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ORANGE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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SEPTEMBER 2026

ORANGE AUDUBON
A Chapter of National and Florida Audubon Societies

www.orangeaudubonfl.org

Clockwise: Kim Titterington *with young alligator. Photo courtesy*

The Rescue, Care and Rehabilitation of Reptiles by Kim Titterington, Swamp Girl Adventures

September 17, 2026

Kim Titterington is a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, research collaborator and a Certified Veterinary Assistant specializing in reptile care and rehabilitation.

Involved with reptiles for over 30 years, she began presenting educational programs in local schools as a preteen. Titterington established her not-for-profit organization Swamp Girl Adventures Reptile Rehab to facilitate her work.

Her Osceola County-based organization works with research groups to aid in the conservation of reptiles and in disease surveillance as well as rehab. She will bring a few live reptiles for our view, including a turtle, a gopher tortoise and an Eastern indigo snake.

Prepare your questions, and we'll see you all in person on Thursday, September 17th in the Camellia Room at Leu Gardens to enjoy this presentation!

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.

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/

Did You Receive Your Orange Audubon Brochure in the Mail?

In late August, Orange Audubon members were sent a packet including our annual brochure that lists all our activities for the year. If you did not receive it, email membership@orangeaudubonfl.org to check on your membership status or use the Join/Renew link. Thank you!

Bird-Friendly Yards Tour Returns! October 4, 2026

Orange Audubon is hosting a Native Plants Yards Tour on Sunday, October 4th, 9 am–2 pm, co-sponsored by the the Tarflower Chapter, Florida Native Plant Society and Wild Birds Unlimited, Winter Springs.

Showcased will be 8 homes, featuring new or mature native landscapes and bird feeders attracting Painted Buntings, goldfinches, and more. Tickets are $15 (Youth accompanied by a paying adult are free). Proceeds benefit Orange Audubon's future Natural History Museum at Apopka Birding Park. The tour is a few weeks before Backyard Biodiversity Day at Mead Botanical Garden (October 24th), where native plants will be for sale.

Maps and descriptions will be provided, and attendees can tour at their own pace. This year all tickets will be purchased online from this link: https://orangeaudubonfl.org/yards-tour/Don't miss it!

Deer eating coral honeysuckle in home landscape. *Photo: Deborah Green*

Tourist Development Tax Funding Coming Our Way?

The Tourist Development Tax (TDT), sometimes called the "bed tax," added on to hotel room bills, has brought in millions each year to Orange County. Florida statutes govern the expenditure of this money by the County. Many Orange County residents have been lobbying to use it to help the county's big problems of transportation and affordable housing. Unfortunately, that will require a change in statute by the Florida legislature, something brought forward last session by Representative Carlos Guillermo-Smith, without success.

Traditionally, millions in TDT funding have gone to Visit Orlando for marketing of our region's tourism (30% of the funding). Other funds have gone to our big attractions and to build and expand the Orange County Convention Center. Several of the Orange County Commissioners in the last few years worked to spread the wealth to non-profits and other entities, as long as the projects expand tourism and bring longer hotel stays.

This summer Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings convened a Task Force to evaluate new proposals. Each of the six County Commissioners appointed two representatives. City and industry representatives filled out the rest of the 32-member task force. The County's first Mayor, Linda Chapin, chaired the Task Force, along with Eddy Moratin of Lift Orlando.

We heard about this opportunity from a supporter and submitted a funding application for the Orange Audubon Natural History Museum at Apopka Birding Park. As you know, we have a long-term lease on the 69.5 acre former nursery site at the entrance to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive and are restoring habitat (page 3). We had been calling our project a Nature Center, but state statute does not allow funding for a nature center in a county with over 850,000 residents. With indoor and outdoor exhibits planned, it was an easy shift to call it a Natural History Museum.

The application included profiling our team's ability to carry out this project. Thirty-five years ago I spearheaded the Museum of Science and Industry in Tampa's first traveling exhibit, Deep Sea Treasures. So I know something about museums!

The Task Force listened to three days of presentations by 17 applicants, whittled down from the original 24 applicants. Skillfully led by the co-chairs and using pre-established ranking criteria, the Task Force reduced the field from 17 applicants to 12 recommended for funding. There was drama regarding a $523 million expansion request by the Orange County Convention Center. Linda Chapin who had been Mayor during the Convention Center's early expansion said that return on investment information is needed prior to more spending, and her opinion held.

Orange County TDT Task Force second session reviewing applicant presentations. *Photo: Orange County*

Our Orange Audubon Natural History Museum was 8th ranked among the top twelve projects! The Maitland representative was concerned that we might be taking the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey away from Maitland, which gave me the opportunity to explain how Audubon Florida, with its wonderful Center, is a separate organization, partnering with us and assisting on many things but independently funded.

Since part of the application process was providing information about matching funds, I let them know that Orange Audubon now has almost $2.5 million in the bank, mostly contributed by our wonderful donors.

I explained that all of our accomplishments, with the exception of those by Kathy Rigling, our part-time Education Coordinator, have been done by dedicated volunteers, including myself, and that we were working on this transition from an all-volunteer to a staffed non-profit that other Audubon chapters have undergone. Paying for construction while sustainably staffing up has posed a challenge. The Task Force member from Windermere asked — if we receive TDT funding for the building, could we use our saved money for operations including salaries? Yes, I said, with permission of those donors, we could.

TDT funding presents an exciting opportunity to construct our LEED Gold Net-Zero Energy building and also build a conditioned storage space for not-in-use exhibits, chairs and equipment and to upgrade our exhibit plans. Our architect, Philip Donovan of Little Diversified Architectural Consulting is excited for possibilities to enhance our frugally-developed design.

On August 25th, the recommendations went to the Orange County Board of County Commissioners. More than one commissioner, who hadn't engaged in or viewed tapes of the days-long Task Force *(See p. 3)*

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.

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

LIKE OAS' FACEBOOK PAGE

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

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

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From p. 2, deliberations, asked that the applicants present all over for the commissioners. District 1's Nicole Wilson and District 5's Kelly Semrad, who had engaged in the process, supported accepting the Task Force recommendations without repeat.

Incidentally, Mayor Demings, before the proceedings had warmly shook my hand and asked "How are you?" "Nervous" I replied. "You've got to trust the people," he said. To me this meant, the 32-member Task Force with wide representation across the county, on which members had spent their thoughtful valuable volunteer time. The Commissioners finally unanimously accepted the Task Force Recommendations.

Now, Orange Audubon must await Orange County notification of details of a funding agreement. On behalf of our organization, I am thrilled for recognition of the importance of our Orange Audubon Natural History Museum at Apopka Birding Park to Orange County.

Thank you, Rick Baird, our board member most involved with the building, for accompanying me at this marathon commission meeting and for your help all along the way. Thank you to our architect Philip Donovan for joining me at two of the meetings and to former Orange County Commissioner Christine Moore for her steadfast support. Thank you to the skilled co-chairs Linda Chapin and Eddy Moratin and all the Task Force members. Now we await next steps.

Deborah Green, Orange Audubon President

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. 1), 3. supporting our parks through bird surveys and publicizing our county natural lands by collaborating on walks (p. 7), and 4. speaking out and asking our members to speak out to county and state officials on conservation issues (see below).

The biggest issue before us this fall, as guided by Audubon Florida, is that the Federal Aviation Administration proposed a rule to let commercial space companies bypass 13 core federal environmental and historic preservation laws, raising major concerns for neighboring conservation areas like Canaveral National Seashore and the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. By the August 31st comment deadline, we wrote individually and representing Orange Audubon. Here is an Orlando Sentinel op-ed by Clay Henderson about the issue. *Conservation Committee*

Top, Lance Hart marking concrete pads to save. Below, Concrete pad removal by the St.Johns River Water Management District. *Photos: Jack Horton*

Apopka Birding Park Upland Habitat Restoration

Native upland habitat is rapidly disappearing in Central Florida as even abandoned citrus groves are cleared for homes, apartments and warehouses. Species such as gopher tortoises and overwintering sparrows have lost much of their habitat. Orange Audubon is protecting and restoring a rare 69.5-acre upland property adjacent to the Lake Apopka North Shore and entrance to the popular Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive.

Greenhouses at the former nursery had burned in 1999, leaving extensive concrete pads and a severe infestation of cogon grass, a difficult-to-remove invasive plant.

Orange Audubon established the Apopka Birding Park Working Group (ABPWG), bringing together board members who were Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive Ambassadors and volunteers with upland restoration expertise. When mapping became an identified need, we recruited members with those skills. During spring and summer 2026, volunteers mapped approximately 90% of the property, including cogon grass, concrete pads and gopher tortoise burrows. These maps now guide contractors and restoration activities.

Volunteer workdays with members of our larger community began in April 2025. Monthly workdays have attracted retirees with environmental backgrounds, college students, middle-school students and their parents, as well as Hispanic volunteers recruited through the IDEAL program. Approximately 500 volunteer hours from 60 volunteers have been contributed through monthly workdays, with an additional 2,200 hours from ABPWG members. Early work included removing invasive asparagus fern and Syngonium from an oak hammock, dismantling wooden structures and repurposing the lumber into Leopold benches.

With support from the Florida Wildflower Foundation, volunteers established an acre-plus native, bird-friendly pollinator landscape at the park entrance. Approximately 100 bald cypress trees were planted and hand-watered and mulched. Despite the absence of permanent irrigation; approximately 85–90% have survived. ABPWG members are also growing native trees for planting as soon as the concrete pads are removed.

The gopher tortoise is a focal species, along with birds. Volunteer surveys identified and staked 12 burrows in June 2025. Follow-up surveys in February and March 2026 identified 20 active or potentially active burrows. Each was staked with a 25-foot protection zone consistent with FWC standards, helping prevent damage during mowing and herbicide treatment. Orange Audubon also consulted Wildlands Conservation about improving habitat for tortoises, whose preferred native grasses and herbaceous plants thrive in areas with relatively sparse trees.

Gopher Tortoise at burrow. *Photo: Mary Keim*

A major restoration milestone is removal of the greenhouse concrete pads. The St. Johns River Water Management District began removing the pads in May 2026, at no cost to Orange Audubon, as they will reuse the material as riprap. Approximately 85% of the pads are targeted for removal, with completion expected in September 2026. ABPWG volunteers are closely monitoring the work. Cogon grass treatment and selective mowing are being coordinated around the protected tortoise burrows, with another major Cogon grass treatment planned this month. *Apopka Birding Park Working Group*

Latino Conservation Week

For Latino Conservation Week, a project of the D.C.-based Hispanic Access Foundation, Orange Audubon and partners had a lovely celebration on September 12th at the Apopka Birding Park.

A proclamation declaring Latino Conservation Week, signed by Apopka Mayor Nick Nesta and read by Vice Mayor Diane Velasquez, was followed by one from the Orange County Soil and Water Conservation District.

This was followed by a bird walk led by Jimena Aguirre with Biophilia Institute. Then inside the Truck Shop, bird-box making was led by Steve Turner. The wood had been earlier purchased and cut by Steve and Alan Shapiro, under a grant from the Hispanic Access Foundation. The boxes will be mounted at the Apopka Birding Park, to possibly host Southeastern American Kestrels. Thanks to all who participated.

Update Your Membership

September 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, and we transmit the funds to National. The minimum membership dues are $20 ($15 for students). If you want to include an additional donation, which goes to Orange Audubon, you can. Just click the Join/Renew link on our website. If you need your expiration date, email membership@orangeaudubonfl.org. Thank you!

Your Contributions Really Help

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.

Orange Audubon now has the ability to receive monthly donations on our website and these donations can be used toward our nature center and educational efforts.

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 Society, may count towards your required minimum distribution, providing a significant tax benefit. Speak with your fund manager to set this up.

Thank you!
Deborah Green, President with Sue Weidner, Treasurer

Left, Latino Conservation Week proclamations, walk at the Apopka Birding Park led by Jimena Aguirre. The group with 9 comoplete bird boes. Right, Steve Turner instructs on putting together the boxes. *Photos courtesy Biophilia Institute*

Looking For Volunteers

Do you have time and a passion for volunteering? Orange Audubon is looking to expand its existing base of Orange Audubon member volunteers. Here are volunteer opportunities:

- Meal and Logistics support for the NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL (December 3-7)
- Hospitality at our monthly in-person programs at Leu Gardens, 3rd Thursdays, 6pm
- Helping our Education Coordinator with school events
- Joining the elite group of Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive Ambassdors
- Assisting with clean-up, planting, etc. for our future Orange Audubon Nature Center at the Apopka Birding Park

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

Labeling Thank You

At Orange Audubon Society's Labeling Party on August 17th, many hands made light work. We thank Rick Baird, Mike Daley, Camilo Alvarez, Jackie Daly, Achyut Dhakal, Maria Elena Franco, Deborah Green, Lance Hart, Maevyn Laurette, Melisa Mercado, Neisha Mercado, Nestor Mercado, Noreen Nickerson, Mercy Peou, Janice Rahill, Alan Shapiro, Lance Shaver, Jessie Sodano, Mary Soule, Margie Sullivan, Susan Thome-Barrett, Steve Turner, Mary Van Egmond, Louise Vivona-Miller and Sue Weidner. Thanks all!

Mary Van Egmond, Volunteer Coordinator

Our President's Big Honor

We have something wonderful to celebrate! Orange Audubon president Deborah Green was named one of *Orlando Sentinel* columnist Scott Maxwell's 10 People Who Make Orlando a Better Place to Live! One of Deborah's nominators praised her "remarkable ability to bring people together around a shared vision, something she has demonstrated through projects such as the learning stations and experiences along the Apopka Wildlife Drive and the North Shore Birding Festival." And Deborah isn't slowing down! She is working hard to help get the Orange Audubon Natural History Museum up and running, creating an exciting new place for our community to connect with birds, nature, and conservation. We thank Scott Maxwell, Deborah's nominators, and, of course, Deborah for all she does!

Jimena Aguirre, Outreach Committee Co-chair

Young Birders Corner

Shore of Hog Island. *Photo: Haden Klinger*

Hog Island Inspiration

Hog Island Audubon Camp, Maine is a great place to experience birds and nature. I had the amazing opportunity to go there for a week through a scholarship from the Florida Young Birders Club (FYBC). The camp, run by National Audubon, offers a variety of programs for both teens and adults, and I did the Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens.

This camp opened in 1936 and has helped many people learn about the natural world. Notable birders have led programs there, including Roger Tory Peterson, Allan Cruickshank, Kenn Kaufman, Scott Weidensaul and many more. The program I did was a week long. Young birders from across the United States came, and it was great to meet like-minded people my age.

A day at Hog Island had plenty of birding, but also had fun programs like a daily session on learning to draw birds. Evening programs every night were coordinated by leaders of the camp.

One of my favorite parts was the boat trip. We went out to Eastern Egg Rock where many unique birds like Arctic Tern, Atlantic Puffin, and Roseate Tern nest. We saw other cool birds on the trip like Parasitic Jaeger, Razorbill, Common Murre and plenty of Black Guillemots.

Another fun day was when we went to a beach with nesting Piping Plovers. It was really cool to see these birds in Maine because some of them spend the winter down here in Florida. That was another interesting part -- getting to see birds that we see in Florida as migrants and overwinterers like Blackburnian Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler and Merlin. Overall, Hog Island Audubon Camp was an incredible experience, and I am so grateful for the scholarship from FYBC that sent me up there.

Haden Klinger

Haden Klinger is a high school junior and trip leader for Orange Audubon. He was one of the founding members of our Young Birders Club when only 11 years old.

Climate Change and A Recent Disaster

The effort to deal with climate change involves trying to know floods before they happen, so that people can continue to live safely in their homes.

When people become aware that Earth is warming, this leads to a sense of urgency about preparing for what is to come. This is an important time because many communities are unable to adapt quickly enough by themselves as the planet keeps on warming.

Recently, on August 26, 2026, massive floods took place in Nepal. At first, people thought an earthquake caused this however it was revealed that a glacier in the Langtang Lirung Peak in the Himalayas broke off and caused massive amounts of water, ice and rock to fall along the Trishuli River at speeds of about 120 miles per hour or almost 200 kilometers per hour!

This flood destroyed homes and by the time this article was being written, almost one thousand people passed away and thousands more were missing in both Nepal and Tibet. It is one of the most deadly disasters the area has experienced in recent years and will become more frequent as the world warms.

Scientists have discovered that rising temperatures are causing the mountains in the Himalayas to become unstable. With the glaciers moving back, the rock which had previously been held in place by ice has started to thaw, and the permafrost that had helped to stabilize the slopes starts to melt.

Paul Horn. Inside Climate News. *Nepali Government Data*

Scientists warn that because of recent human activity causing global temperatures to rise, the chances of such disasters only keeps increasing, particularly in the Himalayas, where the region is warming more quickly than most of the rest of the world.

At the same time, the lakes in the area are growing because of melting ice, and floods from these lakes have become much more frequent since the 1980s, with a rise in the number of such events along the China-Nepal border in the last ten years.

Scientists are trying to predict these issues in advance. Nepal and China have had flood systems that warn them in advance for many years and say that these have helped to prevent loss of life, even though the sensors used in the flood in use were made for monsoon floods, not a sudden glacier collapse.

Now, scientists are using images from satellites to find unstable slopes and growing lakes, allowing engineers to find which lakes require draining. This involves monitoring a part of the world that is changing rapidly, and it's this rapid change that makes planning so difficult.

While everyday people cannot prevent a glacier from collapsing, the greater risk is related to the decisions that determine how much the world warms. By supporting policies that reduce carbon emissions, people can help slow the rate at which glaciers are moving back and reduce the instability in mountains.

Organizations that are aiding in Nepal by rebuilding buildings and providing researchers to expand their warning systems to the areas that need them most need our support. By keeping up with climate change, people will understand why floods, wildfires, and storms have become more frequent and more severe in recent years.

To those reading this, you don't need to live close to a glacier or be involved in science to make a difference. All you need to contribute is to pay attention to updates related to climate change, support relief organizations, and advocate for better warning systems.

This is effective because small efforts made by people who are willing to take action can lead to a positive result over time.

Arnav Dhakal

Arnav Dhakal is a 11th 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.

Beginners' Birdwatching Class

October 10, 17 and 24, 2026

Would you like to improve your bird identification skills? Take Orange Audubon's Beginners' Birdwatching Class starting October 10th and continuing October 17rh and 24th.

If you have to miss one of the three Saturday mornings, you can make it up in the winter series (Feb 7, 14 and 21, 2027). Instructors are Susan Thome-Barrett and me. All sessions are 8:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m. An "outdoor" classroom session and mini-field trip is October 11th at Orlando Wetlands. On October 17th and 24th field sessions are at Mead Botanical Garden and the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, respectively.

The class is limited to 12 students and registration is required. Total cost for all three sessions is: $60 members; $75 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

Kathy Rigling

Golden-winged Skimmer., Orlando Wetlands, July 2023. *Photo: Mary Keim*

Dragonfly Identification at Orlando Wetlands

Fifteen attended the Orange Audubon Dragonfly Identification field trip on September 5th at Orlando Wetlands and adjacent Seminole Ranch Conservation Area.

Fourteen odonates (dragonflies and damselflies) were seen including 3 darners (Cyrano, Regal, Common Green), 6 skimmers (Needham's Skimmer, Eastern Amberwing, Four-spotted Pennant, Eastern Pondhawk, Little Blue Dragonlet, Blue Dasher), 1 broad-winged damsel (Ebony Jewelwing) and 4 pond damselflies (Rambur's Forktail, Duckweed Firetail, Variable Dancer, Blue-ringed Dancer).

Lots of skimmer nymph exuviae (shed exoskeletons) were found at the mesocosms (big blue tanks). This was a great group to lead, full of curiosity about nature.

Mary Keim and Randy Snyder, Dragonfly Trip Leaders

Jack Horton. *Photo courtesy Jack Horton*

Board member profile

Jack Horton, Orange Audubon Society's First Vice President, is a wildlife photographer, sports car enthusiast, former international water polo referee, and plays a major role in land management at the Apopka Birding Park.

He retired several years ago from teaching high school pre-calculus and coaching water polo in Seminole County.

Jack, who grew up here in Central Florida, has been a volunteer with the St. Johns River Water Management District at the Lake Apopka North Shore. Jack is entrusted with a special assignment, locking the inner gates to the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, so that the Wildlife Drive is ready for the Friday and weekend visitors.

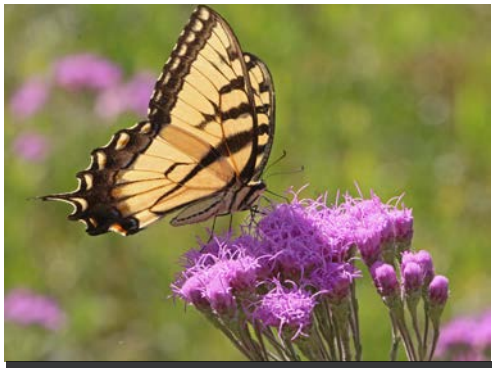
He is our Apopka Birding Park lock expert as well as taking on other many land management tasks. Jack has installed many bird boxes, including a barn owl box and a screech owl box, and has been involved with our gopher tortoise surveys.

He is one of the many people who makes our progress on the habitat restoration possible. We appreciate you, Jack.

Young Birders Club Trip September 27, 2026

Orange Audubon Society's Young Birders Club will be going on a field trip on September 27th to Mead Botanical Gardens in Winter Park. We will look for fall warblers and other migratory birds at this popular bird hotspot. The field trip is free to parents and Young Birders, but you are required to register in advance on our website: https://orangeaudubonfl.org/field-trip-signup/ .

Loaner binoculars will be available upon request. The trip is free, but the spots are limited. For more information contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail on Florida paintbrush, *Photo: Mary Keim*

Backyard Biodiversity Day Celebrates Florida's Unique Flora and Fauna

Saturday, October 24, 2026 - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Location: Mead Botanical Garden 1300 S. Denning Drive, Winter Park, FL 32789

Join the Tarflower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society for a full day of discovery, nature and community at the 14th Annual Backyard Biodiversity Day, hosted at beautiful Mead Botanical Garden! This beloved event celebrates Florida's incredible native plants and wildlife, while supporting vital habitat restoration efforts on-site in the Sandhill, Xeric Hammock and Scrubby Flatwood ecosystems.

FREE, family-friendly event features:

- Expert-led presentations on native gardening and biodiversity
- Interpretive hikes exploring pollinators, edible native plants, reptiles, gopher tortoises and ongoing sandhill restoration
- Native plant & wildflower seed sale
- Eco-conscious vendors and environmental exhibitors
- Engaging kids activities and crafts
- Local Food trucks
- Live Music

Whether you are a longtime native plant enthusiast or just curious about creating a more sustainable and wildlife-friendly yard, Backyard Biodiversity Day offers something for everyone.

Parking at Mead Botanical Garden is free but limited. If parking is full, please park legally on nearby streets. Even better, walk, bike or carpool!

Orange Audubon Society is proud to have co-sponsored this event since its inception. Take our Yards Tour earlier this month (October 4th), make lists of plants you need and buy them from our Tarflower friends. Don't miss it!

Teachers: Call on Orange Audubon

Orange Audubon Society's Education Coordinator Kathy Rigling is available to visit schools.

As a retired middle school science teacher, Kathy has 35 years of classroom experience in the Orange County Public Schools, as well as 11 years as the nature coordinator at the Wekiva Youth Camp.

Her classroom visits provide standards-based science lessons, community science field experiences and guidance for planning and implementing native plant gardens—all free of charge. Programs are grade level appropriate.

This year Orange Audubon is offering a limited number of monthly before or after school STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) birding clubs.

Our Education Coordinator will visit your extracurricular club providing an engaging bird-related curriculum, loaner binoculars and other related resources.

These have been successfully piloted at Zellwood Elementary, Eccleston Elementary, Rock Springs Elementary and Eustis Elementary.

Our monthly free educational webinars have resumed. The link to sign up is http://eepurl.com/imGskM

The webinars are posted on our YouTube channel. The first one, Our Feathered Friends curriculum, is posted at this link.

Please email education@orangeaudubonfl.org to sign up for classroom or after school visits. *Kathy Rigling*

Join Our Bird Surveys

At Orange Audubon, we are helping birds by participating in community science throughout the year, even in Florida's hot, humid summers. We encourage all our members to consider trying out a survey, no matter their skill level, as there are always more experienced birders to assist you.

This summer we continued our monthly surveys at Wekiwa Springs State Park, the Apopka Birding Park and the North Shore of Lake Apopka. We also had our quarterly survey at Oakland Nature Preserve and Rock Springs Run State Reserve.

The North Shore survey included Louisiana Waterthrush, Short-tailed Hawk, Yellow-throated Warblers and Mississippi Kites. At the Apopka Birding Park, we have observed a good variety of species including warblers such as Prairie, Northern Waterthrush and Yellow Warblers, lots of flyovers of wading birds, ducks and raptors, even some shorebirds this past month. For more information about upcoming surveys, please contact me at riglingkathy@gmail.com.

Kathy Rigling

2026 NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL

The NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL highlights the St. Johns River Water Management District's 20,000-acre Lake Apopka North Shore, one of the top eBird hotspots in Florida. Most of the 70 field trips are for birding but a number are tailored for photographers. We will again nature journaling this year!

Fulvous Whistling-Ducks on the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. *Photo: Leigh Kalfakis*

Field trips have excellent local and out-of-town leaders, and include a Young Birders trip, birding by bicycle, birding by kayak, and search for Crested Caracara, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, overwintering northern-breeding ducks and others for your life list.

Be aware! For the past few years, we have had a rush upon the opening of registration. Sixty-five percent of registrations occurred in the first 24 hours.

So be sure to watch for the opening. The festival is a project of Orange Audubon Society and all proceeds go toward our natural history museum at the Apopka Birding Park, including operations.

Here is the link to be on the mailing list.

Visit our website northshorebirdingfestival.com. If you have questions, email festival@orangeaudubonfl.org or call 407-637-2525.

Deborah Green

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bird Chats with OAS via Zoom
No Bird Chats in September
October 1 – The Bald Eagle: The Improbable Journey of America's Bird by Jack E.Davis
October 8 – Birding Peru by Alan Shapiro
October 22 – The Spark Bird Project by Jenn Lodi-Smith
Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org
See past Bird Chats on Orange Audubon Society on YouTube

September Program: Rescue, Care and Rehabilitation of Reptiles by Kim Titteringen
September 16, 2026
Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

September Field Trip: Central Winds Park, Seminole County
September 19, 2026
Register: https://orangeaudubonfl.org/activities/field-trips/

Nature Fest, Oakland Nature Preserve
September 26, 2026
Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Apopka Birding Park Volunteer Workday
September 26, 2026
Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

Young Birders Field Trip, Mead Botanical Gardens
September 27, 2026
Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Apopka Birding Park Bird Survey
September 26, 2026
Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Mead Botanical Garden Bird Walk, Winter Park
October 3, 19, 17 and 24, 2026
Register: https://orangeaudubonfl.org/activities/field-trips/
Contact Linda at (941) 704-1189

Wekiwa Springs State Park Bird Survey, Apopka
October 3, 2026
Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Native Bird Friendly Yards Tour
October 4, 2026
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Young Birders Field Trip, Central Winds Park
October 4, 2026
Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Rock Springs Run State Preserve Bird Survey, Sorrento
October 7, 2026
Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Oakland Nature Preserve Quarterly Survey
October 18, 2026
Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Beginners Birdwatching Class
Orlando Wetlands, Mead and Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive
October 10, 17 and 24, 2026
Register: https://orangeaudubonfl.org/activities/field-trips/

October Program: Wild Turkeys by Jay Exum
October 15, 2026
Contact Alan at alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Limited Edition Field Trip: Brownie Wise Park, Osceola Co
October 18, 2026
Register: https://orangeaudubonfl.org/activities/field-trips/

Backyard Biodiversity Day, Mead Botanical Garden, Winter Park
October 24, 2026
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

October Field Trip: Mead Botanical Garden
October 24, 2026
Register: https://orangeaudubonfl.org/activities/field-trips/

Limited Edition Field Trip: Birding by Bike, Orlando Wetlands
October 25, 2026

North Shore Bird Survey
October 28, 2026
Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

Apopka Birding Park Bird Survey
October 31, 2026
Contact Kathy at riglingkathy@gmail.com

Apopka Birding Park Volunteer Workday
October 31, 2026
Contact Deborah at info@orangeaudubonfl.org

NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL, Lake Apopka
Dec 3–7, 2026
Contact Deborah at (407) 637-2525

Oakland Nature Fest
September 26, 2026

The fourth annual Oakland Nature Fest will be Saturday, September 26th, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., at Oakland Nature Preserve!

Participate in animal interactions and guided hikes and learn more at interesting presentations! Admission is free, but donations are gratefully received, and will benefit the mission of Oakland Nature Preserve.

Orange Audubon Society will be there with a table. If you live in West Orange and have time to volunteer, we could use your help. Email volunteer@orangeaudubonfl.org