



Clockwise, left to right, Ashley Konon, The Wekiva River, Another area of the Wekiva River. Photos courtesy Ashley Konon.

Conservation of the Unique Wekiva Wild and Scenic River System by Ashley Konon February 20, 2025

Dive into the Wekiva Wild and Scenic River System! Orange Audubon's February presenter will share the exceptional qualities that earned the Wekiva River its designation as a National Wild and Scenic River, one of only two in Florida and about 200 around the United States. She will showcase the innovative programs and projects dedicated to preserving the river's beauty for future generations. Join us to learn about Florida's only Partnership Wild and Scenic River!

Ashley Konon has spent the last decade in Florida, building on her New England upbringing and education in Animal Science from the University of Vermont. She's enhanced her expertise in environmental conservation by completing the Master Naturalist Program through University of Florida /Institute of Food and Agriculture after moving to Florida. Ashley has been a zookeeper at three zoos, a kayak guide on the Indian River Lagoon, and currently is the River Ambassador for the Wekiva Wild and Scenic River system. In her role as River Ambassador, Ashley focuses on conservation efforts and promoting the health of the Wekiva River system. She's passionate about connecting people with nature through her work or hobbies, including photography, kayaking, paddle boarding, painting, biking, and camping.

Join us in person at Leu Gardens on February 20th at 7 p.m. for a fascinating program about a river we all value and love. Address is below.

Alan Shapiro, Programs Chair

Birds of Prey Identification Trip, February 2, 2025

On Sunday, February 2nd, Bob Sanders will teach a Birds of Prey Identification class on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Bob is a popular trip leader and raptor expert. Before moving to Central Florida, he co-founded the Chimney Rock Hawk Watch in Martinsville, New Jersey.

Price is \$15 (Audubon members) or \$25 (non-members). To reserve your spot, visit [our website](https://orangeaudubonfl.org/field-trip-signup): <https://orangeaudubonfl.org/field-trip-signup>. Bob can be reached at (407) 459-5617.



Red-tailed Hawk with nesting material. Photo: Kathy Rigling.

Orlando Wetlands Festival

Coming up on Saturday, February 22, 2025, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., is the wonderful Orlando Wetlands Festival, put on by the City of Orlando at Orlando Wetlands in Christmas, FL. Now being held only every two years, this festival has walking and bus trips to learn about the wildlife of the Orlando Wetlands, booths and native plant giveaways. Orange Audubon Society has been a sponsor of this festival since its inception and will have a booth. If you are willing to help us, which may include selling nature merchandise, email info@orangeaudubonfl.org. See you there!

ORANGE AUDUBON SOCIETY programs are free. No reservations necessary.



ORANGE
AUDUBON

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/

2025 ORLANDO WETLANDS FESTIVAL

WATER IS LIFE

FEBRUARY 22, 2025 • 9 A.M. - 3 P.M.

Threats to Florida Species

The 2025 Florida Legislative Session has started. Are you signed up for the *Audubon Advocate* newsletter? Audubon Florida has excellent policy staff in Tallahassee interfacing with legislators. At the end of each committee week and each week of Session, Audubon Florida will keep us up to speed on the issues and let us know when our voices can make a real difference.

In the latest Action Alert is information on legislation filed to protect Florida State Parks from development, an issue very important to all of us. Here's the link to speak up on the proposed bear hunt: <https://act.audubon.org/a/bears2024>

On January 28th, [four conservation groups, represented by Earthjustice](#), filed a request in federal court to defend critical protections for the imperiled Florida Scrub-Jay

The groups are requesting to intervene in a 2024 lawsuit filed by a national conservative legal organization, Pacific Legal Foundation, in Florida's Middle District. The lawsuit seeks to remove Endangered Species Act protections from the Florida Scrub-Jay and to scrap Charlotte County's decade-old Florida Scrub-Jay Habitat Conservation Plan. Earthjustice is representing the Florida Wildlife Federation, American Bird Conservancy, the Center for Biological Diversity, and the Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida in the case.

The Florida Scrub-Jay is the only bird species found exclusively in the state of Florida and was listed as a federally threatened species in 1987 because its population had dropped dramatically due to habitat loss. Further declines have been documented since, resulting in a current population estimated at less than 10,000 birds — 90% fewer than before European settlement.

Scrub-Jays are popular with birdwatchers and nature lovers across the globe because of their vibrant blue plumage and inquisitive nature. They are cooperative breeders, forming family groups that defend territories and raise new chicks together. Because Scrub-Jays feed, breed, and nest on the same unique scrubland habitats that agricultural operations and developers prize, they are under increasing pressure as Florida continues to develop.

Charlotte County developed its Scrub-Jay Habitat Conservation Plan in 2014 to comply with species protection regulations under the federal Endangered Species Act. The county's Habitat Conservation Plan doesn't prevent development in Scrub-Jay habitat, but it does



Florida Scrub-Jay, Lyonia Preserve. Photo: Alex DeBear

require a fee for landowners building in the plan's designated area. This money goes towards habitat enhancements, conservation research, or is used to purchase protected lands for the rare birds to help ensure their long-term survival.

One Charlotte County landowner is refusing to pay the fee. After purchasing five acres in designated Scrub-Jay habitat, he sued Charlotte County and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with Pacific Legal Foundation representing him.

The suit claims that the Endangered Species Act cannot protect any species found only in one state because Congress's authority to enact laws only applies to issues that cross state borders. Therefore, they argue that since the Scrub-Jay is found only in Florida, federal protections should not apply. This legal theory, if left unchallenged, could impact not only the Scrub-Jay but hundreds of other imperiled species found in just one state, including the Florida Panther, Florida Grasshopper Sparrow, and many of Hawaii's endemic species.

"The majority of imperiled species in the United States exist in only a single state," said Earthjustice Senior Attorney Aaron Bloom. "If, as this lawsuit claims, those species can't be protected under the Endangered Species Act, then many will be lost forever."

Targeting Charlotte County's proactive effort to protect the Florida Scrub-Jay's habitat from uncontrolled growth is a threat to all of Florida's unique species. Florida was the state where the most recent mainland bird extinction in the United States happened back in 1987 when we lost the Dusky Seaside Sparrow. Let's not allow another iconic Florida species to go the same way. Follow Earthjustice's suit [at this link](#).

*Orange Audubon Society
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.

Orange Audubon Society
P.O. Box 941142
Maitland, FL 32794-1142
www.orangeaudubonfl.org

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

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

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

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.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE, 1-800-435-7352, WITHIN THE STATE. VISIT WWW.FDACS.GOV FOR HELP. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. REGISTRATION NO. CH2330

Toward Our Nature Center

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 past March. We are fund-raising toward construction of our nature center, 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.

To update on recent progress: Little Diversified Architectural Services has completed design for the renovation of the old cement block truck shop into a beautiful nature and environmental education center. Little has submitted plans for permitting to the City of Apopka, and is working toward the building's certification under United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program. Next step is for us to select our general contractor. For the restoration, water has not yet been hooked up, so engaging the many willing volunteers for native planting is not yet possible. We continue making plans to restore the large disturbed site. A Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission grant for treating the invasive cogongrass has been secured.

OAS' nature center effort comes from our chapter and involves all of our members. We are profoundly grateful to those making monetary contributions. Others are or will be making donations of their time, and we will mention those in coming issues.

Generous donations during late December and January were received from Shari and Stan Sujka and Peggy Lantz. We would be deeply grateful to receive your donation as well, to further OAS' tax-exempt mission. Donations to OAS are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. [Use this link.](#)

For some of our members with IRAs, making qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) directly to non-profits may count towards the required minimum distribution, thereby providing a significant tax benefit to you. Donations coming in early in the year will help us as we choose our contractor and decide if we can move forward with construction. Thank you!

*Deborah Green, President with
Teresa Williams, Treasurer*

Red-cockaded Woodpecker: Rare and Threatened

Slightly larger than a Downy Woodpecker, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers have a black head and neck, large white cheek patches, bold black-and-white bars on their back, and spotted black-and-white flanks.

The "cockade," a tiny red line on the side of the male's head, is rarely seen. This species makes holes in large living pines softened by heartwood rot (a red fungus) and they live in cooperative family groups that excavate their nest cavities and raise young. Preferring large pines over small ones because the larger bark harbors more prey, these woodpeckers eat the adults, larvae, and eggs of insects and other arthropods found on and under the bark, including ants, termites, beetles, and wood roaches.

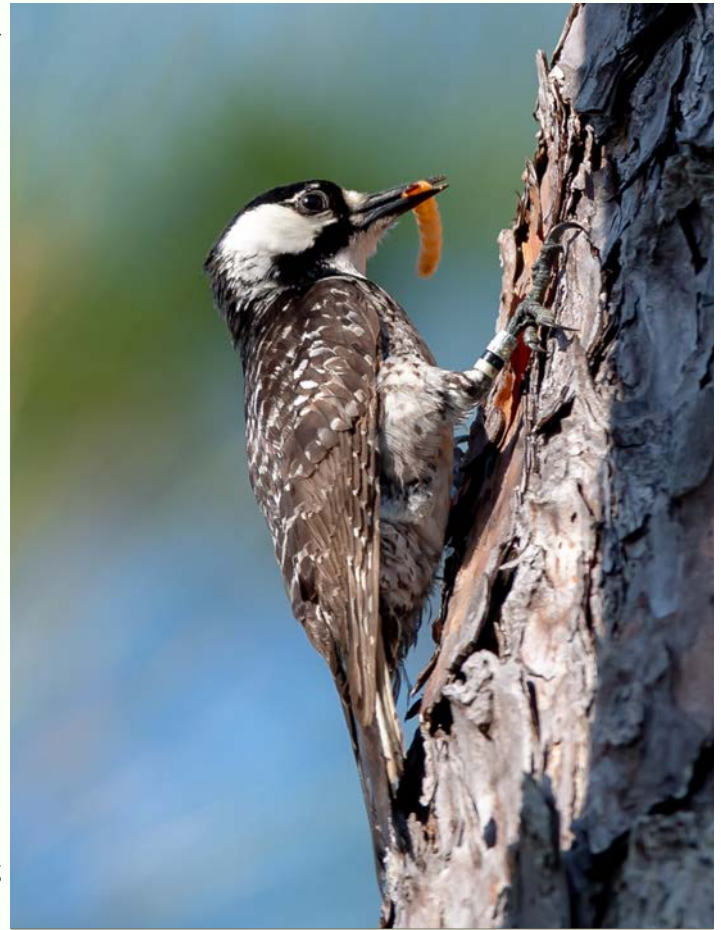
Red-cockaded Woodpeckers need a special habitat of mature longleaf pines to thrive. Decimated by logging in the 20th century, their formerly extensive domain now exists in scattered patches of managed forests throughout the Southeastern U.S. Declared endangered in the 1970s, the species was recently downlisted to threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Commission after decades of conservation.

How to find this bird? Visit national wildlife refuges, national forests, and other federal preserves that protect and manage large areas of habitat. Because the species is threatened, some nesting areas may be off limits. In places where public access is allowed, ask a ranger for help finding them. Look for smaller holes and sap on tree trunks near the larger nest holes. The birds peck the bark to release the sap which deters predatory snakes.

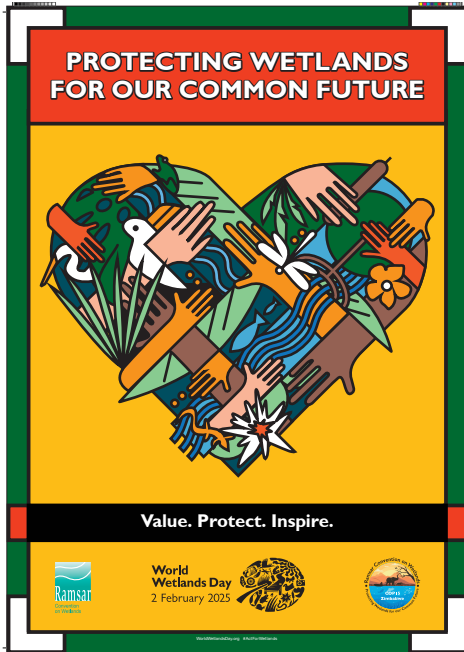
Red-cockaded Woodpeckers can be found at Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area in Southern Osceola County, Hal Scott Regional Preserve in East Orange County, and Clearwater Lake Recreation Areas in the Ocala National Forest, according to Kathy Rigling, OAS Education Coordinator. "It is not the easiest bird to find," she said. "Most people see them as the sun rises and the birds fly out of their cavities."

You also may see Red-cockaded Woodpeckers on an Orange Audubon April overnight field trip to the Northwest Florida Panhandle and Tall Timbers, an internationally renowned research station. "We stay a couple of nights at Tall Timbers where these birds and other avian species are the subject of research and conservation efforts," said Teresa Williams who organizes the trip. For more information, contact her at 407-718-1977. Located in Leon County near Tallahassee, Tall Timbers is not open to the public; you need special permission to visit. Check it out! There is much to learn about Florida wildlife.

Linda Carpenter



Female Red-cockaded Woodpecker with buprestid beetle larva, Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area. Photo: Jack Horton



Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area

On January 28, 2025, Orange Audubon Society (OAS) participated in the Florida Department of Environmental Department (FDEP) Bureau of State Lands Land Management Review (LMR) Team on the William Beardall Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area (TWMA). TWMA is a 30,000-acre, beautiful mix of wetlands, uplands and riverine systems, in Orange County, bordering the west side of the St. Johns River.

TWMA is managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). All lands purchased using funds from the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (TIITF), like Florida Forever, are required to have a land management review performed every five years. FDEP LMR performs these five reviews and reports back to TIITF. Any deficiencies are reported to the appropriate agency for attention. Also, next year the actual LMR is scheduled to be updated. (That's it for the acronyms).

There are fifteen land use types documented and mapped by FWC at TWMA. These include over 10,000 acres of floodplain marsh, Hydric hammock, wet flatwoods (~5,000 acres each), mesic flatwoods (2,806 acres) and blackwater Jim Creek (~500 ac.), within and extending through the official boundary of TWMA.

Staff includes 8 biologists who perform multiple duties including controlled burns, herbicide treatments, public outreach and significant land management techniques. The goal of these efforts is to ensure that all 30,000 acres remain in, and are guided towards, the most natural state possible for flora and fauna that utilize the TWMA. TWMA relies a lot on volunteer groups to monitor various resources. One of those groups is our own Randy Snyder and Mary Keim doing bird surveys. The LMR team found that items in the Land Management Plan are being successfully carried out.

TWMA is also home to over forty cultural and historical sites. One is commemorated by a plaque honoring seven naval airmen, from Sanford Naval Air Station, who died in a training accident over TWMA in 1943. Another is the remains of the fireplace from the hunting camp of the Bumby family. In 2021, a fence had to be erected to prevent further vandalism. There is a thriving market in the trade of Florida historical artifacts, and the majority of the site locations are not made public, due to the potential for vandalism.



Tosohatchee flora and the St. Johns River bordering Tosohatchee. Photos: Rick Baird

Activities on the TWMA include birding, hiking, hunting, camping, horseback riding and geocaching. Use of dogs to hunt hogs may sound gruesome, but it is a very effective way of controlling feral hogs on the 30,000 acres of TWMA. Almost all of the activities are reserved online and managed by the limited staff. They do it well and safely.

I encourage you to visit the TWMA anytime from dawn to dusk seven days a week at 3365 Taylor Creek Rd., Christmas, Florida.

Rick Baird, Conservation Chair

Protecting Wetlands

Wetlands are land areas that are saturated or flooded with water either permanently or intermittently. From the Lake Apopka North Shore (once part of Lake Apopka and now a restoration area to improve Lake Apopka water quality after years of the North Shore being drained and farmed) to Orlando Wetlands (a reconstructed wetlands to treat wastewater before it flows into the St. Johns River) to Tosohatchee (a property dotted with permanent and seasonal natural wetlands), Orange Audubon Society (OAS) appreciates our wetlands as homes for wildlife.

On August 30, 2021 the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 75/317 that established February 2nd as World Wetlands Day. This marks the anniversary of the Convention on Wetlands, which was adopted as an international treaty in 1971. Contracting Parties of the Convention on Wetlands have been celebrating World Wetlands Day since 1997.

Nearly 90% of the world's wetlands have been degraded since the 1700s, and worldwide wetlands are disappearing three times faster than forests. Wetlands are critically important ecosystems that contribute to biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation, freshwater availability, flood protection and more. In Orange County, the Wetlands Ordinance seeks to protect the area's remaining wetlands from development. Follow this link to help [protect our lakes](#). Join OAS at the Orlando Wetlands Festival on February 22nd (p.1).

OAS Conservation Committee

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. 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. Email info@orangeaudubonfl.org, if you are interested in joining.

Deborah Green

New Year's Resolutions

First, take the time to enjoy birds this year. This is a good idea whether you expect to spend time in your backyard, on local or national trips or even abroad. Simply relax, enjoy yourself and relish the wonder of birds. This is potentially the easiest part of our suggested three-part set of resolutions.

Second, resolve to share the wonder of birds with others. Take others out and help them discover the amazing world of birds that has already inspired you. Introduce birds to your neighbor, co-worker, a local teacher, a local officeholder, or a group of youngsters.

Finally, and particularly important, regularly work to secure the future for birds. It doesn't have to be a huge endeavor, but it should be directed at whatever local, regional or international effort fits you best. You can work in cooperation with a national organization, your local bird club, a Refuge Friends group, a bird observatory, or other similar vehicle. Yes, you can help make a difference to protect birds, but it first takes assessing your options and making the initial deliberate effort.

Source: Paul Baichich and Wayne Petersen, compilers and editors of the Birding Community E-bulletin, <https://www.refugeassociation.org/birding-community-e-bulletin>.

IDEAL Program and Audubon in Action Grant

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) members Deborah Green, Kathy Rigling and Susan Thome-Barrett are participating in the "Inclusive, Diverse, Equitable, Accessible, Large-scale (IDEAL) Participatory Science" program to improve participation in citizen (community) science to more closely represent the communities we serve and gain greater community support. We have appreciated participating with Audubon chapter leaders from around the country (September *OASis*, p. 3). Despite a change in direction federally, OAS is committed more than ever to be inclusive.

See our results for making the Christmas Bird Counts more inclusive in the January *OASis*, p. 4. The Audubon in Action grant that OAS secured from National Audubon last March has as its purpose to diversify participation in our efforts to restore habitat at the Apopka Birding Park. Past OAS board member Jeanne Economos, the pesticide coordinator for the Apopka Farmworkers Association, connected us with the Observatorio Ambiental Hispano, which tries to get Latinos out in nature and to learn about the environment. We continue that new partnership and seek others. *OAS EDI (DEI) Committee*



Gilberto Sanchez leads Buscando Pajaros trip, 2022.
Photo: Deborah Green.

Buscando Pajaros March 8, 2025

As part of our efforts to engage diverse groups representative of our local demographics, for the 4th year Orange Audubon is hosting a bilingual tram ride at Orlando Wetlands. Our trip leader Gilberto Sanchez is an Orlando Wetlands volunteer, naturalist and skilled photographer. He has enjoyed leading trips in his native Spanish for our Buscando Pajaros trips and later at the Orlando Wetlands Festival.

The trip will be Saturday, March 8th, from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. It is free but limited to 20 people. Registration is on the OAS website at [this link](#). If you have any questions, contact Deborah Green at info@orangeaudubonfl.org or 407-637-2525.

Family Photography Field Trip, February 23, 2025

Budding photographers, ages 8 to 17, can learn some photo tips from award-winning photographer Wei-Shen Chin and his children, who are also award winners in Orange Audubon Society's annual Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest.

The date of this Family Photography Field Trip is Sunday, February 23, 2025, time: 8-11 a.m. Location is Newton Park, Winter Garden, meeting at the main wooden dock. This easily accessible park (not much walking needed) is full of Purple Gallinules that are otherwise tricky to find in Central Florida. Limpkins, terns, winter ducks and possibly raptors are also seen at this site.

Youth under 16 must be accompanied by a parent. Including both youth and adults, the trip will be limited to 20 participants. Price is \$5 for youth and \$5 for adults accompanying a youth under 16 years of age.

Orange Audubon is very fortunate to have the Chin family offering this workshop. Wei-Shen Chin is an Orlando-based wildlife photographer. He began his career as a photojournalist in Cleveland, OH, shooting for UPI/Reuters and covering the Indians, Browns and Cavaliers. During COVID, he turned his attention to wildlife photography and developed a love for capturing birds-in-flight, one of the most technically challenging aspects of wildlife photography. His work has been featured in many publications and websites including Orange Audubon, Florida State Parks and Oakland Heritage Center. He is most proud of his three children, Lauren, Nicole, and Matthew, who have also become award-winning photographers.

Lauren Chin, 17 years old, took up photography in 2018 when she asked her dad to use his compact Canon G7 while on vacation in Yellowstone. Starting in 2021, she has taken home prizes each year in the Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest.

Matthew Chin, 14 years old, first took up photography recording family trips to Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons six years ago using a compact Nikon Coolpix S9900. In 2021, at age 10, he won first, second and 5th place in Orange Audubon's Chertok photo contest Youth category, his first photo contest ever. He has won awards in this contest every year since.

To sign up for this photo field trip, go to Orange Audubon's field trips sign up page and check member (for this field trip price for Youth and Adults is the same). Here is the link: <https://orangeaudubonfl.org/field-trip-signup/>.



Wei-Shen, Lauren and Matthew Chin at Newton

Education Coordinator Update

Between the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL in early December and the winter holidays, Orange Audubon's educational programs have still maintained great momentum.

I am continuing after-school birding club visits to Zellwood Elementary School. This month the students really enjoyed using our *Florida Birds* books to research a focus bird of their choice. They were excited to learn the results of the Christmas Bird Count at their school — all grade levels from K to 5 participated, including 24 classes, 400 students and 30 adults. Each grade counted birds for a 30-minute period. Thirty-one species were observed from 7:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m. including 2 new birds for the school: Baltimore Oriole and Yellow-throated Warbler! A big thank you to Orange Audubon member Terrie Leibler for helping with this event!

During January, we had two of the three sessions of the Beginning Bird Watching Class. Learning to use binoculars and observing Green Herons, Snowy Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills and other wetland species was a big hit at Orlando Wetlands for session one. Even though the weather was overcast at Oakland Nature preserve for session two, the class was excited to see a female Painted Bunting and a Black-and-white Warbler among other songbirds. A big thank you to Glenn Blaser and Jimena Aguirre for helping to lead this popular class.

Other highlights this month were a highly interactive migration game for all the third-grade classes at Dillard Street Elementary and a program about habitats (springs and river system) at Wekiwa Springs State Park for the Sandhill Homeschool Collective.

Orange Audubon still has availability to conduct on-campus bird surveys and other standards-based educational programs. Interested teachers should email me at education@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Our monthly free educational webinars will continue on February 5th from 7:00-7:20 p.m. with a program about participating with students in the Great Backyard Bird Count. The link to sign up: <http://eepurl.com/imGskM>

We also have a limited number of free class subscriptions for OCPS 3rd-5th grade classrooms of the engaging *Audubon Adventures* print publication. This high interest magazine not only supports standards-correlated science content but



Zellwood Elementary After-School Birding Club. Photo: Kathy Rigling

Orange Audubon Young Birders Club Update

Registration is now open on Orange Audubon's website for two Young Birder Events.

The first one is a free field trip on March 1st to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive from 7:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

We will bird along one of the best birding locations in Florida. We will form carpools and drive along this 11-mile wildlife drive, stopping frequently to observe varied species of waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, raptors and songbirds.

Our leaders are Brennan and Ethan Landreville, Alex DeBear, Kai Sterk and myself. Not only will we be helping your young birders find and identify birds, we will also offer photography tips to those budding photographers who may want to enter Orange Audubon's Chertok Photography contest in April, Ethan was an award winner in this contest. This trip is limited to 10 families.

The other event is the family photography field trip on February 23rd at Newton Park in Winter Garden, taught by Wei-Shen Chin, Lauren Chin and Matthew Chin. See details on p. 5.

To register for each field trip please visit this link on our website: <https://orangeaudubonfl.org/activities/field-trips/>

Also, save the date also for the April 12th Young Birders field trip to Mead Botanical Gardens. Registration for that trip will open in March.

also aids literacy education, with both print and digital resources.

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



Beginners Bird Watching Class January 2025 at Orlando Wetlands Park. Photo: Kathy Rigling

Intermediate Bird Identification March 22 and 29, 2025

Orange Audubon Society offers 3-session Beginners Bird Watching Classes in fall and in January. Many people have told us they are ready for an Intermediate Bird Identification Class, and we have the perfect person to teach it!

Bob Sanders taught Beginners Bird Identification for years and is full of identification tips and natural history information.

The class is two-part. The sessions are on March 23rd and March 30th, both at Orlando Wetlands from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Cost for the two-part class is \$50 for Audubon members and \$65 for non-members, limited to 12 participants. Registration is on our website: <https://orangeaudubonfl.org/field-trip-signup/>. Email any questions to info@orangeaudubonfl.org.



Bob Sanders teaching, Photo: Deborah Green. *Hail, Hail, the Gangs All Here—Ring-billed Gulls*, Joe Overstreet. 2024 Chertok Photo Contest Honorable Mention Winner, Novice Category. Photo: Jean Polarolo

AUDUBON'S *Birds of Florida*

Through April 6, 2025

John James Audubon (1785-1851) created exquisite, life-size illustrations. His ground-breaking compendium, *The Birds of America*, is a monumental achievement of both art and ornithology. His collection of 435 prints and accompanying field notes changed the way people saw and understood bird life.

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

Audubon collected and painted 36 bird species and observed and wrote about 50 more during his time in Florida. Some of the most famous images of his collection such as the American Flamingo, Great White Heron, and Roseate Spoonbill resulted from the Florida trek, and many have strong local connections.

Hyatt and Cici Brown have collected over 75 original Havell prints from *Birds of America*, which have a Florida connection. This exhibit and accompanying catalog display these historic prints and tell the story of his Florida expedition, where he traveled, what he observed, and what he painted. Entitled "Audubon's Birds of Florida," the exhibit presents nearly eighty original prints, paintings and related artifacts focused on birds Audubon saw or wrote about from Florida in "Ornithological Biography," as well as many birds he painted while in Florida or shortly thereafter.

The exhibit and the book of the same name by Clay Henderson examines how Audubon's work inspired the modern conservation movement and remains relevant today.

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. Called "stunning" by those who have seen it, this exhibit has been extended to April 6th. Don't miss it.



American Flamingo, Plate 431, from *Birds of America*.
John James Audubon

Count Backyard Birds

The next Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is February 14-17, 2025. The GBBC was the first community (citizen) science project to collect online data on birds and to display results in near real-time. In 2024, GBBC participants turned in 384, 416 eBird checklists reporting 7,920 species of birds. This creates an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count (February 14-17), simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. First create a free eBird (<https://ebird.org/home>) to enter your checklists. If you already have an eBird (or another Cornell Lab project) account, use your normal login name and password. Counting instructions are at <https://www.birdcount.org/tools/counting-instructions/> Join the fun and contribute to this great citizen science project! You may find a new bird in your "backyard."

Mary Keim, GBBC Participant with Kathy Rigling

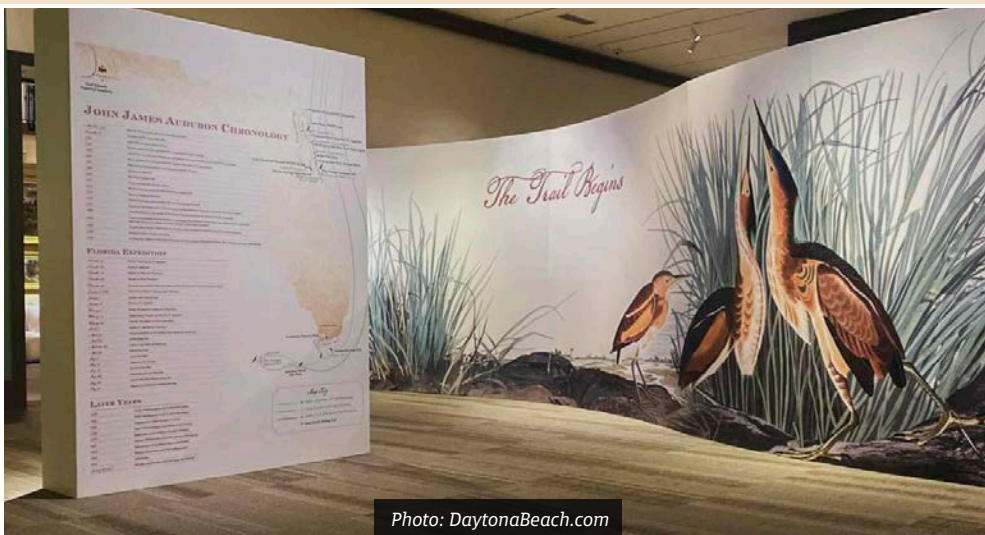


Photo: DaytonaBeach.com

Apopka Birding Park Bird Surveys Last Weekend of the Month

As Orange Audubon Society 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.

Email me at alexdebear@icloud.com to participate.

Alex DeBear

FEBRUARY/MARCH CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Chats with OAS via Zoom

Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

- Badgerland Birding by Ryan and Derek Sallman

February 6, 2025

- Speaker TBA

February 13, 2025

- Birds and Coffee by Greg DuBois

February 27, 2025

Gainesville Birding Hotspots, Limited Edition

February 1-2, 2025 (full)

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) February

February 14-17, 2025

<https://www.birdcount.org/>

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

February 16, 2025

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Program: The Uniqueness and Conservation of the Wekiwa Wild and Scenic River by Ashley Konon

February 20, 2025

Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Orlando Wetlands Festival

February 22, 2025

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Youth Photo Workshop

February 23, 2025

Contact Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.r.com

Apopka Birding Park Bird Survey

February date TBA

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Young Birders Trip, Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive

March 1, 2025

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Limited Edition Field Trip to Clearwater Lake, Ocala Natl Forest

March 8, 2025

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Field trip to Mead and Leu Gardens

March 15, 2025

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

March 15, 2025

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Program: Plants for Birds: The Caterpillar Connection by Deborah Green

March 20, 2025

Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Intermediate Bird Watching Class

March 22 and 29, 2025

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

Update Your Membership

The new year is a great time to join or renew your 3-way membership in Orange Audubon Society (OAS), Audubon Florida and National Audubon Society.

Please pay directly to OAS, and we transmit the funds to National. If you want to include an additional donation, which goes to OAS, you can.

The base membership rate is \$20 (\$15 for students). Go to OAS' website and click the [Join/Renew link](#).

If you need your expiration date, email membership@orangeaudubonfl.org. Thank you!



Delicious Dragonfly Snack—Great Egret with Halloween Pennant. 2024 Chertok Photo Contest Third Place Winner, Youth Category. Photo: Lauren Chin

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 early to get out 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 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](#).