



Clockwise, left to right, all from the 2025 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. *Wilson's Plovers*, Honorable Mention, Advanced Category, Photo: Bobby Van Mierop. *Spoon Landing — Roseate Spoonbill*, Honorable Mention, Advanced Category. Photo: Wei-Shen Chin. *Owlways Watching — Barred Owls*, Honorable Mention, Advanced Category. Photo: Robert Gloeckner.

Below, left: Teresa Williams, Chertok Contest Chair, after putting up Chertok prints at the Magnolia Park EcoEducation Center. Photo: Deborah Green



Orange Audubon's Online Auction Opens June 12th!

From private birding experiences with experts to landscape consultation to gift certificates for restaurants and attractions, there is something for everyone in the 2026 Orange Audubon Society Online Auction.

All proceeds will benefit the Orange Audubon Nature Center at the Apopka Birding Park (see page 2).

Although the Online Auction won't open for bidding until Friday, June 12th at noon, our BiddingOwl site is available to survey what is available now, using your previous year's log in or you can register on the BiddingOwl website at this link: <https://new.biddingowl.com/OrangeAudubonSociety>

As new items are donated, they will be added to the easy-to-use BiddingOwl platform that has been used for the **past five years**.

Check back closer to the time to see **all** the items. The auction will close on June 22nd at 7:00 p.m.

Bid from the comfort of your home. You will make pickup arrangements with our volunteers. Nab some great items and help Orange Audubon's fundraising! Thank you!

Linda Gaunt, Online Auction Chair

38th Annual Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest Awards Program June 18, 2026

It's time once again to celebrate the end of another Orange Audubon Society season with our traditional final program showcasing the beauty and diversity of Florida's natural world—a show of entries in the 2026 (38th Annual) Kit and Sidney Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest.

What better way to celebrate nature than by helping preserve it—both in action and in photography? For 60 years, Orange Audubon has promoted environmental conservation through advocacy and

nature education programming. For the last 38 years, the Chertok contest program has helped Orange Audubon meet its mission-driven goals through photography. The contest encourages appreciation for and protection of Florida's native wildlife and natural areas. Participants learn about native species, environmental impacts of nonnative species, and ethical photography practices, while newfound knowledge enhances their enjoyment of nature and photography and instills a sense of stewardship. We protect what we love.

All are encouraged to attend and bring friends and family as we celebrate the 38th year of this photo contest and Orange Audubon's 60th year as your local Audubon chapter. Join us on June 18th at Leu Gardens (address below) for a photographic journey through Florida – from the Panhandle through the Keys. Winners of the 2026 contest will be announced and awards and ribbons presented at the end of the show. See you there!

Teresa Williams, Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest Chair

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/



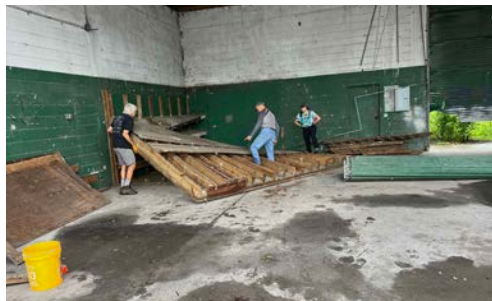
Ryan Garrison with his framed misty marsh Little Blue Heron print that will be on the Online Auction. Photo: Deborah Green

June Challenge (Financial), Please Donate So We Can Start Construction

Generous donations continue coming in from our members who recognize the amazing opportunity Orange Audubon has with a nature center site at the beginning of the popular Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive.

Our members who are naturalists also recognize how important upland habitats are for birds, gopher tortoises and other wildlife and how these habitats are disappearing to development. Others see that we are creating a community green space, welcoming to all.

The 69.5 acre former greenhouse nursery was supplused by the St. Johns River Water Management District to the City of Apopka in 2018, and Orange Audubon secured a 30-year lease with unlimited five-year renewals in 2024.



The old Truck Shop that Orange Audubon will be renovating. Workday removal of wooden structures within the building. Photos: Deborah Green. Rendering of the nature center, a renovation of the old cement block building. The bird observatory annex, a 1000-square foot addition to the 2400 square foot building. Murals will show bird migration. Renderings: Little Diversified Architectural Consulting.

As most of our readers know, our 3400-square foot nature/special events center/museum will be a renovation of the existing green cement block building near the Lust Road Canal. To renovate is more ecological than to tear down and build anew, since you are saving the energy of producing the materials, saving energy for transport of the materials to the site and are avoiding major waste disposal.

Our award-winning architects, Little Diversified Architectural Consulting (Little) of Orlando and Charlotte, love our concept. They developed a beautiful design that will be net-zero energy, use rainwater harvesting and be certified LEED Gold to educate on best construction practices.

This summer we have several UCF students in non-profit management helping us, happy to have the chance to apply their skills to a real life project.

We also have joined the Association of Nature Center Administrators (ANCA) and signed up for their mentorship program, where we are matched with another nature center where the director may have insights to share. ANCA matched us with the Marine Discovery Center in New Smyrna Beach! Marine Discovery Center's new building coincidentally was designed by Little!



Mark Zaremskas, Principal of RB Marks Construction, with Liz Davis, Assistant Site Manager, and Lindsey Zaremskas, Bid Coordinator, during meeting with Orange Audubon about starting a Phase 1 contract. Photo: Deborah Green.

In April, Orange Audubon chose our contractor, Mark Zaremskas of R.B.Marks Construction, Winter Springs. This company had done the Plaza Live Theatre renovation, also designed by Little, which was supported by an Orange County Tourist Development Tax grant. That building is owned by the City of Orlando with a long-term lease to the Orlando Philharmonic.

Recently, Mark had a positive idea, knowing we were still fundraising prior to starting construction. His idea is to start the demolition on our old truck shop, *continued*



Orange Audubon Society 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 Orange Audubon happenings. Add or update your email address by contacting newsletter@orangeaudubonfl.org.

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

JOIN Orange Audubon's [MEETUP GROUP](#)
LIKE Orange Audubon's' [FACEBOOK PAGE](#)

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

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continued from p.2 — take out the roll-up doors, roof and other metal parts of the building — as well as do the site prep, including underground piping, laying down the entryway, paving the handicapped entry pathway, etc.

He had this idea because — on their Plaza Live Theatre renovation—the grant had required beginning construction by a certain date for which they weren't ready, due to some equipment not being in. Starting the demo and site prep satisfied the grant, and there was no damage to the work as it sat a few months while equipment came in.

Because much of our delay is because we not only need more money for the building but also for staff, our Apopka Birding Park Working Group will be developing a "business plan," documenting anticipated operating expenses and possible revenues.



Main room of nature center with exhibits that can be moved to the side to accommodate 120 people seated. Rendering: Little Diversified Architectural Consulting

In Little's clever design in response to our needs, our exhibits will be on casters and able to be moved to the side. The entire space can seat 120 people. We plan to hold our monthly programs there and can rent out the space to other groups.

How close are we to starting construction?

Donations for our "\$600K in 60 days campaign" in early 2026, in honor of our 60th anniversary, were an amazing \$120,000, all from our members. We are looking to raise another \$400K to feel confident we can both build the building and operate it.

June Challenge (Financial).

Our fund drive now before the end of our fiscal year June 30th is again called our June Challenge (Financial). We hope you will contribute to propel us to the finish line.

Monthly donations

If you are a Sustainer member of National Audubon, with online monthly donations, consider directing funding to Orange Audubon as well. We now have the ability to receive monthly donations on our website and these [donations](#) can be used toward our nature center and educational efforts.



First row, check in and the Orange Audubon board members present in front of renderings of the building. Second row, Deb Carswell, co-chair of the party planning committee, Charlotte White with Mary Van Egmond after setting up the raffle tables. Third row, Maribel Brinkle, Molly Pohlana and Maddie Barber confer. Mary Helmers excitedly shows the Matthew Chin print she won in the raffle. Fourth row, Ella Duke behind the bar. Commissioner Yesenia Baron and Molly Pohlana. Photos: Deborah Green and Sue Weidner

Tax-exempt Donations

For those with IRAs who are over 70 1/2 years of age, making qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) directly to non-profits, including Orange Audubon, may count towards your required minimum distribution, providing a significant tax benefit. QCDs can already be made for the 2026 tax year.

Naming Rights

We are updating our [naming rights](#) flyer. Naming rights for the bird observatory annex have been claimed by our most generous donor. But the classroom, estimated to cost \$250,000, remains. We have 8 donors in the \$10,000 range. Twenty-five donors of \$10,000 would cover the cost of the classroom and all

Fundraising Fun

Orange Audubon was invited to hold a fundraising party by the owners of Propagate Social House in Apopka on its Shade House Deck.

Ella Duke, co-owner of Propagate and Hall's on Fifth food court in downtown Apopka, had been at the Apopka City Council meeting in October 2024 when our architect presented on our nature center plans. Understanding the amenity Orange Audubon is creating for the community, she has wanted to help ever since.

Activities at the party were simple, mostly socializing with other nature-lovers and supporters of Orange Audubon's project and bidding on some great raffle items. Molly Pohlana, interior designer on our architectural team, presented using print renderings. A few Apopka dignitaries, like Commissioner Yesenia Baron, attended.

We had invited our big donors to tour the nature center site beforehand, and a half dozen took a tour led by Rick Baird.

Proceeds topped \$5000, thanks to the great donated raffle items, including a photo print donated by Wei-Shen Chin, taken by his son Matthew. We thank Little Diversified Architectural Consulting and CMTA Engineering Consulting, as well as Apopka Serves and Propagate Social House for co-sponsoring. Thank you to Diann Haubner for party advice and to Deb Carswell and Charlotte White for their great help, in addition to our regulars, Jimena Aguirre, Rick Baird, Maddie Barber, Linda Gaunt, Deborah Green, Mary Van Egmond and Sue Weidner.

Thank you again to Ella Duke for hosting us. Nice to be social.

the names could be listed in the signage. Can you be among them?

And if you have less to donate but still want to support our all-volunteer team and be a part of this great project, contribute what you can. Many thanks!

For an all-volunteer organization, with just one part-time employee, Education Coordinator Kathy Rigling, Orange Audubon accomplishes a tremendous amount. Many of our activities are described in our first Annual Report, [available at this link](#).

Mail checks to Orange Audubon Society, P.O. Box 274, Apopka, FL 32704 or [use this link](#). Thank you so much!

Deborah Green, President with Sue Weidner, Treasurer



Concrete pads, the bases of the old greenhouses; Photo: Joyce Stefancic. Areas being scraped and pads taken out. Photo: Deborah Green.

Restoration Progress

At our Apopka Birding Park, a former greenhouse nursery, the old greenhouses burned down circa 1999, but their bases, concrete pads, are widespread. The St. Johns River Water Management District is removing the concrete pads to use the concrete for rip-rap along canals and lakes and for other construction projects. This is going on Mondays through Thursdays through July, and during those days, the Apopka Birding Park is closed to pedestrian or any entry, for safety concerns.

Our Apopka Birding Park Working Group is narrowing down what to plant when the pads are taken out, including when and where we can collect native grass seeds or purchase them.

We are still working on treating the cogon grass, our highly invasive weed pest. We are working with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the City of Apopka on twice yearly herbicide treatments. The City will do the spring treatment in June. We are researching species to plant and timing after the treatments.

Ameriscapes Landscape Management has contributed another pro bono mowing with its 15-foot boom mower, and Bright Green Lawn did more specialized mowing. Part of cogon grass control is to mow in winter, so the plant grows in and can absorb the systemic herbicide.

Before any of these major actions, gopher tortoise burrows were identified and staked off by Jack Horton, Lance Hart, Steve Turner and Lynn Marie Folts.

Hand mowing of cogon grass around the burrows was done by Steve Turner, Lance Hart and Alan Shapiro

Our landlord, the City of Apopka, will be installing water and sewer soon, now that we are starting our Phase I demolition and site preparation. To date, we have hand watered, using a 200-gallon tank loaned to us and kindly filled by the St. Johns River Water Management District.

Alan Shapiro, who formerly owned a large native plant nursery, has continued to expand the entry native landscape, which was supported by a Florida Wildflower Grant and a grant from Bloom and Grow Garden Club of Winter Garden. A few plants died in the recent freeze but most are growing in really well. The nearly 100 bald cypresses planted by Peter Berry and other volunteers are doing well.

Workdays Continue

There is always something to do on Orange Audubon's monthly workdays, which started in April 2025 and are now held every last Saturday of the month.

For help in late May, we thank Rick Baird, Bob Berger, Neisha Carmona, Arnav Dhakal, Achyut Dhakal, Deborah Green, Lance Hart, Jack Horton, Kristen Huebler, Michael Kay, David Marano, Melisa Mercado, Gina Montesano, Alan Shapiro and Steve Turner.

Email volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org to participate. **If any companies want to set up a special team workday, we can set that up.** Thank you!



Apopka Birding Park Workday, May 30, 2026. Above, Lance Hart and Steve Turner picked up pvc pipe on the property. Below, the garden workers after the workday. Photos: Jack Horton and Alan Shapiro

Gratitude

Thank you to our generous donors who contributed in May:

Ameriscapes Landscape Management, Apopka Woman's Club, Abbie Clarke, CMTA Consulting Engineering, Alexander DeBear, Sonia Durrance in memory of Kim Humphrey, Florida Growth Alliance, Ryan Garrison, Karen Goldberg, Lance Hart and Deirdre Irwin, Stephen Koontz in memory of Mary Margaret Koontz, Susan and Hugh Morris, Sheri Murphy, Noreen Nickerson, Little Diversified Architectural Consulting, Vanessa Picariello, Mary Piercey, Terry Piper in memory of Diane Brown, Jeanne and Eugene Polarolo, Lori Riddle, Delsy Rodriguez, Jeffrey Switzer, and the Windermere Garden Club, plus others whom we couldn't reach to secure permission to list. We thank you all!!

Donations to Orange Audubon are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. [You can donate online at this link](#) or mail checks to Orange Audubon Society, P.O. Box 274, Apopka, FL 32704.



Exciting News

National Audubon has selected Orlando as the location for its next **Leadership Conference, March 30 to April 2, 2028**. The biennial event brings together Audubon staff, chapter and campus leaders, and conservation partners from across the hemisphere. We are honored and excited to show off our Apopka Birding Park and other great locations!

The statewide **Audubon Assembly will be October 15-17, 2026**, at the TradeWinds Resort on St. Pete Beach. The theme is "Protecting What Connects Us — Water, Wildlife, and Community." To learn more about how Audubon works to help the environment, see you there.

Weak Conservation Support

The Florida Legislature reached a compromise budget for FY2026-27 that will go into effect July 1, 2026. Audubon Florida staff in Tallahassee worked hard to save the Florida Forever program, and many of us reached out to our legislators.

Responsible for protecting future state parks, state forests, wildlife habitat, and critical water resources, Florida Forever is supported by the overwhelming majority of Floridians.

But the final budget includes no funding for Florida Forever. Even worse, the budget sweeps existing Florida Forever funds into the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP).

In case you are not familiar with RFLPP, it is a program run by Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). It purchases conservation easements over agriculture lands, like working farms and ranches, whose owners agree not to sell their property to developers.

RFLPP currently has about 230,000 acres of ranch and farm lands under conservation easements. FDACS website says natural lands protection is "not as the primary purpose, but in conjunction with economically viable agricultural operations."

Audubon Florida will continue working with elected officials, agency leaders, and conservation partners ahead of the next legislative session to ensure Floridians understand what is at stake.

Split Oak

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) held a Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Recreational advisory meeting on May 13, 2026 at the UF/IFAS Cooperative Extension Office in Osceola County. With input from various stakeholders, including FWC, Audubon Florida, Orange Audubon Society, Florida Trail Association, Friends of Split Oak, Orange and Osceola County, FWC prepared a list of issues and concerns going forward for the next 5 years at Split Oak Forest.

The review included the recently donated 1,500 acres of land that will allow the Osceola Expressway to impact 60 acres of Split Oak in Osceola County. The group identified some 70 issues of concern. These include if the money accompanying the donation would be sufficient to bring the new property up to the quality of the original Split Oak property. FWC will present its analysis of these issues in a public meeting on August 20, 2026 at UF/IFAS Extensive Osceola County 1921 Kissimmee Valley Lane Kissimmee, FL 34744.

Rick Baird with Orange Audubon Conservation Committee



Rick Baird at an outreach event. Photo Jim Adamski

Board member profile

Long-time Orange Audubon Board Member Rick Baird worked in the environmental public sector for over 40 years, at both Orange County Environmental Protection Division and later for Osceola County Natural Resources.

Rick received his Bachelors in Biology and his Masters in Public Administration, both from the University of Central Florida. He is a past President of the Central Florida Association of Environmental Professionals

Rick is currently Orange Audubon's Conservation Committee Chair, but over ten years ago he served as First Vice President and also as President. He is a member of the Apopka Birding Park Working Group and is incredibly knowledgeable related to commercial building and permitting. We appreciate you, Rick!

Looking For Volunteers

Orange Audubon is looking to expand its existing base of Orange Audubon member volunteers. Here are opportunities:

- Meal, Hospitality, and Logistics support for our Chertok Florida Native Nature Photography Contest Awards Program (June 18th) and the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL (December 3-7)
- Helping our Education Coordinator with school events
- Becoming a Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive Ambassador to welcome visitors to the Drive
- Joining our labeling party on August 16th, 1-5pm to prepare our annual fall brochure and letter appeal mail out

The [Get Involved](#) tab on our website has a survey to let us know of your interests. Or just email volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org. Thank you!

Mary Van Egmond

Thanks to the OASis Contributors

Orange Audubon Society would like to thank the following writers whose contributions have greatly enhanced the OASis this year: Rick Baird, Alex DeBear, Sheryan Epperley Chester, Arnav Dhakal, Linda Gaunt, Deborah Green, Haden Klinger, Kristen Kosik. Chris Newton, Orange Audubon Conservation Committee, Mark Schocken, Alan Shapiro, Susan Thome-Barrett, Mary Van Egmond, Sue Weidner and Teresa Williams.

Exquisite wildlife photos have enhanced the text. For use of these, Orange Audubon thanks Jan Addison, Audubon Florida, Back to Nature, Faruk Baghdad, Rick Baird, Glenn Blaser, Shari Blissett-Clark, Mac Camacho, Jim Cunningham, Nancy Dale, Alex DeBear, Bob Elmquist, Jay Exum, Lynn Marie Folts, Ryan Garrison, Lance Hart, Jack Horton, Rafael Gomez, Deborah Green, Leigh Kalfakis, Mary Keim, Melinda Klinger, Joe Mileyka, Brian Miller, Karl Miller, Eric Moore, Pamela Owens, Gilberto Perez-Sanchez, Sarah Powell, Beth Reynolds, Kathy Rigling, Delsy Rodriguez, Shalimar Rodriguez, Mark Shocken, Robert Sena, Alan Shapiro, Joyce Stefancic, Glenn Turner, Mary Van Egmond and many Chertok photo contest winners.

For careful and timely editing, we are most grateful to Rick Baird, Mary Keim, Kathy Rigling, Susan Thome-Barrett and Mary Van Egmond.

We will enjoy our two months off and then will be asking for articles and use of your photos again for September. Deadlines are always middle of the month before.

If you want to send an article or article idea, send to info@orangeaudubonfl.org. Have a great summer!

Update Your Membership

June is a great time to renew your 3-way membership in Orange Audubon Society, Audubon Florida and National Audubon Society. Please pay directly to Orange Audubon Society, and we transmit the funds to National. The base membership rate is \$20 (\$15 for students).

If you want to include an additional donation, which goes to Orange Audubon, you can. Go to our website and click the [Join/Renew link](#). If you need your expiration date, email membership@orangeaudubonfl.org. Thank you!



Education Coordinator Update

This month closed the 2025-26 season for Orange Audubon's educational programs. From mid-April to the end of May, I visited 86 classrooms, connecting with 1805 students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Our events included eight different bird counts from third grade through eighth grade. We presented our ever-popular bird beak adaptations, migration challenges, characteristics of birds, habitats and food webs.

We participated in school outreach events, including the Earth Day Expo at Zellwood Elementary, Family Garden Day at Dommerich Elementary, the Sustainability Festival at Timber Lakes Elementary, STEM nights at Timber Springs Middle School and Whisper Lakes Elementary, and the Peace Festival at Lake Nona High School.

We also completed a native garden installation at University high School with its Green Club. We collaborated with Audubon Florida with our youngest Young Birders for an Owl Prowl at the newly renovated Audubon Center for Birds of Prey. The children were excited to learn all about owls and then visit the owl ambassadors throughout the center. I lead a group of Girl Scouts through their Habitat Badge, as we explored the trails and boardwalk at Orlando Wetlands.

Memorable moments included: Students' watching Purple Martins feed their nestlings at a Martin condo next to a local school.

Having a Crested Caracara fly over a school and land on the roof during a bird count, stay for about 45 minutes including hunting on the ground.

A student asking what he needed to do to become a bird guide and telling us that, after this experience, that's what he wants to do when he grows up.

At a school where we did a bird count last fall and returned for a second count, one of the girls said she had been waiting all year for us to return.

I would like to thank Randy McCall for helping at multiple schools, Alan Shapiro for planning and teaching installation of native plant gardens, Susan Thome-Barrett for co-teaching the REI classes, Daisy Fiore for inviting the Young Birders to the Owl Prowl and Jimena Aguirre for helping at the Owl Prowl and doing our social media.

If you would like to volunteer in future educational programs, please email education@orangeaudubonfl.org.

Kathy Rigling, Education Coordinator



Castle Vew Elementary School students having fun learning about birds. *Photos: Kathy Rigling and Nicole Freeman*

2026 City Nature Challenge: The Results!

The City Nature Challenge is an annual 4-day bioblitz in which people document the flora and fauna around their community using the iNaturalist app. Each observation is valuable for documenting the biodiversity of our local habitats, including within the urban area. It is held the last weekend in April and 2026 was its 11th year.

The number of participating countries was 61

- # of observers: 106,354

- # of species documented: 76,422+

Orange County's results:

- 342 observers

- 4,757 observations

- 1,196 species

Oak Fleabane, White Beggar Ticks and Brown Anole were our most observed species.

Most observations were by Lynn Marie Folts with 650, followed by Jeffrey Gammon with 555 and Kate Dolamore with 496.

Most species found were by Lynn Marie Folts with 392 followed by Kate Dolamore with 327 and Jeffrey Gammon with 316.

Top identifiers were Mary Keim with 423 followed by Matt Atkinson with 258 and Kate Dolamore with 190.

A big thank you to everyone who participated in this year's City Nature Challenge!



Lynn Marie Folts and Kate Dolamore participating in a bioblitz. Both scored high in the City Nature Challenge. *Photo courtesy Lynn Folts*

Kathy Rigling

Orange Audubon YouTube

Orange Audubon's weekly Bird Chats will go on hiatus in July and August but over 250 of our guest speaker recordings are posted on our YouTube Channel.

Put Orange Audubon Society in the YouTube search field or [use this link](#).

To receive the link to watch Bird Chats live on Zoom and be able to ask questions, [register at this link](#).

See p.10 for the listing of June Bird Chats.

The Bird Chats team: Kathy Rigling, Susan Thome-Barrett and Deborah Green,



Great Crested Flycatcher. Photo: Joe Mileyka

North Shore Bird Survey June 23, 2026

The St. Johns River Water Management District's 20,000-acre Lake Apopka North Shore is rich in bird life. Orange Audubon requested a revival of North Shore Bird Surveys to show changes in species composition as the property has been restored from farm fields to native vegetation, with more natural water flows.

Surveys are generally the 4th Tuesday. Registration with waiver is filled out for the season [on this link](#), and each month, email Chris Newton at dexterdevon68@gmail.com.

We thank Ben Gugliotti, District Land Manager for making this opportunity available and hope that the data supports the positive changes that have been made,

Here are Chris's notes on the May survey:

Breeding is finishing up for some and raging for others. Boat-tailed Grackle chicks calling everywhere. We have been getting about 15-20 volunteers/birders a survey and we are now covering 90% of our legs, so way to go and thanks again.



Above, Snail Kite; Below Eastern Kingbirds. Photos Delsy Rodriguez

Chicks and more chicks, as May goes. Still a single Northern Shoveler and a couple Ring-neck ducks holding on. Probably injured individuals, like the Canvasback. 38 Ground Doves was a nice number and White-winged Doves were singing their song from the Willows. I think we may have some cuckoos in the area, 31 were reported. We tallied nearly 1,000 Common Gallinules, 70 Purple, 18 Swampens, and 44 coots.

120 Black-necked Stilts was awesome, so many little fuzzies. Wood Storks got a shout out with 15. Still getting the trifecta of ibis (White-faced, White, Glossy). A late Amer-

ican Bittern was a nice record, and Least are showing with 14. Thanks to the team on Leg 1, who secured our first Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. Uncommon, but probably more overlooked than anything.

A huge fish die off or spawning by the Sand Farms helped bring all the big waders, so a tally of 456 Great Egret shows how many are really around. 112 Great Blue and 121 Snowy also coming together for a meal. There were easily over 100 gators in here as well. 60 Osprey through out, several feeding chicks. 7 Mississippi Kites was nice all coming in from the west to fly over the sod fields.

Eastern Kingbirds were holding on at Lust, 14 Great Crested Flycatcher probably "weeping" for everyone near a wooded area. 1 - Red-eyed Vireo holding on. 16 Fish crow seemed weirdly low, but 3 Carolina chickadee seemed high for our area. One was singing out in a small willow clump in the middle of the marsh. Apparently Oak hammocks are to expensive these days to set up shop. A late Tree swallow, but several Barn fledglings helped make it to 66 reported. 2 - Bobolink still bopping around and Red-winged Blackbirds doing their thing with almost 800 counted. Big count: 118 Cardinal..... and 1 Blue Grosbeak singing.

Total since we started doing these surveys again: 180 species. The next survey will be Tuesday, June 23rd, 2026.

Chris Newton

Thank you Mead Team!

A big thanks to the Orange Audubon volunteers who have helped fill the Mead Botanical Garden feeders by Lake Alice and by the Butterfly Garden this season: Eloise West, Mike Holland, Dan & Betty Schnurr and myself. They've donated time and often seeds to keep the birds at Mead happy and fed. Seeds are also provided by Wild Birds Unlimited in Winter Springs, so make sure to thank them when you are in the store.

One of the most exciting moments this year at the Mead feeders came during Spring Migration when a pair of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks spent several days recharging at the Butterfly Garden feeders.

If you've enjoyed watching or photographing the birds at Mead's feeders, don't forget to support Orange Audubon's journey to build a new Nature Center by the entrance to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive

Susan Thome-Barrett

June Challenge (Bird Count)

The June Challenge begins on June 1st and extends through the month. It is meant to bring people out during historically the most difficult month for birding.

Pick a county, any county in the state, and try to see the most species for that area during the month. All native birds are countable and follow the American Birding Association (ABA) [checklist](#).

If your local population of an exotic species is recognized as established by the ABA, then any member of that population is an ABA-countable bird. A bird from an established population of Monk Parakeets would be ABA-countable. An escaped Monk Parakeet or a Mute Swan at Lake Eola would not be. List your ABA-countable species first, and then your non-native non-ABA species.

An important twist is that you must see the bird, not just hear it. For rules please visit [this link](#).

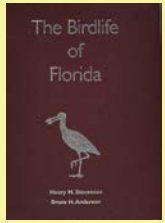
To kickstart the June Challenge, we will have a Limited-Edition field trip on Saturday June 6th from 7:00 am to 12:30 pm at the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. Young leader Haden Klinger will assist me leading this trip. Early June is one of the best times to get a head start on the June Challenge while some migrant birds may still be present. To sign up for this trip, please visit <https://orangeaudubonfl.org/field-trip-signup/>

Email me your ABA countable/noncountable total and which county you birded in to riglingkathy@gmail.com. Also submit your list to floridabirdingtrail.com/june-challenge. Both are due by July 7th.

Orange Audubon is offering a trophy to the Orange Audubon members, adult and youth (under 18), who see the most ABA species during the month in one Florida county.

Our June Challenge Celebration and bird walk will be July 26th at Trimble Park.

Kathy Rigling



The Birdlife of Florida on our Online Auction

On Orange Audubon's annual online auction, we again have a special book that you might bid

on — and win for a steal—to include in your library. It is *The Birdlife of Florida* by Henry M. Stevenson and Bruce H. Anderson. 1994. University Press of Florida. 892 pages, sold for \$120.00 hardback.

In his 1995 *Tampa Bay Times* article, "The Making of Henry Stevenson's Epic Book: Obsession and Glory," Jeff Klinkenberg cites this as the most ambitious research undertaking in Florida ornithology by a single man since the 1930s. Stevenson, a professor of ornithology at Florida State University in Tallahassee and Research Fellow at Tall Timbers Research Station, spent at least 30 years gathering information for this work. He laboriously gleaned data from museum specimens all over the country, from published accounts, and from his and others' field work to present the Florida status of bird species and information about their biology.

This book succeeds Arthur Howell's 1932 579-page opus, *Florida Bird Life* that collected everything known about Southern birds to that time. Alexander Sprunt had revised Howell's book in 1954, but Stevenson and others found the new edition light on original research. Friends began encouraging Stevenson to write a book as definitive, or better, than Howell's.

In 1975, having just retired from teaching, Stevenson officially began the book. So consuming was this effort that after about 10 years he began looking for someone to co-author it, an enormous commitment. He remembered Bruce Anderson, a young ornithologist whom he had met several times and been impressed with.

Klinkenberg, who interviewed Stevenson's widow, recounts "Anderson was something of a child prodigy when it came to birding. He had memorized Howell's *Florida Bird Life* as a boy. Like Stevenson, he was writing scientific papers for prestigious journals as a teenager. An Orlando resident, he studied biological sciences at the University of Central Florida and then started graduate school in Oklahoma. But he lost enthusiasm for his studies, quit school and went to work for the state's labor department."

Stevenson liked the fact that Anderson had

gathered hundreds of bird skins for UCF's collection. In August 1986, Stevenson offered Anderson the job. "It was the greatest honor of my life. I'd always admired the classic ornithologists, and Dr. Stevenson was the last of his kind," stated Anderson.

For about six years, Anderson worked with his coauthor to complete this valuable reference book. In addition to visiting museums, there was field work. Stevenson's canoe was always on top of his truck for bird searches that took them by water.

Valuable information on winter population trends in the book comes from comparisons of early (1910-1935) and more recent (1951-1982) Christmas Bird Counts. Data from Breeding Bird Surveys (1966 to 1984) showed population trends for breeding birds.

The team's final totals for species in Florida are 484 accredited species, 2 extinct, 22 established exotics, 46 hypothetical (of probable natural occurrence), and 135 non-established exotics.

This information has been republished in more general Florida bird books, and many have lost sight of the labor that went into accumulating this information.



Bruce Anderson in Colombia, years after completion of the book. Photo courtesy Bruce Anderson

For example, we have relied on wonderful range maps in our field guides to know if a species occurs here, only in summer or winter, just in migration or year round, and not given a thought to where the information originated. Today we often rely on Cornell's website *All About Birds* for range maps. And those skilled with eBird can find out when a species occurs here based on recent observations.

The number of birders in Florida has exponentially increased, so eBird data has become ever more valuable. Now people predict waves of bird migration based on Nexrad weather data. Many locations have Motus stations that give a ping when a bird affixed with a transmitter flies by, making

eBird

A Young Birder on eBird

To me, eBird is an app that combines the joy of spotting a bird in the wild with the global mission of bird conservation. It turns casual birdwatching to more of a major citizen science collaboration effort that works to understand and protect the natural world. What makes eBird interesting is the simple act of recording what you see on a walk through your neighborhood or a hike through a forest becomes a contribution to one of the most important nature databases ever created.

eBird contributes to science about birds by transforming millions of casual observations into a dataset that researchers, conservationists, and land managers use and rely on every day. Managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, it uses modern research by tracking bird distribution, abundance, and migration patterns in real time, across every continent on Earth. Scientists use this data to look for population declines before they become problems, identify critical stopover habitats that migratory birds depend on for survival, and understand how climate changes are changing the ranges and behaviors of species worldwide.

Beyond the science, eBird creates a worldwide community of observers from ornithologists to curious beginner bird watchers all united by a love of birds and willing to do something meaningful. Every checklist submitted is a small act of kindness. Over time, those small acts add up a record of bird life on the planet, updated all the time, growing more reliable and powerful with every observation added.

Arnab Dhakal is a 10th grader who has been in Orange Audubon's Young Birder's Club for about 2 years. He hopes for a career in business so he can help take care of birds.

recapture at a banding station unnecessary.

Stevenson passed away in 1991, just after hearing the book had been accepted for publication. He would have appreciated the rave reviews from the ornithological community.

Since Bruce Anderson lives locally, participates in our Christmas Birds Counts and is part of our birding community, it is even more special to have this book in your library.

The winner will receive a copy of the book, custom autographed by Bruce Anderson especially for the winner. Thank you, Bruce for this massive work. Check it out. [Here is the auction link.](#) *Deborah Green*

Plants for Birds: Creating a Homegrown National Park

In his 2020 book, *Nature's Best Hope*, University of Delaware entomology professor and best-selling author Doug Tallamy proposes that we create a "Homegrown National Park" through our home landscapes. Our country has lost the habitat that birds need. Bird populations have declined by 2.9 billion in the U.S and Canada over the past 50 years. Our preserves are clearly not enough to sustain biodiversity.

In specifying how we create wildlife habitat in our own yards, Tallamy explains how you need native plants to support native insects, particularly caterpillars, that birds feed on and feed to their young. The best trees to support caterpillars and bird life was a major theme of Tallamy's best-selling 2007 book *Bringing Nature Home*.

Orange Audubon Society's February 18, 2021 talk by Dr. Tallamy, co-sponsored by Seminole Audubon Society along with the Tarflower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, is available [on YouTube](#) and has 14K views!

Bird- and Butterfly-Friendly Plants for Central Florida

Tallamy's call to action is not only to create native habitat in your own yard but to educate others on it and to convince your neighbors to join in. Since we aired his presentation in 2021, Tallamy has been joined by a publicist who has built up the [Homegrown National Park](#) effort. If we plant natives, we are encouraged to "get on the map."



Carolina Chickadee at Sawgrass Island Preserve. Photo: Steve Shaluta.

Here is Orange Audubon's [list of plants](#) to make our Central Florida yards more bird- and butterfly-friendly, developed by member and native plant gardener Mary Keim with her husband Randy Snyder and



Wild Black Cherry in fruit. Photo: Mary Keim

others. From that resource, our most highly recommended native trees that promote bird life are:

Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) – trees in the genus *Prunus* are top choices for attracting fruit- and insect-eating birds; host for Eastern Tiger Swallowtail.

Cabbage Palm (*Sabal palmetto*) – Florida's State Tree; nectar for pollinators; fruit for birds; host for Monk Skippers.

Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) – fruit and dense shelter for wildlife.

Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*) – oaks are top choices to support caterpillars and thus insect-eating birds; acorns

Sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata*) – This tree supports caterpillars for birds and the dry, sweet fruits are just the right size for small birds to eat.

Declines in Backyard Birds Linked to Use of Nonnative Plants

Especially during the breeding season, insect- and even seed- and nectar-eating birds depend on caterpillars—which are high in protein and calories—to feed their young. But many gardeners apply pest control to kill caterpillars on their plants. And most nonnative plants sold at nurseries are selected to resist feeding by caterpillars, often with inedible shiny, waxy leaves.

A study by the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the University of Delaware, funded by the National Science Foundation, directly linked the decline of a common bird species to reduced insect prey from the use of nonnative plants in landscaping. The study showed that the Carolina Chickadee raises fewer or no young in landscapes dominated by nonnative plants. Chickadee populations

can be sustained only if native plants make up more than 70 percent of plant biomass.

The study's lead author, a former grad student of Tallamy's Desiree Narango, explained "By using native plants, we can provide food for not only our common North American species, but we're also providing vital stopover habitat and resources for migratory birds during their perilous journeys."

Where to Buy Native Plants

The Florida Association of Native Nurseries lists nurseries and specific plants. [See this link.](#)

Backyard Biodiversity Day at Mead Botanical Garden on October 24 will be a good place to buy native plants.

And when you are at the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, see both the native landscape behind the welcome shelter and the new landscape inside the gate of our Apopka Birding Park, both spearheaded by board member Alan Shapiro. Let him know if you can help at alanguardiflora@gmail.com.

Natives are beautiful and support birds.
Deborah Green

Make Your Yard Hummingbird-friendly

Only one species of hummingbird lives in the East, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. If you are lucky, these hummingbirds not only pass through your yard in migration but stick around for the season. They most easily find red plants.

Here are some great native plants to use:

- Coral bean (also called Cherokee Bean)
- Coral honeysuckle
- Firebush
- Tropical sage
- Trumpet creeper



Pest Control—Ruby-throated Hummingbird. First Place, Novice Category, 2024 Chertok Florida Native Nature Photo Contest. Photo Tracy Dreyfus

JUNE/JULY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Chats with Orange Audubon via Zoom

[Link to register](#)

- **Apopka Birding Park Update** June 4, 2026
- **Recovering the Southeastern Kestrel** June 11, 2026
- **Uganda: The Pearl of Africa** June 25, 2026
- The Bird Chat team takes a break in July and August

June Challenge Starts

June 1, 2026

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

June Challenge Field Trip at the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive

June 6, 2026

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

June 7, 2026

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Online Fundraising Auction on Bidding Owl

June 12, noon–June 22, 2026, 7 PM

<https://www.biddingowl.com/OrangeAudubonSociety>

Contact Linda at (941) 704-1189.

Oakland Nature Preserve Bird Survey

June 13, 2026

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

June Program: 38th Annual Chertok Photo Awards

June 18, 2026

Contact Teresa at (407) 718-1977

North Shore Bird Survey

June 23, 2026

Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

June Challenge Bird Walk and Celebration Trimble Park

June 26, 2026

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Apopka Birding Park Bird Survey

June 27, 2026

Contact Alexander at alexdebear@icloud.com

Apopka Birding Park Workday

June 27, 2026

Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka

July 11, 2026

Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Orange Audubon Board Planning Meeting

July 12, 2026

Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

North Shore Bird Survey

July 21, 2026

Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

Save the Dates:

Bird-Friendly Yards Tour will be Sunday October 4, 2026.

Backyard Biodiversity Day at Mead Botanical Garden will be Saturday, October 24, 2026.

NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL will be Thursday, December 3, 2026 through Monday, December 7, 2026.

Summer Break and Planning Time

Orange Audubon's programs go on hiatus in July and August as the board plans for our next program year. We will continue to post on our Facebook page and Instagram (thanks to new board member Jimena Aguirre).

Our bird surveys continue through the summer, as well as our Apopka Birding Park workdays.

We welcome your input on activities we should offer -- field trips, programs.

Please send any suggestions to info@orangeaudubonfl.org by June 9th. We will try to incorporate these into our plans for next season. Thank you! Thank you for being a part of our chapter!

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

NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL

December 3-7, 2026
NorthShoreBirdingFestival.com

Photos: Mark Hainen, Sam Mitcam, Joyce Stefancic