



Left, Mark Schocken. Middle, Great Horned Owls eating a rodent later known to be poisoned by an anticoagulant rodenticide. Photo: Mark Schocken. Right, a bait trap. Reddit



## The Owls of Safety Harbor - A Local Tragedy A National Issue by Mark Schocken November 20, 2025

Rat poisons or rodenticides kill small mammals like mice, rats, and squirrels, but sadly also raptors that feed on them. You will notice these black boxes containing bait and anticoagulant rodenticides everywhere. When the chemical is ingested by a small mammal and eaten by the raptor, it prevents the raptors' blood from clotting and causes excessive bleeding. Hawks and owls and other birds of prey are vulnerable.

Dr. Mark Schocken is an environmental chemist, specializing in metabolism, who worked in the pesticide industry for nearly 40 years, for three pesticide manufacturing companies, for a scientific consulting company and an international testing laboratory. He remains an independent consultant to the pesticide industry and advocate for safer rodenticides.

Mark is a photographer and discovered a family of Great Horned Owls nesting in an old oak tree in a public park in Safety Harbor, near St. Petersburg, FL. After he shared his discovery, wildlife photographers and spectators came regularly to the park, in the early morning and around sunset, to see and photograph the owls.

By the time the owlets left the nest, over fifty people were visiting each evening to watch them. Then they became aware that the owls were dying from anticoagulant rodenticide poisoning. Mark and friends wanted to do something to prevent this from happening. They started the Safety Harbor Strong Owls & Nature Facebook Group and organized people to comment on rodenticide use to the Environmental Protection Agency and local agencies. In this presentation, illustrated with wonderful photos, Mark will educate us on this issue.

Prepare your questions, and we'll see you in person on Thursday, November 20th in the Camellia Room at Leu Gardens for this free talk! Come at 6:30 p.m., for socializing. Program starts at 7 p.m. Address below.

*Alan Shapiro, Second Vice President*

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/](http://www.leugardens.org/plan/directions/)

## Orange Audubon's Work Recognized

At the 2025 Audubon Assembly at the Mission Inn in Howey in the Hills last month, Orange Audubon received two awards among chapters with over 500 members.

First was the Best Education Program, Large Chapter, for our **Schoolyard Christmas Bird Count**.

More than 500 students and nearly 30 adults participated this year to observe, record, and count birds right in their schoolyards. Thanks to Orange Audubon's program, students gained confidence as young citizen scientists, learned to use binoculars, and contributed to real scientific data, all while developing a deeper connection to nature.

Having one whole school, Zellwood Elementary, participate in the Zellwood/Mt. Dora Christmas Bird Count was encouraged by our participation in Audubon's Inclusive, Diverse, Equitable, Accessible Large-scale (IDEAL) Participatory Science Project.

Binoculars secured through an IDEAL grant and two additional National Audubon Collaborative Grants allowed the entire school to participate in shifts. Third graders, who were part of the monthly Afterschool Bird Club that we sponsor, assisted younger students.

For the October 18th awards ceremony, Orange Audubon's Education Coordinator Kathy Rigling was busy teaching the Beginners Birdwatching Class, [so the award was accepted by President Deborah Green](#). The audience of fellow chapter leaders was very impressed by the program. Congratulations to Kathy and our chapter!



Orange Audubon Society Education Coordinator Kathy Rigling (center) with students at Zellwood Elementary Christmas Bird Count. Photo: Pamela Owens



Audubon Florida Chapter Awards <https://www.audubon.org/florida/news/seven-florida-chapters-honored-conservation-awards>

### 2025 Large Chapter of the Year

According to Audubon Florida, “Orange Audubon Society has done remarkable work this year, from advancing their nature center project on the Lake Apopka North Shore to expanding educational and conservation programs that reach hundreds of people, including youth and underserved communities.”

Encouraged by Audubon Florida’s Kristen Kosik who administered the chapter awards, President Deborah Green talked about progress toward the nature center and our Capital Campaign, the 10th annual NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL, outreach to the Hispanic community, our bird surveys open to all, our weekly Zoom Bird Chats and YouTube channel, and about how we have been helped by National Audubon grants. [Link to speech](#)

Congratulations also to Orange Audubon member Linda Sitek for recognition as Philanthropist of the Year. Since rescuing a trio of young barred owls with her husband, after they fell from their nest, Linda has been a dedicated supporter of Audubon and the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland. Congratulations also to Charles Lee for the recognition of 53 years with Audubon Florida. Charles helps us a lot here in Central Florida.

### Orange Audubon’s Local Efforts

Your local chapter is: 1. working on restoration of an upland habitat site, our Apopka Birding Park (p. 3), 2. encouraging people to plant native plants, particularly those utilized by birds through our Bird-friendly Yards Tour (p. 5), 3. supporting our parks through bird surveys and publicizing our county natural lands by collaborating on walks (p. 6 and 8), and 4. speaking out and asking our members to speak out to county and state officials on conservation issues (see next column).

*Deborah Green, Orange Audubon President*

### Preemption?

If the state does not allow local governments to enact and enforce stricter environmental regulations than those it mandates, what good has the long process of ordinance development with scientific and public input been? How can quality of life for our residents and any wildlife protections be maintained? Senate Bill 180 effectively freezes all local land-development regulations and comprehensive plans through Oct. 1, 2027. We are proud of [Orange County for joining Manatee County and 23 cities](#), including Windermere, Deltona and Edgewater, in the lawsuit against this egregious law that strips the ability of cities and counties to manage their growth. Thank you Charles Lee for making us aware of the importance of encouraging our county to stand firm, and thanks to all those who sent emails. We are following this issue.

*Orange Audubon Conservation Committee*

### Looking For Volunteers

Do you have time and a passion for volunteering with Orange Audubon? Here are opportunities:

- Assisting with clean-up, planting, etc. for our future Orange Audubon Nature Center at the Apopka Birding Park
- Meal, Hospitality, and Logistics support for the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL (December 11-15).
- Helping our Education Coordinator with school events
- Hospitality at our monthly in-person programs at Leu Gardens, 3rd Thursdays, 6pm
- Joining the elite group of Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive Ambassadors to welcome visitors to the Drive

Email [volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org). Thank you!

*Mary Van Egmond*



University of Central Florida Kighthawk Audubon chapter founding members and past and current presidents at Audubon Assembly. Photo: Deborah Green



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](mailto:newsletter@orangeaudubonfl.org).

For other membership information, contact: [membership@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto: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](mailto:volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org).

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## Progress at the Apopka Birding Park

Orange Audubon Society is working to raise enough money to start construction on the Orange Audubon Nature Center at Apopka Birding Park.

The 69.5 acre old nursery site, adjacent to the popular Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, was deeded to the City of Apopka by the St. Johns River Water Management District in conjunction with our chapter in 2018. Our long term lease to develop the property was signed in March 2024.

Details on our plans to renovate the old Truck Shop into a LEED certified nature center are in [my Bird Chat presentation](#).

Our first Annual Report also profiles the project, [link here](#).

We are nearly half way through a \$4.5 million Capital Campaign. We will be starting our second financial audit this month.

### What have we been able to accomplish?

With small grants and donations from our community, plenty of ingenuity and advice from people familiar with habitat restoration, Orange Audubon has begun the long road to convert a greenhouse nursery back to native habitat, a “rewilding” process.

An obstacle is lack of water, but our landlord, the City of Apopka, will be installing water and sewer hopefully before the new year.

A second obstacle is widespread presence of cogongrass, a highly invasive weed pest, but we are working with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the City on twice yearly herbicide treatments.

Our final obstacle is the presence of the concrete pads that were the bases of the old greenhouses that burned down circa 1999. The St. Johns River Water Management District will be removing the concrete pads to use the concrete for rip-rap along the lake and other construction projects.

That will occur this winter and will cause considerable disturbance but finally allow us to do major restoration activities. Stay tuned, and if you want to help financially or otherwise, email [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org).



## Upcoming Plantings

Orange Audubon has secured a Viva Florida grant from the Florida Wildflower Foundation for the native landscape adjacent to the building. A key feature of the building is the 10,000 square foot bird-watching annex (shown below) with places to sit and watch the birds (and bird-safe glass).



Annex to Orange Audubon Nature Center at Apopka Birding Park. Rendering: *Little Diversified Architectural Services*

The bird-friendly native plant landscape outside the windows was designed by landscape architect David Drylie, a pioneer in promotion of native landscaping with his nursery Green Images in Christmas starting in 1988. The landscape includes a large water feature. A berm and hedge will provide a natural barrier so that visitors will not be able to enter, so it remains quiet for attracting birds.

Inside the annex will be tables with binoculars and bird identification materials. The walls of the annex will be graced by murals on bird migration by our favorite local muralist.



## Interim Plantings

The landscape visible from the annex cannot be planted until building construction is complete, to avoid damage to the plantings. However, the Florida Wildflower Foundation was kind enough to grant us funding for a separate landscape just inside the yellow gate to our property.

At the October 28th workday, we worked on site preparation and hope to plant at the workdays on November 15th and 29th. Email [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org) if you would like to contribute or participate. Thank you.

## What We Need to Build the Building

Since our members and friends received our letter appeal with our annual brochure in early September, response from our community has been stellar. Thank you so very much to all who have donated and so generously. You will be hearing from us with notes of appreciation in the coming days.

As we [explain in our Annual Report](#), raising enough money to hire a center director/executive director goes along with our Capital Campaign for the building.

## November Match!

For the month of November, generous donors have put up a \$10,000 match. Can you contribute to make sure we secure this amount? Last June was our first time offering a match, and we handily made it with 33 donors in two weeks. It would be incredible to do even better this time.

If anyone has any questions about how Orange Audubon is shepherding your donations, we have a new treasurer, Sue Weidner, who is a Certified Public Accountant that works for Seminole County. She inherits Teresa Williams' long-time careful accounting and has moved our accounts to Quickbooks and established internal controls. Restricted and unrestricted assets are carefully tracked.

We bank at Seacoast Bank and most of our investments are in CDs. We are starting our second financial audit. Our first, along with the Annual Report and IRS 990 form, [can be found at this link](#).

For more on how to donate, see page 7. And thank you so much!



Orange Audubon Treasurer Sue Weidner participating in November 1st workday, removing nails from reclaimed wood being used to make bird boxes and Leopold Benches. Apopka Birding Park Working Group member Alex DeBear sitting in a Leopold Bench, recently made by Alan Shapiro. Photos: Deborah Green

## GARDEN OF HONOR

Bird and Pollinator Garden at Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive



## Garden Award

On the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (LAWD) two years ago, Alan Shapiro, Orange Audubon's 2nd Vice President and LAWD Ambassador, planted a native landscape behind the Ambassador Welcome Shelter. That garden was recently awarded an Garden of Honor by the statewide Florida Native Plant Society.

Congratulations, Alan, and thanks for adding this amenity, enjoyed by our nature photographers and birders.



## Backyard Biodiversity Day Volunteers Appreciated

For the 10th year, Backyard Biodiversity Day (BBD) at Mead Botanical Garden was a great event, through which our chapter supports the Tarflower Chapter, Florida Native Plant Society in their native plant promotion. Proceeds of the plant sales go toward the upland habitat restoration Tarflower is doing at Mead. Thanks to Maddie Barber, Abigayl Bryant, Bob Elmquist, Ann Mixson, Debbie Rouleau and Mary Van Egmond for staffing Orange Audubon's display at BBD.



Backyard Biodiversity Day. Photo: Mary Van Egmond.

## Education Program Update

Late September and October have been very fruitful for Orange Audubon's educational programs. We had eleven school visits, 8 of which were campus bird surveys. All together 704 students were able to participate in bird counts. The students ranged from 1st grade through 8th grade.

One of the bird highlights included spotting a Magnolia Warbler in the vicinity of the native garden that Orange Audubon helped to fund and install at Wolf Lake Middle. Several students got to see it and were very excited to see such a beautiful neotropical migrant. American Kestrels showed up at multiple schools, and at Blankner we even got to observe one hunting the field inside their track. At Northlake Park Community School, the students were excited to see multiple newly arrived Palm Warblers and amazed that they had traveled here from Canada.

We even did a bird survey with students from the Florida Virtual School. We chose Orlando Wetlands as a central location. Some families traveled great distance to participate, including one family that drove from Miami.

Bird counts with students would not be successful without the binoculars that we have secured through grants and without our volunteers to assist the students with binoculars and finding birds. We appreciate Randy McCall, Terrie Leibler and Susan Thome-Barrett for helping out with those.

This month also included my teaching the upland birds component for the Florida Master Naturalist class at Seminole State Forest. Susan Thome-Barrett and I did our "Making Your Yard Bird and Pollinator Friendly" program both at Backyard Biodiversity Day at Mead Gardens and for the Leu Garden volunteers for a recent potluck lunch.

We also completed our Fall Beginning Bird Watching Classes this month. Our beginner birders got a crash course in fall migration at Mead Gardens when we had some birds arriving the morning of October 18th. The participants were so excited to see a Blue-winged Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager and more! A big thank you to Susan Thome-Barrett and Holly Hobart for assisting with the beginner's classes.

Our next monthly free educational webinar will be on November 5th from 7:00-



Wolf Lake Middle School students doing bird survey, Photo: Jennifer Bennett; Dommerich Elementary first graders doing bird lesson. Photo courtesy Dommerich Elementary.

7:30 pm with a program about Project Feederwatch for classrooms. [Here is the link to sign up.](#)

We still have a limited number of free classroom subscriptions of *Audubon Adventures*, a high interest magazine that not only supports standards-correlated science content but also aids literacy education with both print and digital resources. Please email [education@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:education@orangeaudubonfl.org) to sign up for classroom or after school group visits, or to request a class subscription to *Audubon Adventures* magazine. If you would like to volunteer to help with a bird count or other educational program please email me as well.

Kathy Rigling, Education Coordinator



## Bird-Friendly Yard Tour Returns!

A key strategy to promote use of native plants is to provide examples of the plants in place after several years of growth.

For the first time since 2016, Orange Audubon hosted a Native Plants Yard Tour on October 12th, co-sponsored by the Florida Native Plant Society, Tarflower Chapter. This tour was also co-sponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited, Winter Springs.

Eight homeowners enthusiastically showed off their yards, some with new, others with mature native landscapes, and others featuring bird feeders attracting Painted Buntings, goldfinches, and more.

The tour was timed to be a week before the Tarflower Chapter's Backyard Biodiversity Day at Mead Botanical Garden, where native plants were for sale.

"The Yards Tour event was incredible," said participant Tara Treuil. "This was my first time attending, and it far exceeded my expectations. I gained a lot of knowledge that I can't wait to use in my own yard."

Thanks very much to the homeowners who showed off their native bird-friendly landscapes: Catherine Bowman and Ron Blair; Paula Durlach; Marge Holt; Jennifer Thompson; Shari and Stan Sujka; Deborah Green; Jason and Laura Peliwo; and Jim and Mary Helmers.

Each of the landscapes was different, but plants that showed up in most of the landscapes included American Beautyberry, Firebush and Elliott's Lovegrass. A list of the plants in each yard was distributed to the participants and is now posted on Orange Audubon's website at [this link](#). Showing off my yard, which I also did in 2016, I emphasized two trees that host caterpillars fed upon by songbirds. These are sugarberry, *Celtis laevigata*, and Wild Black Cherry, *Prunus serotina*.

We had invited landscape professionals involved with the Outside Collab program, which works to introduce natives to developers. We were pleased that six people



from Cherry Lake Tree Farm attended. Cherry Lake co-owner Timothee Sallin had a fun reunion with Orange Audubon board member Alan Shapiro, who had owned the Grandiflora Nursery in Gainesville. When Timothee had studied horticulture at the University of Florida, he had worked in Alan's nursery.

Proceeds contribute toward our nature center. Thanks to the wonderful volunteers, especially co-organizer Neta Villalobos-Bell and Gabbie Milch for signs. Neta, Gabbie, Jessica Sodano, Pam Schrimsher and Grant Basham, Dusty Eden, Mo Cortese, Susan

Clockwise left to right, Bird Friendly Yards Tour sign; Mary Helmers greeting visitors; American Beautyberry with Firebush; Tropical Sage, Deborah Green showing off yard; Timothee Salin of Cherry Lake with Alan Shapiro; Laura Peliwo and Hannah Summersill at Peliwo landscape; Deborah Green showing off yard; Jim Helmers talking with visitors. Photos Anonymous

Thome-Barrett, Alan Shapiro, Hannah Summersill, Jennifer Barber and Mary Van Egmond kept the tour running smoothly. We probably won't wait 9 years before doing it again.  
*Deborah Green*

## Fall Sparrows are on the move! by Alexander DeBear

You heard it here! As the craze of warblers, vireos, thrushes and buntings slows down, what only accelerates are the movements of our overwintering Florida Sparrows. For the uninitiated, these small, strikingly patterned brown birds ('little brown jobs' or LBJ's for short) will spend the majority of their winter throughout Florida's grasslands to recover from a lengthy summer of singing, rearing chicks and their subsequent migration.

In the next few weeks expect to see more White-crowned, Clay-colored, Swamp, and Savannah Sparrows to start, quickly followed by Lincoln's, White-throated, Vesper, Song, and Grasshopper Sparrows. All can be found in broomsedge fields and the accompanying well-spaced shrubs dotted throughout the middle of these fields. Swamp Sparrows in particular are well adapted for life in the wetlands, but can be found amongst the other sparrows in drier habitats as well.



Henslow's Sparrow. Photo: Alex DeBear

Around the beginning of December, one should expect the arrival of Henslow's Sparrow, an iconic sparrow that winters in Florida's damp pine savannahs. It especially prefers pine forests that have been burned within the last two to three years. Wildfire and/or prescribed (artificially supplemented) fire helps to maintain the natural growth and succession cycles that keep a habitat healthy and suitable for plants and animals, especially overwintering sparrows. The Henslow's Sparrow's wintering habits strongly contrast with its summer habits, singing its bizarre, two part short song on the midwestern tallgrass prairies.

Just last winter, two Henslow's Sparrows were found at Wekiwa Springs State Park in the Sand Lake area. Haden Klinger, the Young Birder and high school sophomore that found the birds, recounts the experience. "We were hiking and talking because it was kinda slow, and I heard these distinctive flight calls. I immediately recognized them as Henslow's, as I got the chance to familiarize myself with them from a trip we took to Gainesville a few weeks earlier. We only heard them at first, but

I needed a good vantage point. I stood on top of a fallen tree, and after some quick scanning I saw one running between the gaps in the grasses. It turned out to be a first ever for the state park!"

"I think there's good potential for them to winter there [at Wekiwa] again. It just depends



LeConte's Sparrow. Photo: Ethan Landreville

if the grasses and burns are good. I know they're an annual winterer, but most of them go undetected because of their skulky nature."

Another talented young birder, Ethan Landreville, turned up a rare LeConte's Sparrow this past winter, a marvelously beautiful 'Saltmarsh' type sparrow that, unlike its relatives, prefers expansive bluegrass habitats along the Florida Interior. He recounts, "We were at River Lakes Conservation Area which is right along the St. John's River in Brevard County. Right at dawn, we heard this ticking noise... After tracking it down we found that it was a LeConte's Sparrow. It moved through the *Andropogon* grass (now in the genus *Antherum*) and showed very well for a few minutes. The area has really nice habitat with these wet pinewood meadows and big fields of broomsedge. I think we might head over there again this winter to hunt for more sparrows."

The coastal saltmarsh or 'sharp-tailed' (Genus *Ammospiza*) sparrows are also a spectacle to behold. At high tide these sparrows are pushed to the edges of their saltmarsh and closer to observers onshore. One may attain a quick look as they dart between the cordgrasses, surveying territory. Saltmarsh and Seaside Sparrows are annual winterers along the Atlantic Coast, especially in the upper Northeast towards St. Augustine and Jacksonville, while Nelson's Sparrows are found in larger numbers along the Gulf Coast and Panhandle.

Joy can be found in our year-round sparrow species like the Eastern Towhee, sporting their striking white eyes in the dense Florida scrub. The Bachman's Sparrow sings its iconic song "Heeere kitty-kitty-kitty" throughout the warmer months and quiets down at the break

of autumn, settling back into the bottoms of our longleaf pine forests. Irruptive and rare species like Harris's Sparrow and Green-tailed Towhee have potential to show up on good years, but only time will tell for them. Keep your eyes peeled for these little-brown-jobs in the weeks to come and all throughout the winter season. Happy birding!

Alex DeBear

## North Shore Bird Survey

For the October 28th North Shore Bird Survey (NSBS), eleven birders headed out on a foggy morning. Heavy rain had hit the area, so we had to avoid some routes due to wet conditions. The sod fields had turned into a lake, and the muddy fields brought birds.

Below is our recap for the morning's survey that netted 104 species: Waterfowl included both species of Whistling-Ducks, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers, Gadwall, Ring-necked Ducks, and scaup. Yellow-billed Cuckoo is still holding on in the willows, and Soras and Virginia Rails are back. American Coots have returned, with 2,300 recorded on survey day. Sadly 52 swamphens were recorded and only 11 Purple Gallinules. Shorebirds included well over 150 Greater Yellowlegs and roughly 40 Lesser, plus a good showing of Killdeer and Black-necked Stilts. A lone American Avocet in breeding plumage was a great bird for the survey.

399 Glossy Ibis were recorded along with White Ibis, plus 4 Least Bitterns and 5 American Bitterns. Nine Northern Harriers had showed, and 32 Red-shouldered Hawks were seen. Eastern Phoebe's have returned, well only 98, lol.

Western Kingbird was a good find. Still some Barn swallows linger, 6 seen, and Tree Swallow numbers are only 36. Wrens have taken over, House in good numbers with 88, Sedge love that invasive Cuban Bulrush as 36 were recorded. Marsh and Carolina had good numbers as well.

The "meowing" of Gray Catbirds can be heard in any thicket, as 107 were tallied. White-crowned, Savannah, and Swamp Sparrows were tallied. Lincoln's was found but it after the survey. eBird reviewers should up their Swamp Sparrow filter, as everyone had their numbers flagged due to us recording 174 conservatively. We managed 10 species of warblers with Palm, Yellowthroat, Northern Waterthrush being the most numerous. As I always say, check that Spanish Needles for Painted Buntings, we had 4 and 7 Indigo. Our NSBS list has reached 150 species to date. Awesome job and thank you for all coming out to help. What are we going to find next month out there for the festival?

Christian Newton

Discover Central Florida's 20,000-Acre Lake Apopka North Shore • 377+ Bird Species Affordable Birding and Photo Field Trips

**ORANGE AUDUBON**  
*A Chapter of National and Florida Audubon Societies*

**December 11-15, 2025**

Photos: Mark Hainen, Sam Mitcham, Joyce Stefancic

## 2025 NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL

Orange Audubon Society's 10th annual NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL will be December 11-15, 2025. Filmmaker Jim Cunningham has created two short promotional videos posted on [northshore-birdingfestival.com](http://northshore-birdingfestival.com). Popular trips have filled quickly but we have added some new trips.

**NEW! Thursday 5a Exploring West Marsh**– Kayaking. Kayaks from Oakland Nature Preserve or bring your own. Lake Apopka West Marsh, Canoe/Kayak Launch, 24451 Blackhorse Trail, Astatula, FL 34705. \$40, bring lunch. 8:00AM - 11:30AM. Leaders: Jim Peterson and Alan Shapiro.

**NEW! Friday 9a. Canaveral National Seashore.** Mostly walking, some on sandy surfaces. National Seashore, Apollo District, 7611 S Atlantic Ave, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32169. \$50, bring lunch or we can eat together at a lagoon-side restaurant. 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 pm. Canaveral National Seashore is one of only 10 National Seashores in the U.S. Leaders: Luis Gles, Mariah Hryniewich, John Kendall and Adam Hull.

**NEW! Saturday 12. Wekiwa Birding by Ear Walk.** Youth Camp, Wekiwa Springs State Park. \$25, plus park entrance fee.

12:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m. Leaders: Jessica Dyszel and Matt Richardson.

**NEW! Sunday 5a Orlando Wetlands, Birds in Flight** – Walking. Orlando Wetlands. \$45, bring lunch. 7:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Leaders: Eric Moore and Ryan Garrison

**NEW! Sunday 7a. Avian Reconditioning Center Photo Workshop** – Minimal Walking. \$40. 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. A unique opportunity to photograph as many as 10 species of native Florida raptors perched on attractive and appropriate branches and limbs.

On Friday, the festival hosts a simple Dinner with the Leaders, Pizza and Salad. On Saturday the Keynote Dinner is Krazy Greek and the talk is by Alex and Mary Marine of Osceola County on the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow.

Dinners are at Wekiwa Springs State Park, and you have to enter the gate before the park closes at 5:30 p.m. Sign up for a workshop before dinner or a trip after dinner at the park or go kayaking using our Guest Services festival discount on kayak rentals.

Proceeds of the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL support Orange Audubon's nature and environmental center fund.

Visit <https://northshorebirdingfestival.com/>. If you have any questions, email [festival@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:festival@orangeaudubonfl.org) or call (407) 637-2525.

## How to Donate Towards Orange Audubon Nature Center

Donations to Orange Audubon are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. 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.

Consult your tax advisor and IRA custodian, and consider donating to Orange Audubon Society, Inc., a 501(c)(3) and eligible nonprofit. We would be deeply grateful to receive your donation to further OAS' tax-exempt mission. Thank you!

### WAYS TO GIVE:

**ONLINE:** Go to [orangeaudubonfl.org](http://orangeaudubonfl.org) and click Donate on top menu

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## NOVEMBER/DECEMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Bird Chats with OAS via Zoom

Contact Deborah at [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org)

### Project Feederwatch by Olivia Sanderfoot

- November 6, 2025

### eBird Tips and Tricks: Maximizing Your Use of the World's Largest Citizen Science Database by Will Johnson

- November 13, 2025

### Southeast Asia : Birds, Culture and Food by Daphne Gemmill

- December 4, 2025

- Dec 11 No Bird Chat (NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL)

- Dec 25 No Bird Chat (Christmas Day)

### Rock Springs Run State Reserve Bird Survey

November 4, 2025

Contact Kathy at [riglingkathy@gmail.com](mailto:riglingkathy@gmail.com)

### Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

November 8, 2025

Contact Kathy at [riglingkathy@gmail.com](mailto:riglingkathy@gmail.com)

### Apopka Birding Park Workday

November 8, 2025

Contact Deborah at [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org)

### Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

November 8, 2025

Contact Kathy at [riglingkathy@gmail.com](mailto:riglingkathy@gmail.com)

### Apopka Birding Park Workday

November 15, 2025

Contact Deborah at [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org)

### PEAR Park Wildlife Conservation Area, Leesburg

November 15, 2025

Contact Kathy at [riglingkathy@gmail.com](mailto:riglingkathy@gmail.com)

### November Program: The Owls of Safety Harbor - A Local Tragedy A National Issue by Mark Schocken

November 20, 2025

Contact Alan at [alangrandiflora@gmail.com](mailto:alangrandiflora@gmail.com)

### North Shore Bird Survey

November 25, 2025

Contact Deborah at [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org)

### Apopka Birding Park Bird Survey

November 29, 2025

Contact Alexander at [alexdebear@icloud.com](mailto:alexdebear@icloud.com)

### Apopka Birding Park Workday

November 29, 2025

Contact Deborah at [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org)

### NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL, Lake Apopka

Dec 11-15, 2025

Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

## Christmas Bird Counts, December 14, 2025 through January 5, 2026

The annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is now in its 126th year. The CBC uses over 70,000 volunteer bird counters in more than 2,400 locations across

the Western Hemisphere to track the health of bird populations at a scale that professional scientists could never accomplish.

If you want to participate, contact the compilers, listed below.

John Thomson, compiler of Bay Lake (December 20th), and Clermont (January 4th), welcomes the most help. Email him at [john.thomton@gmail.com](mailto:john.thomton@gmail.com). Be a part of the longest running citizen science program.



### Christmas Bird Counts

- Bay Lake: Saturday, December 20, 2025. Contact John Thomson at [john.thomton@gmail.com](mailto:john.thomton@gmail.com)
- Wekiwa River: Saturday, December 20, 2025. Contact Jay Exum at [jay.h.exum@gmail.com](mailto:jay.h.exum@gmail.com)
- Zellwood/Mt. Dora: Thursday, December 18, 2025. Contact Gallus Quigley at [gallusq@gmail.com](mailto:gallusq@gmail.com)
- Emeralda: Monday, December 22, 2025. Contact Gigi DelPizzo at [g2cowgirl@yahoo.com](mailto:g2cowgirl@yahoo.com)
- Econlockhatchee: Saturday, December 27, 2025. Contact Lorne Malo at [lornekmalo@gmail.com](mailto:lornekmalo@gmail.com)
- Kissimmee Valley: Sunday, December 28, 2025. Contact Chris Newton at [dexterdevon68@gmail.com](mailto:dexterdevon68@gmail.com)
- Clermont: Monday, January 4, 2025. Contact John Thomson at [john.thomton@gmail.com](mailto:john.thomton@gmail.com)

## Fall Migration Bird Walks at Mead

Orange Audubon's Mead Botanical Garden Fall Migration Bird Walks were each Saturday in October and were another great success. Thanks to Colin Giebner, Haden Klinger, Matt Richardson and Chuck Honaker for guiding. Forty-two people participated on the last Saturday. That morning, 12 children, ages 8-12 joined us, and we recruited three new young birders. Three families participated, and there were people from Mexico, Costa Rica, Bahamas, Thailand & Central Florida.

The rare bird of the season, seen by many, was a Western Flycatcher. Thanks to all. We'll see you in April for spring migration.

*Linda Gaunt, Orange Audubon Secretary*