours. Photo courtesy Kyle Moon. Scrub-jay at Lyonia Preserve with Alex DeBear. Photo courtesy Alex DeBear



Mariah Hryniewich shows Gian Basili how to digiscope. Photo: Deborah Green

The NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL is proud to have Luis Gles and Mariah Hryniewich leading for the fifth year. These amazing birders and guides have been the mainstays of the Florida Keys Hawkwatch and now guide birders on St. Paul Island off the coast of Alaska each summer. They have formed Woodstars Birding and Nature Tours, a festival sponsor. If you have a spotting scope and mobile phone, you may want to learn how to digiscope. Saturday 13, 12:30 - 3:30PM, is a great afternoon offering from Luis and Mariah.

Sunday afternoon there are two Leader's Choice trips (Sunday 14 and 16) that have great leaders but few registrants. With these trips, you can ask your leader to take you to see particular rarities in the area, like the Scizortail Flycatchers or Brewer's Sparrow.

The festival committee thanks our sponsors: KOWA Sporting Optics, Wildside Nature Tours, Woodstars Birding & Nature Tours, the Marine Discovery Center, Jim Cunningham Video Productions, Seacoast Bank, Birding with David Simpson, Florida Wildlife Photo Tours, Guest Services, Green Mountain Scenic Byway, Lake County and the St. Johns River Water Management District.

The birding fun begins!!

Deborah Green, Festival Chair

DECEMBER/JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Chats with OAS via Zoom

Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

- The Birdy and Mysterious Dry Tortugas National Park by Mitch Walters

December 12, 2024

- Bird Banding and the Use of Trackers in the UK by Mike Drew

January 9, 2025

- Florida Birds by Kirsten Hines

January 30, 2025

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 19, 2024.

Contact Gallus Quigley at gallusq@gmail.com

• Econlockhatchee: Saturday, December 21, 2024.

Contact Lorne Malo at lornekmal@gmail.com

• Kissimmee Valley: Sunday, December 22, 2024.

Contact Chris Newton at dexterdevon68@gmail.com

• Clermont: Sunday, January 5, 2025.

Contact John Thomton at john.thomton@gmail.com

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

December 15, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

December Program: The Urban Birder LIVE from the U.K. by David Lindo

December 19, 2024

Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Apopka Birding Park Bird Survey

December 28, 2024

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Biggest Year Yet Field Trip

January 5, 2025

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Beginner's Bird Watching Class

January 5, 11 and 25, 2025

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

January 12, 2025

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

January Program: Know Your Gulls and Terns by Michael Brothers

January 16, 2025

Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Monthly Field Trip PEAR Park Conservation Area

January 18, 2025

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Apopka Birding Park Bird Survey

January 26, 2025

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Beginner's Bird Watching Class January 5, 11, 25, 2025

Orange Audubon Society's popular Beginner's Bird Watching Class starts soon. Class includes three weekend morning sessions, and if you have to miss one, you can make it up during the fall series. All sessions are 8:00 a.m.-11:30 p.m. An "outdoor" classroom session and mini-field trip are Sunday, January 5th at Orlando Wetlands Park. The Saturday, January 11th and Saturday, January 25th field sessions are at Oakland Nature Preserve and the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, respectively. Registration is required, limited to 12 students. Total cost for all three sessions is \$50 for Audubon members, \$65 for non-members and \$10 for youth through ages 8- 12 with a registered adult. You can join OAS, as instructed when you register. Registration [is on our website](#): For questions about the classes, contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com.



On the Lookout—Vermilion Flycatcher. 2024 Chertok Photo Contest Honorable Mention Winner, Novice Category. Photo: Tracy Dreyfus

Get Out and Take Some Photos

Orange Audubon Society's Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest has a deadline of April 30th. It is never too late to start working to take some great shots.

Choose your appropriate entry category: NOVICE: For new and less experienced amateur photo hobbyists. ADVANCED: For experienced photographers who have practiced and honed their skills over time. YOUTH: For participants 17 years of age or younger at time of entry.

Orange Audubon's November 21st program by Wayne Bennett had some great tips for improving your photography. You can watch that program on Orange Audubon's YouTube Channel [at this link](#).

The Chertok photo contest information page is [at this link](#).