

Clockwise left to right, author Leslie Kemp Poole, John Muir, Zora Neal Hurston and a turpentine worker, Harriet Beecher Stowe's Florida book, John James Audubon's Tricolored Heron painting and Jonathan Dickinson marker, site of shipwreck.

## Tracing Florida Journeys by Leslie Kemp Poole, January 15, 2025

Is what early environmental explorers in Florida saw interesting to you? If so, join Orange Audubon on January 15th for a presentation by Dr. Leslie Kemp Poole, author and associate professor of environmental studies at Rollins College. Leslie will share stories of well-known explorers and travelers to earlier Florida, drawing from her 5th book, *Tracing Florida Journeys: Explorers, Travelers, and Landscapes Then and Now*.

Dr. Poole, a fourth-generation Floridian, highlights Florida that was and Florida that exists today, bringing together historical research, interviews with experts, and her personal experiences to tell a revealing story of the state's natural history.

Among the authors profiled, the abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote about her visits to Florida, as did John Muir, reflecting expectations of a place touted to be "paradise." John James Audubon found rich bird life in the Keys. Zora Neale Hurston traveled to turpentine camps and sawmills documenting the stories and music of workers. Jonathan Dickinson and Stephen Crane recounted shipwrecks along the sparsely populated Florida coastline. Members of Hernando de Soto's violent 1539 expedition described struggles with dense swamps, forests, rivers, and resistance from native peoples.

Join us at Leu Gardens on January 15th at 7 p.m. for a fascinating 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/](http://www.leugardens.org/plan/directions/)

## Beginners' Birdwatching Class, Winter 2026

There are still a few spots left in Orange Audubon's Winter Beginners' Birdwatching Class. This 3-session class receives great reviews, with many people going on to do more birding on their own or with our chapter after taking it. Instructors are Susan Thome-Barrett and me, assisted by Holly Hobart.

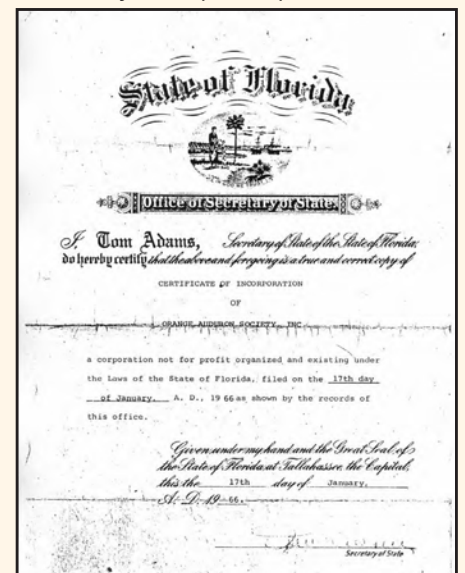
All sessions are 8:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m. An "outdoor" classroom session and mini-field trip will be Sunday, February 8th at Orlando Wetlands. On Saturday, February 14th and February 21st, field sessions are at Oakland Nature Preserve and on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, respectively. If you have to miss a session, you can make it up in our fall session next October.

The class is limited to 12 students with registration required. Total cost for all three sessions is \$60 for members; \$75 for non-members; \$10 youth (12 & under with registered adult). Non-members can join when registering, all through our website. For questions about the class, contact me at [riglingkathy@gmail.com](mailto:riglingkathy@gmail.com).

Kathy Rigling

## Happy Birthday, Orange Audubon!

On January 17, 1966, our chapter filed its Articles of Incorporation. 2026, our 60th year, could be the year we finally build a nature center and create a home of our own! Can you help? See p. 2.



## 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. If you are not



familiar with our project, [see last month's OASis](#). Details on our plans to renovate an old Truck Shop into a LEED certified nature center are also in [my Bird Chat presentation](#) and Orange Audubon's first Annual Report, [link here](#).

We are nearly half way through a 4.5 million dollar Capital Campaign. Please understand that our fundraising is not just to build the nature center. Orange Audubon, second largest chapter in Florida, may be the largest chapter nationwide **run entirely by volunteers**. With opening of the nature center, we need a paid center director, and the funding source needs to be sustainable. The nature center will have the potential for some income: We can provide rental space for other environmental groups and garden clubs, we will have a small gift shop and workshops can bring in some income. But this is likely not to be self-sustaining. It is important that Orange Audubon moves forward with care.

We know we have a fabulous project with great marketing potential for companies seeking naming rights on parts of our beautiful building. In company-wide meetings of our architectural firm, Little Diversified Architectural Services, both in Charlotte and Orlando, out of approximately 400 projects, reportedly our little building is the one most often mentioned. Thanks to the location near the popular Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive and the great design of the building, it will be a project with which any company can be proud to be associated. Nucor Corporation, North America's largest steel manufacturer and recycler, based in Charlotte, North Carolina, has pledged to donate some important building components (see last month's issue). We are beginning discussions with a bird-safe



Nucor reps and our architect and committee members view the Truck Shop that will be renovated into our nature center, September 2025. Photo: Deborah Green

glass manufacturer.

We thank Steve Hudak of the *Orlando Sentinel* for [profiling our project in mid December](#). That article stimulated a husband to seek naming rights to honor his wife who grew up in Apopka. And we thank the *Apopka Voice* for pro-bono advertising of our project.

Companies that want to be associated with the project can download our [Naming Rights flyer](#), and we ask that they call us to set up a site visit.

The individual donations from our community members have been amazing (see p.3), but this is the time to solidify some corporate partnerships. If anyone in our community can help, please let me know at [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org).

### 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.

A grant from the Florida Wildflower Foundation funded an entry native landscape, spearheaded by board member Alan Shapiro.

Our landlord, the City of Apopka, will be installing water and sewer soon. We are working on treatment of cogongrass, a highly invasive weed pest, and other invasives through herbicide treatments before investing in native plant seeds and seedlings. The concrete pads that were the bases of the old greenhouses that burned down circa 1999 will be removed starting as early as mid January. All that will finally allow us to do major restoration activities. Much help is needed. Please email [info@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:info@orangeaudubonfl.org) if you can help.

*Deborah Green, Apopka Birding Park Working Group Chair*



ORANGE  
AUDUBON

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).

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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## Trees For Birds and the Planet

Planting trees is a powerful strategy against climate change because trees absorb massive amounts of atmospheric carbon dioxide through photosynthesis, storing it as biomass and releasing oxygen, effectively acting as natural carbon sinks and cooling the planet. Planting trees also moderates local temperatures and reduces the amount of energy needed for homes. Trees clean our air and water, provide habitat for wildlife, connect communities, and support our health and well-being.

With our Apopka Birding Park, Orange Audubon finally has a chance work on reforestation. Peter Berry is a new friend who is on a mission to plant cypress trees wherever he can. He and volunteers have planted over 40 cypress trees so far at our park.

We have trees to plant at the monthly workday, now scheduled for January 24th, 9 am to 12 pm, at the Apopka Birding Park. Join us! [Registration link](#).



Peter Berry planting cypress *Photo: Alan Shapiro*

## Conservation Committee Report

Welcome to 2026. Conservation issues will continue to be a challenge this year. The Central Florida Audubon Regional Conservation Committee (RCC) will meet on January 18, April 19th, July 19th and October 18th at 4pm on Zoom. To participate, contact Marsha Cox at [marsha.sevasnsb@gmail.com](mailto:marsha.sevasnsb@gmail.com). The 2026 Florida Legislative session begins January 13, 2026 and runs through March. [Last month we gave an overview of bills to watch out for in the upcoming session. \(p.3\).](#) [Please sign up at this link](#) to get regular updates from Audubon Florida on what is happening, relative to bird habitat and conservation in this year's session



Male Snail Kite, Lake Tohopekaliga. 2025 Chertok Florida Native Photo Contest, Honorable Mention Winner, Advanced Category. *Photo: Dan Jones*

## Orange Audubon Thanks Our Donors

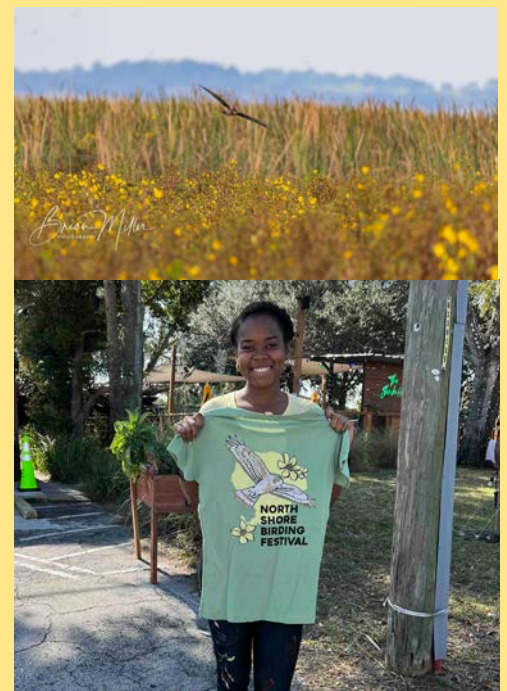
Orange Audubon is proud of the wide support from members of our birding and conservation community. And with our attempts to make progress on the Apopka Birding Park that we document each month in the *OASis* and this year's fall letter appeal, our fiscal year 2025-26 has started well, in numbers and amounts of our member's donations. Thanks to all who are supporting our efforts to build and operate a nature center.

From July 2025 through December 2025, Orange Audubon gratefully received donations from the following individuals (listed are those that we were able to secure permission to list before press time, in alphabetical order): Nancy Adler and Don Crowell, Terry Aycrigg, Arthur Barksdale, Rodney Beaubien, Matthew Blanz, Frank Canty, John and Patricia Cloran, Marguerite Cornwell, Stacey Crawley, Sonia Durrance, Marilyn Frazier, Ryan Garrison, Marc Godts/Green Isle Gardens, Kathryn Graves, Deborah Green, Michelle Grossman, Fred and Pat Harden, April Harris, Walter Hellinger, James and Mary Helmers, Mary Hudgins, Sheilla Johnson, Nancy Jones, John and Elizabeth Kelly, Sam Kendall, Wayne Kennedy, Julie Kent, Kathleen Leser, Susan Lewis, Larry Martin, Rick and Linda Maxson, George and Janna McGowan, Susan and Hugh Morris, David and Darbee Percival, Jan Pewsey, Terry Piper in memory of Peggy Lantz, Eugene and Jeanne Polarolo, Leslie and Michael Poole, Traies Roe, Marilyn and Larry Roofner, Pam Schrimmscher and Grant Basham, Florence and Robert Sena, Alan Shapiro, Dorothea Skowron in memory of Richard Skowron, Richard Sloane, John Soucy, Bob Stamps and Loretta Satterthwaite, D Steven Stanford, Joyce and Bill Stefancic, Elizabeth Stewart, Jeffrey Switzer, Michael Valente, Mary Van Egmond, Shirley Waggoner, Jennifer Weader, Jody Weiss, Jeffrey and Kathleen Werrmann, Kathleen Wynegar, Shari Yudenfreund-Sujka and Stan Sujka, and Sandra Zajac.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) reports that 52 bears were "collected" in the hunt that just ended. Thank you to those that purchased one of the permits and did not use them and thank you to those that made your concerns known to our legislators and FWC Commissioners.

On another note: Our neighboring Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society is no more, and we have welcomed its members to join us. If you live in that area, [follow this link](#) to engage in Lake County conservation issues.

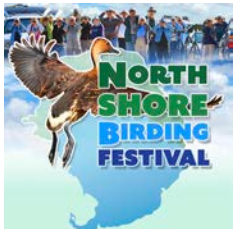
Thanks for being ready to speak up.  
*Rick Baird, Conservation Committee Chair*



Northern Harrier over Bur-marigolds. Photo: Brian Miller. Artist Delia Miller with the T-shirt she designed. Orange Audubon's stone blue festival shirts are still available.

Our NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL T-shirt features the Northern Harrier with Bur-marigolds. The design is by Apopka artist Delia Miller, who will be doing murals in our new nature center. Remaining sizes are M, L and XL. Price is \$24 (\$22.54 plus \$1.46 Orange County sales tax) plus \$5.50 shipping = \$29.50. [Use this link to order.](#)

**2025 NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL**



Orange Audubon Society's 10th annual NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL was a lot of fun. Since its 2016 launch, the festival's attendance has grown steadily, with 330 participants in 2025, from 16 states and over 70 Florida cities.

The festival aims to expand its national reach, spark return visits, raise awareness of Central Florida's natural treasures and contribute ecotourism dollars to the area. It showcases the region's conservation value and habitat protection efforts. It brings together a critical mass of leaders and participants to catch up on their common interest—birding. Once Orange Audubon's nature center is built, the festival will include a free Expo Hall with displays by optics and tour companies, allowing added community engagement.

This year we had 62 leaders, and all but few professional guides donated their time. Something special is how many of our leaders are under 30. Several trip leaders who received their start with us have gone on to guide at larger festivals and for prestigious companies.

Haden Klinger, 16 and founding member of Orange Audubon's Young Birder's Club, said: "The NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL is an amazing opportunity to learn, have fun, and explore. I helped with a Leader's Choice trip this year where the leaders decide where we go birding based on the group. I had the chance to co-lead with Christian Newton. We had a lot of fun, and I learned a lot from him, like tips on leading a group when the birds are slow or leading based on the group's skill level. Overall, the opportunity to help out at the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL was a great learning experience, and I'd recommend it to anyone who gets a chance."

Orange Audubon sends a big thank you to trip leaders Rebecca Anthony, Bill Asteriades, Gian Basili, Glenn Blaser, Travis Blunden, Blair Clark, Alexander DeBear, Gigi DelPizzo, Jessica Dyszel, Lynn Folts, Pamela Ford, Ryan Garrison, Greg Gensheimer, Luis Gles, John Groskopf, Mark Hainen, Mitchell Harris, Chuck Honaker, Aice Horst, Mariah Hryniewicz, Adam Hull, Danielle Ivey, Will Johnson, Pete Johnson, John Kendall, Haden Klinger, Ludlow Lambertson, Brennan and Ethan Landreville, Lorri Lilja, Ed Maldonado, Alex Marine, Bruce Matasick, Deborah and

Randall McCall, Eric Moore, Tricia Newton, Christian Newton, Susan Pepper, Lee Ann Posavad, Ben Powell, Gallus Quigley, Matthew Richardson, Kathy Rigling, Ralph Risch, Jack Rogers, Steve Shaluta, Alan Shapiro, Scott Simmons, David Simpson, Mary Soule, Joan Tague, Susan Thome-Barrett, John Thomson, Connor Wagner, Craig Watson, Maxfield Weakley, Graham Williams and Danny Young. Sam Mitcham who was unable to lead at the last minute contributed to scouting the locations. Thank you all. Leaders make the festival!

## Education Program Update

This month Orange Audubon led bird counts at Zellwood Elementary School and Wolf Lake Middle School as part of the Zellwood- Mt. Dora Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 18th.

To prepare the students for the count, I created a video explaining the history of the CBC, basic ways to identify birds, how birds are counted scientifically and tips on using binoculars. At Zellwood Elementary this video was shown to kindergarten through 5th grade classes.

At Wolf Lake Middle I worked with the 6-8th grade agricultural science classes. Previously, on August 22nd, we conducted the Great Southern Pollinator Count and on October 14th, an initial bird count to prepare the students for the CBC.



Wolf Lake Middle School agriscience students on CBC on "pajama day". Photo Kathy Rigling.

Both Zellwood Elementary and Wolf Lake Middle had completed native plant habitat improvement projects in the 2024-25 school year which were funded by Orange Audubon through its IDEAL grant.

We started the Christmas Bird Count at Zellwood Elementary school bright and early before school with the birding club (which I visit monthly), the Green Club and the Garden Club. I was fortunate to have the assistance of four volunteers: Terrie Leibler, Madeline Barber, Jaliza Almeida and Lauren Carlson. The students were excited to see the increased activity of the birds, since we normally do our monthly bird counts after school.

When school started, each grade level came outside to participate in a 30-minute count. We had up to 112 students at a time

counting birds in their schoolyard. We used 33 pairs of our binoculars (the last 11 purchased through the IDEAL grant), as well as Zellwood Elementary's binoculars from our FLEDJE grant and other sources.

For grades 1-5, the students worked together to spot the birds and our volunteers assisted them in identifying them. The younger students counted birds by color and completed a tally sheet. It was a great learning experience for all levels. All together 564 students and 35 adults participated. The wind and overcast skies didn't dampen the students' enthusiasm for observing birds with binoculars.

Several students from the afterschool Birding Club were helping their classmates with binoculars and pointing out birds. Highlights were a male Baltimore Oriole, an American Kestrel, lots of active Palm Warblers (a big student favorite) and two juvenile Bald Eagles.

In the same afternoon, I traveled to nearby Wolf Lake Middle School to assist the 6th-8th grade agriscience students to count birds on their campus. Volunteers Randy McCall and Jennifer Barber had already conducted CBC morning counts with those students.

The students were very keen to try to find birds in their native plant habitat, bird feeding areas and nearby tree line. 167 students participated in the Wolf Lake portion. Highlights included a low flyover of 3 White Pelicans, Laughing Gulls, Killdeer, Black-and-white Warblers and small feeding flocks of Palm Warblers.

Our wonderful team of six volunteers made this project possible. Thanks to Randy McCall, Jennifer Barber, Madeline Barber, Terrie Leibler, Jaliza Almeida and Lauren Carlson.

Orange Audubon still has availability to conduct on-campus bird counts and other standards-based educational programs. Interested teachers should email me at [education@orangeaudubonfl.org](mailto:education@orangeaudubonfl.org).

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

Our monthly free educational webinars will continue January 10th from 7:00-7:30 pm with "Improving Habitat for Wildlife". The link to sign up is <http://eepurl.com/imGskM>

*Kathy Rigling, Education Coordinator*



Madeline Barber leads youngest children on the Zellwood CBC day. Education Coordinator Kathy Rigling and Orange Audubon volunteers get ready to check out loaner binoculars. Photos courtesy Zellwood Elementary.

## Looking For Volunteers

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

- 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
- Assisting with clean-up, planting, etc. for our future Orange Audubon Nature Center at the Apopka Birding Park
- Helping to clean and fill bird feeders at Mead Botanical Garden

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

*Mary Van Egmond,  
Volunteer Coordinator*



Cooper's Hawk, Photo: Mary Keim

### **Birds of Prey Identification Class** January 11, 2026

On Sunday, January 11th from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m, popular instructor Bob Sanders will teach his Birds of Prey Identification class on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. Bob is an avid birder and raptor expert. Before moving to Central Florida, he was co-founder of the Chimney Rock Hawk Watch in Martinsville, New Jersey.

Price is \$15 (Audubon members) or \$25 (non-members) and must be paid online on Orange Audubon's website. To register go to the Orange Audubon Society website: <https://orangeaudubonfl.org/field-trip-signup/>



Horned Grebe from Northwest Recreation Complex.  
Photo: Lynn Marie Folts

### **Northwest Orange County Trip** January 17, 2026

Orange Audubon's first free monthly trip for 2026 will go to two properties in Northwest Orange County. We will start at the Northwest Recreation Complex in Apopka, visiting the large pool with a fountain that is a well-known hotspot for winter ducks, such as Hooded Mergansers, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck and sometimes rarities, like the Horned Grebe.

## **Behavioral Clues Help with A Challenging Winter Warbler**

The Orange-crowned Warbler is a winter warbler in our area that is quite non-descript, and I have eagerly picked up behavioral clues from trip leaders at the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL to help me spot it.

In winter, when most warblers are deep in the tropics, this species can be found in Southern states and is called one of the hardiest of the warblers.



also eat berries, seeds, and plant galls, and visit suet feeders. It visits holes drilled by sapsuckers and pierces flowers for nectar. Its call is a high-pitched "chip" or "tsit".

This drab, yellowish-olive species has no wing bars, and the namesake orange feathers on its head are almost never visible. If you can get your binoculars on it, you will see a dark line through the eye, broken eye-ring, and faint streaks on its belly.

The Tennessee Warbler is also very drably colored, but has white under-its tail feathers (unlike the Orange-crowned's yellow undersides). A behavioral cue is that the Orange-crowned Warbler will hover to take prey from the underside of leaves, including dead leaves, as well as sallying out from a perch for flying insects. The Worm-eating Warbler also probes dead leaves, but that tan warbler has distinctive stripes on the head. Both the Tennessee and Worm-eating are migrants here, rarely staying the winter.

As explained by Jessica Dyszel of Duval Audubon, a new leader with our festival, you might confuse the Orange-Crowned with a Palm Warbler if the light doesn't allow you to see color or other characteristics. A behavioral difference is that the Palm Warbler will constantly pump its abdomen but the Orange-crowned does not. Enjoy our winter warblers!

*Deborah Green*



Orange-crowned Warbler, Photo: Mary Keim; Orange-crowned Warbler, Photo: Eric Moore; Worm-eating Warbler, Photo: Robert Sena

The Orange-crowned Warbler is usually seen singly, sometimes loosely associated with flocks of other birds. From the ground to the treetops, it pokes, clambers, and flits through vegetation.

In dense, shrubby areas like thickets and brushy clearings, the Orange-crowned eats mainly invertebrate prey, including ants, beetles, spiders, flies, and caterpillars. It will

It's also a great place to look for Bonaparte's Gulls, other gulls and terns as well as shorebirds and winter songbirds.

Our second location is a new Orange County Green PLACE property called Lake Lucie Conservation Area. This is 166 acres in the northwest corner of Orange County. We will be hiking on a one and a quarter mile loop on sandy, mostly shaded trails. We will

look for winter songbirds, woodpeckers and raptors as we enjoy this hilly preserve.

Leaders will be Alan Shapiro and Kathy Rigling of Orange Audubon. This trip is free, but spots are limited. To register go to the Orange Audubon Society website: <https://orangeaudubonfl.org/field-trip-signup/>

## North Shore Bird Surveys

Orange Audubon is collaborating with the St. Johns River Water Management District on bird surveys on the Lake Apopka North Shore, following specific transect methodology to allow a comparison to District surveys done years ago. Ben Guigliotti, North Shore Land Manager, works with us on these.

Thanks again to everyone who has been participating. Winter is a great time to bird, with so much diversity. The North Shore is so rich with bird life. As much as the Peruvian Primrosewillow (the nonnative sp.) is an invasive, several waterthrush and Virginia Rails have made wintering homes out of it. Carolina Willow stands house small groups of warblers; the road edges that are covered with Spanish Needles are good for buntings.

Cuban Bulrush is a very aggressive invasive aquatic sedge, but Sedge Wrens and Swamp Sparrows use it as wintering homes. Elderberry stands, which generally have lots of grasses and small shrubby like vegetation, house sparrows, chats, buntings, flycatchers, and mixed warblers. It's worth checking every little nook and cranny on the North Shore.

If anyone new wants to join us, the surveys are the 4th Tuesday starting at 6:30 a.m. at the McDonald Canal parking lot. The next Survey will be January 27th, 2026. [Sign up using this link.](#) Have a Great New Year. Good Birding! Chris Newton



Sedge Wren. Photo: Brian Miller. Virginia Rail. Photo: Ryan Garris on

## Longleaf Pines

Longleaf pines are tall pines with a pom-pom-like configuration of needles and very large cones. Needles on the ground are in fascicles of threes and about a foot long.

These trees develop deep roots, in sandy soils, and withstand drought and hurricanes. The oldest ones in Florida are over 200 years old.

Before the early 1900s, longleaf pine forests were the dominant ecosystem in the uplands of the South. However, their timber ("heart of pine") is excellent for construction. Due to over-harvesting and building on their high dry habitat, longleaf pines have largely disappeared from their original range. After harvesting, foresters preferentially plant slash or loblolly pines which grow more quickly.

Along the main park road of Wekiwa Springs State Park, keeping to your left, the sandy rolling hills host hundreds of widely-spaced longleaf pines with a continuous blanket of wiregrass and wildflowers beneath. This "sand-hill habitat" is one of the outstanding features of this important state park.

Orange Audubon has a ways to go in restoring the Apopka Birding Park, but planting longleaf



Longleaf pine. Photo: Mary Keim



Peggy Lantz surveying her sandhill restoration project near her home, which won an award from the Florida Native Plant Society. Photo: Mac Camacho.

## Peggy Sias Lantz August 8, 1933 – December 14, 2025

Naturalist and author Peggy Sias Lantz passed away on December 14, 2025 at the age of 92. Peggy was steeped in Florida history, living in Gotha in the West Orange County lake community that her grandfather settled in 1914. Her husband Don had passed away in 2020 after 61 years of marriage. She is survived by four children and five grandchildren.

Although she was more active over the years in the Florida Native Plant Society, Peggy was also an important part of Orange Audubon Society, serving as president from 1989 through 1991, holding other offices and serving as newsletter editor for many years.

Peggy's long list of books include *Florida's Incredible Wild Edibles* in 1993 with Dick Deuerling. This classic was replaced by her 2013 *Florida's Edible Wild Plants: A To Guide to Collecting and Cooking*, published by University Press of Florida. She published *The Young Naturalist's Guide to Florida* in 1994 and *The Florida Water Story* in 1998, both co-authored by Wendy Hale. The latter two have been used in local middle schools.

Donations in her memory can be made to her favorite organizations including to Orange Audubon Society, according to her family. [Watch this obituary site for announcement of a service later in January.](#)

## JANUARY/FEBRUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Bird Chats with OAS via Zoom

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

[Link to register](#)

### Birds of Trinidad and Tobago by Clint Quintal

January 8, 2026

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

January 22, 2026

### For the Love of Shorebirds by Brian Cammarano

January 29, 2026

### Bird Banding by Jim McGinity

February 5, 2026

### Travelogue by Joe Hammond, Raven Birding Apparel

February 12, 2026

### Birding in Great Britain by David Campbell

February 26, 2026

### Limited Edition Field Trip: Your Biggest Year, Lake Apopka

#### Wildlife Drive (full)

January 3, 2026

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

#### Clermont Christmas Bird Count

January 4, 2026

Contact John at [john.thomton@gmail.com](mailto:john.thomton@gmail.com)

#### Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

January 10, 2026

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

#### Birds of Prey ID class with Bob Sanders

January 11, 2026

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

#### January Program: Tracing Florida Journeys by Leslie Poole

January 15, 2025

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

#### Oakland Nature Preserve Bird Survey, Oakland

January 25, 2026

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

#### Rock Springs Run Reserve Bird Survey, Sorrento

January 28, 2026

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

#### January Field Trip: Lake Lucie, Green Eyes, Fields of Fame, Apopka

January 17, 2026

Register: <https://orangeaudubonfl.org/activities/field-trips/>

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

#### Apopka Birding Park Workday

January 24, 2026

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

#### Oakland Nature Preserve Bird Survey, Oakland

January 25, 2026

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

#### North Shore Bird Survey

January 27, 2026

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



*Stealth Fighter, Least Bittern. 2025 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest, 1st Place Winner, Advanced Category. Photo: Wei-Shen Chin*

#### Rock Springs Run State Reserve Bird Survey

January 28, 2026

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

#### Gainesville Overnight Limited Edition Birding Trip

January 31–February 1, 2026 (full)

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

#### Apopka Birding Park Bird Survey

January 31, 2026

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

#### Beginners' Bird Watching Class

February 7, 14 and 21, 2026

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

#### Birds of Prey ID class with Bob Sanders

February 8, 2026

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

#### Young Birders Field Trip

February 15, 2026

Contact Kathy at (407) 488-9559

#### February Program: Breaking New Ground with Florida Scrub-Jays by Karl Miller

February 19, 2026

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

#### February Field Trip: Orlando Wetlands, Christmas

February 22, 2026

Register: <https://orangeaudubonfl.org/activities/field-trips/>

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

#### Limited Edition Field Trip: Merritt Island Hotspots

February 28, 2026

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

#### Youth Photo Workshop

March 1, 2026

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