

# The JAY



[www.seminoleaudubon.org](http://www.seminoleaudubon.org)

*The mission of the Seminole Audubon Society, Inc. is to promote awareness and protection of the plants and animals of the St Johns River basin in order to sustain the beneficial coexistence of nature and humans.*

January– February 2023

## **FL Audubon JayWatch Annual Meeting, Nov. 5, 2022, Jonathan Dickinson State Park**

By Chuck Honaker, FL Master Naturalist

On Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>, JayWatch, a community science program of Florida Audubon that focuses on our endemic, federally-listed, threatened Florida Scrub Jay (FSJ) (Latin: *Aphelocoma coerulescens*), which is the namesake of this publication, held their annual meeting at the 10,000-acre Jonathan Dickinson State Park (here after written as JDSP) which itself has a substantial population of the unique birds. Approximately 50 volunteers and I were in attendance to hear about our most recent survey data in presentations from researchers and field biologists on their work with Florida Scrub Jays. Florida has five extinct native species: passenger pigeon, ivory-billed woodpecker, Carolina parakeet, Bachman's warbler and the Dusky seaside sparrow. However, Florida Scrub Jays continue to survive amidst habitat loss in our fast-growing state, partly through the efforts of FL Audubon JayWatch volunteers who help with habitat improvement; monitoring, banding and annual population surveys of scrub jays at multiple sites around the state. The national Audubon organization as recently as 12/21/2022 in an email newsletter stated:

"...this species [FSJs] is listed as vulnerable to extinction by the IUCN [International Union for the conservation of nature] and as federally threatened. Fewer than 5,000 Florida Scrub Jays remain. Their numbers have dropped by 90 percent over the past century, as the scrub and scrubby flatwoods they require have been fragmented and destroyed by development and agriculture. Thus, it's now illegal to feed Florida Scrub Jays unless you have a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service." From *To Feed or Not to Feed* by Melissa Groo, 05/24/2018

This article will provide some highlights from the JayWatch meeting.

Historically, wildfires played an essential role in maintaining appropriate scrub habitat for our FSJ and other scrub plants and animals. In partnership with Florida's Department of Environmental Protection in state parks and preserves, good scrub oak habitat for our FSJs is enhanced by roller-chopping and prescribed fires. This was highlighted by Rob Rossmanith, Park Biologist, who did a presentation on how prescribed fires, along with removal of sand pine and plant species that are unsuitable for scrub jays, positively affected the population at JDSP.

Natasha Lehr, a research assistant who focuses her work on Florida scrub jays at JDSP and Archbold Biological Station, described how the successful translocation of Ocala National Forest scrub jays to JDSP has enhanced the genetic diversity of the population. As a result, scrub jay numbers are

growing due to greater breeding success. Florida now has eight active genetic regions of scrub jays around the state which is one fewer than last year. Due to fragmented habitat they are no longer interconnected. Because Florida Scrub Jays are unlikely to fly long distances to find suitable habitats or mates, they continue to be translocated (trapped and physically transported) by trained personnel to isolated or declining sites to help increase population numbers. This, along with appropriate habitat maintenance, such as prescribed fire and mechanical clearing of scrub areas, has helped to stabilize or increase FSJ numbers at some sites.

Here are some historical charts [used with permission from Audrey DeRose-Wilson, Director of Bird Conservation for *Florida Audubon*] that reflect FSJ population trends in some nearby sites:



### Southwest Volusia Genetic Unit : Lyonia Preserve, Volusia County

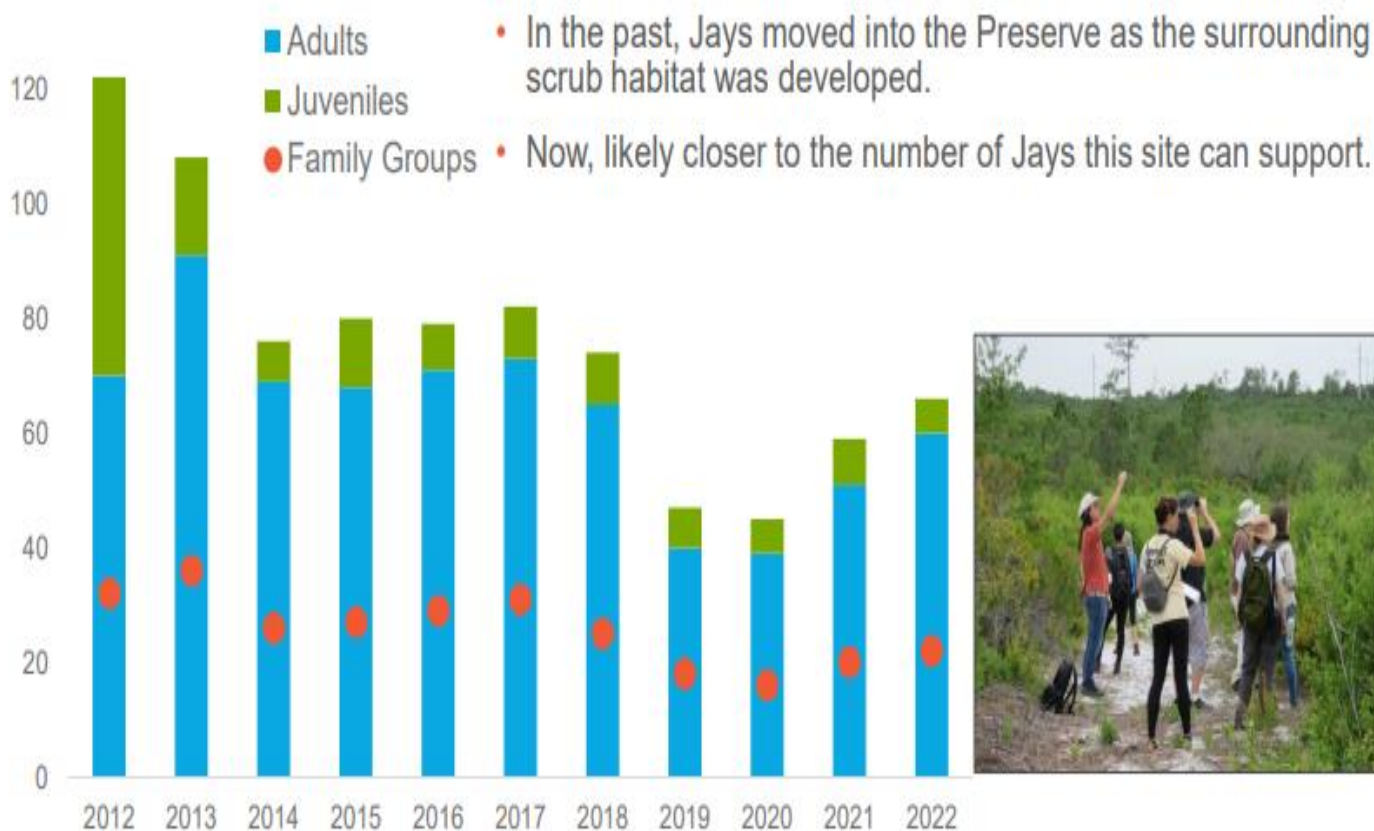


Photo provided by Florida Audubon

## Southwest Volusia Genetic Unit: Blue Springs SP, Volusia County



Dr. Reed Bowman, a scientist at Archbold Biological Station in Venus, FL who has studied scrub jays for over 30 years, also addressed the JayWatch Volunteer group. He reflected on the loss of habitat and the fragmentation of suitable scrub for FSJs that are ongoing challenges, but he also noted areas like JDSP, Lake Wales Ridge, Archbold, and Ocala where scrub jays are doing well. It will be critical to continue to protect and preserve scrub habitat to give FSJs a more secure future.

The 2022 surveys at 22 sites resulted in a count of 256 scrub jay family groups, 760 individual jays including 172 juveniles. There were 40 volunteers who took part in live training this year and others participated in online training opportunities. This community science effort continues to be vital to the future of FL Scrub Jays. FL Audubon's website provides information on JayWatch for interested persons. *Florida Scrub Jay* by Mark Jerome Walters is an excellent book that provides an engaging, detailed history of the Florida Scrub Jay and its past, current, and future challenges.





Florida Scrub Jay photograph by Chuck Honaker



## **Christmas Bird Count 2022** by Leslie Martin

Again this year, volunteers from Seminole Audubon Society spent a lovely day on Dec. 17th counting birds for the Wekiva Basin Christmas Bird Count. We had 13 people searching for our feathered friends at many locations: neighborhood parks, Lake Monroe Riverwalk, Evergreen Cemetery, James Dunn Park, Liberty Park, Mayfair Country Club and many backyard feeders in Sanford and Lake Mary.

Some highlights included a Roseate spoonbill, Eastern bluebirds, Painted bunting, an orange-crowned warbler and a pair of Red-tailed hawks. It will be some time before results are compiled for the entire 17-mile circle.

Photos of Bluebird pair and FL Sandhill Cranes by Kate Dolamore



# Chipping Sparrow

*Spizella passerine*

By Faith Jones

Photos by Ken Schmidt



The sparrow section of your Sibley Guide is near the back of the book. It may seem like pages and pages of very similar birds. Sparrows are truly LBJs, Little Brown Jobs. Identification can be simplified if you eliminate species that are not found in inland Central Florida and at this time of year. Then follow a systematic method of looking at the bird.

All sparrows have cone-shaped beaks. They are seed-eaters. Members of the genus *Spizella* are small (5.5") sparrows with rounded heads and fairly long tails.



To identify a sparrow, I recommend you start at the top of the head, then work your way down and back to the tail. In the chart below the left side shows what to look for on a sparrow and the right side indicates what you will



find if it is a Chipping Sparrow.

here to focus	What you will find on a Chipping Sparrow
Crown – is there a stripe? If so, what color(s)? Is the crown a different color?	No stripe. Dark cap. Ranges in color from rust to light brown.
Eye Ring, Eye Stripe or Eyebrow Stripe (superciliary)?	-Very faint eye ring which is not diagnostic. -Dark eye stripe. Other sparrows have eye stripes the same color or darkness as their other facial markings. -Unique to Central Florida sparrows, Chipping Sparrow's eye stripe extends across the lore, the area between the eye and the beak, a lore line.
Mustache stripe?	Faint
Chest – plain or patterned? If patterned - spots (round or elongated) or streaks?	Plain
Wing bars – Are there any? How many?	Two wing bars that are beige or buff-colored.
Rump	Gray, if you get to see it.
Tail – long or short, notched or rounded?	Fairly long

Chipping Sparrows are found only in Florida during the winter months when the color of their caps can range from a bright, rusty color to a pale brown. Overall, the bird's colors are subdued during this non-breeding season. Their color can range from a pale brown to gray.

The colors may change, but the color pattern remains the same year-round. Chipping Sparrows are by far the most common sparrow species to be found in Central Florida.

During winter months, while Chipping Sparrows are here, they form flocks of several dozen birds. Chipping Sparrows forage on the ground for seeds & often go unnoticed. When startled, they fly up to a higher vantage point. These birds thrive in open, tree-filled spaces found in suburbs and parks.

Chipping Sparrows, fondly known as “Chippers”, get their name from the crisp “chip” call they make throughout the day as they forage for food and interact with others.

While in their winter habitat, Chipping Sparrows are non-stop eaters. According to AllAboutBlrds.org, each one must consume over two pounds of seeds through the course of the winter to survive. With an average body weight of ½ oz, this means that Chipping Sparrows consume over 70 times their own weight in seeds each winter. Put up a feeder this time of year, and you will very likely be rewarded with visits from a flock of “chippers”.



# Seminole County Set to Tackle Climate Pollution

By Sam Kendall, Conservation Committee

Last spring the Seminole County Office of Economic Development produced a report that quantified the amount of greenhouse gases (ghg) released by all county operations during the year 2019. Emissions from buildings, the transportation fleet, the water treatment plant and the Osceola landfill were all measured. Methane from the landfill accounted for almost the entire total. This is very worrisome because methane is a more powerful heat-trapping gas than carbon dioxide. I wondered what the county would do with this report. Now we have an answer

Hanson Professional Services, an engineering and environmental firm, was recruited to analyze energy use and ghg production in all service areas and offer recommendations to improve energy efficiency and reduce these climate-altering gases. The county now has the 380-page report titled *Energy and Sustainability Roadmap*.

That's just what it is, a road map: a technical analysis showing where energy efficiencies can be improved and where applications of renewable energy can reduce emissions. For example, over 20 county buildings are analyzed for their potential energy savings using solar panels. Everything from the Public Safety Building, to firehouses and even the jail are given extensive summaries of the potential for solar savings.

Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are now over 415 ppm. This is well over the 350 level which is thought to be safe. The evidence of overheating is now seen everywhere across the planet. Scientists have established that climate pollution is accelerating the intensity of storms and droughts. The Florida peninsula sticks out as highly vulnerable.

Nationally, the 2021 Inflation Reduction Act is touted as the largest ever investment in ghg reduction. I hope all these billions of dollars get distributed with efficiency, too, equitably and without corruption. Over half the states now have their own plans to reduce ghg. Many cities also have created plans including St. Petersburg and Orlando. Every government should be taking action and demonstrating ghg reduction practices for their communities.

This kind of analysis by Hanson is long overdue. Audubon members know that the efficient use of fossil energy use is the first step in reducing pollution and saving money. The report does credit the county where efficiency actions are already in place and shows areas where more efficiency can be beneficial. County staff is currently working with Hanson in the process of planning the next steps to see what will be the best practice to move forward. To review the report, contact the county Office of Organizational Excellence at 407 665-7160 or me (Sam Kendall) for a PDF copy.



## Programs and Trip Notes

### **November 13: Disney's Avian Conservation Program and Purple Martin Research**

Presented by Dr. Jason Fischer, Conservation Program Manager for avian projects with Disney Conservation

Dr. Fischer gave an overview of his work with international avian conservation efforts focusing on the Siberian Crane which has already gone extinct in one migration area. Conservation efforts are focused on the Siberian and Chinese habitats and migration path. He also talked about how Disney built a resort in Shanghai with conservation-focused ponds. The birds came and it is now a hotspot for bird watching. He gave us detailed information about Purple Martin migration and their roosting patterns. Data is obtained with solar-powered tracking devices that strap onto the birds.





## December 11: Preserving Seminole County

Jim Duby, Program Manager for Seminole County Natural Lands, provided an overview of the Seminole County Natural Lands Program. Seminole County is the third smallest county in the state and the third most densely populated with approximately 1,400 people per square mile. About 20% of land in the county is preserved. When protected wetlands are included, about 50% of lands have some level of protection. Lands were acquired through the CARL program, Preservation 2000 and Florida Forever. County referendums in 1990 and 2000 provided an additional 25 million dollars in funding, which the county has used to purchase and preserve 6,600 acres. Preservation doesn't end at purchase. The land needs to be managed with restoration of processes such as fire and hydrology, controlling invasive species and continuing education. Seminole County has over 80 miles of interconnected trails through parks, wilderness, historic areas, and shopping areas. Jim included many photos of preservation parks and wildlife. Jim also provided an update on Seminole County's Spring Hammock Preserve Enhancement project. This project will include paving of Osprey Trail, a new boardwalk to Lake Jesup, new footbridges and a new pavilion.

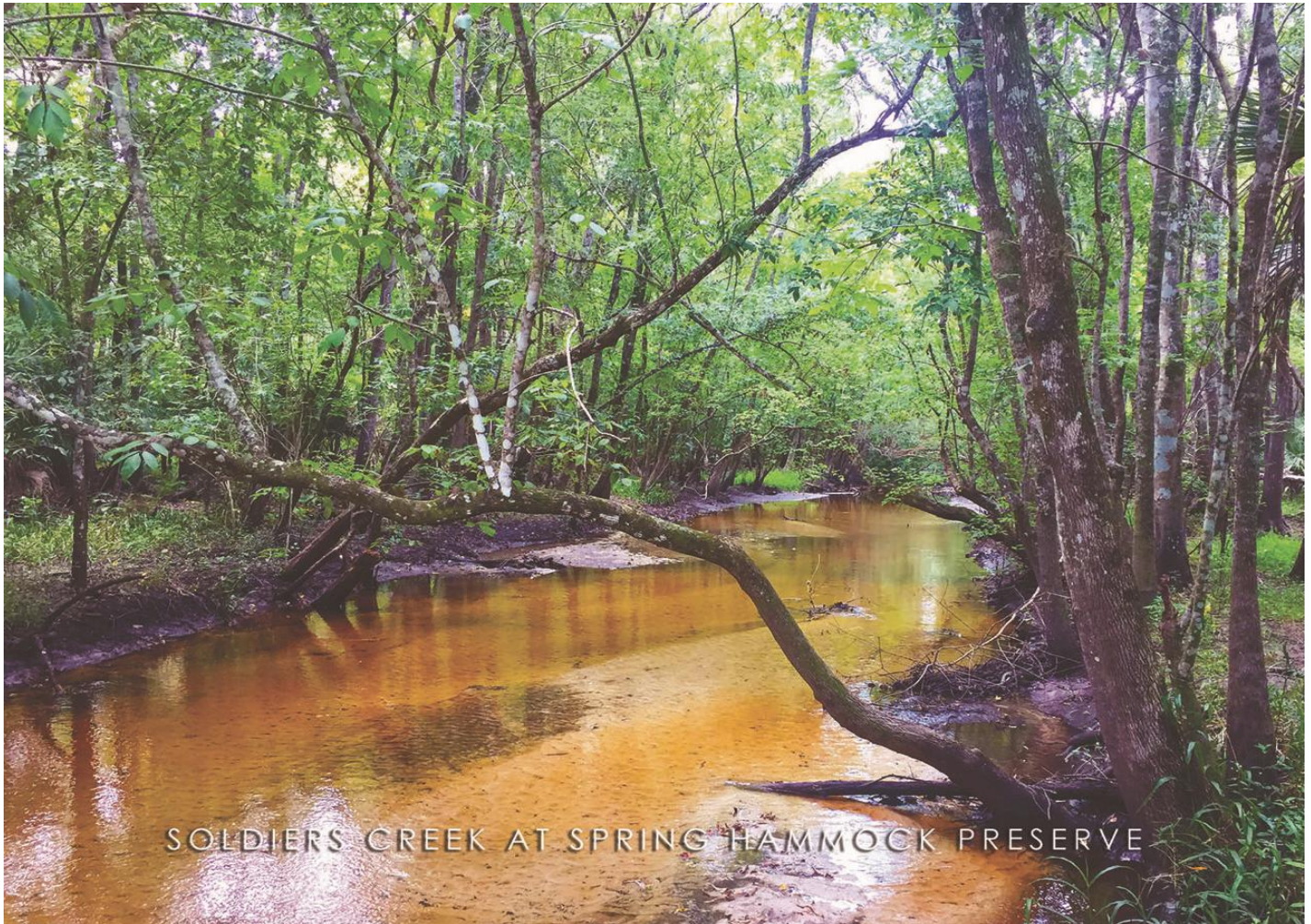


Photo by Jim Duby

## Upcoming Programs and Field Trips

Our field trip to Geneva Wilderness Area November 19 was cancelled due to flooding and damaged trails from recent hurricanes.

### **Program - January 8, 2023: St. Johns River by Lisa Rinaman, The St. John's Riverkeeper and Gabbie Milch, Middle Basin Coordinator.**

The St. Johns River is the longest river in Florida and its most significant one for commercial and recreational use. At 310 miles long, it flows north and winds through or borders twelve counties. Numerous lakes are formed by the river including Lake Monroe in Sanford. Lisa will explain some of the ecological challenges relating to the river and her role as the chief advocate and the public's voice for the river.

Lisa Rinaman was a former staff member for Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton. She has helped implement numerous environmental initiatives and policies. Lisa was instrumental in leading the effort to develop and implement irrigation, fertilizer, and Florida Friendly landscaping ordinances to better protect the St. Johns and local waterways. Also, she has played a key role in securing state funding for water quality improvements. She has also been a key advocate for the *Free the Ocklawaha* initiative.

Gabbie Milch focuses on the St. Johns Middle Basin to assist the community to engage and learn about the quality of the River from Orange County to Lake George. Her goal is to engage volunteers and members of the community to participate in activities such as clean ups, River Friendly Landscape projects and riparian habitat restorations, riverfront hikes and other social learning activities. She is also Seminole County Soil and Water Conservation District 4 Supervisor.

### **Program - February 12: Caracaras**

Susan Shaw and Brendon Quinton are senior scientists with Environmental Science Associates. Together, they have participated in multiple Caracara (Caracara cheriway) nest surveys throughout the known distribution/range of the species in Florida. They will share their knowledge and experience from these surveys, as well as some interesting facts about these unique and threatened birds.

### **Annual Meeting Notice**

The annual meeting to vote on upcoming board terms will take place at the March 12 monthly meeting. If you would like to be on the board or have a nomination for the board, contact [SeminoleAudubon@gmail.com](mailto:SeminoleAudubon@gmail.com).

### **Field Trip - January 14, 2023: Lighthouse Point Park at Ponce Inlet**

Lighthouse Point Park is a 52-acre inlet park located along the northern shoreline of Ponce de Leon Inlet. We will walk along the Intracoastal Waterway and beach areas for approx. 2 miles looking for shorebirds. Entrance to the park is \$10.00/car. Moderate walking is expected over uneven terrain. All levels and ages of birders are welcome. Restrooms are available. Meet at the main pavilion at 8:00 am at 5000 S. Atlantic Ave., Ponce Inlet. Attendance is limited to 20 people. Reservations required. Contact Cecilia Carey at [cacarey@cfl.rr.com](mailto:cacarey@cfl.rr.com).



**Field Trip - January 20 (Friday): Yankee Lake Treatment Facility: Scrub Jays**

This is a guided tour of the only habitat in Seminole County for Florida Scrub Jays. Along with Audubon Florida, SAS was instrumental in getting this habitat preserved in 1993 when the treatment facility was being planned, so we visit this property each year. We will meet at 8:00 am at the Seminole County Northwest Water Reclamation Facility on 501 Yankee Lake Road, Sanford, off SR46 just before the entrance to the Seminole Forest. Restrooms are in the administration building. We will be riding in the management company's pickup trucks. We will be joined on the tour by County administration staff. All levels and ages of birders are welcome. Attendance limited to 10 people. Reservations required. Contact Phyllis Hall at: phylliscath814@gmail.com

**Field Trip - February 18: Deer Run Park**

This golf course property was purchased by Seminole County in December, 2021. It will be developed into a passive park over the next several years including renovation of the clubhouse into a community center. Moderate walking over uneven terrain on the old golf cart trails. All levels and ages of birders are welcome. No restrooms available. Meet at 8:00 am in the old clubhouse parking lot, 300 Daneswood Way, Casselberry, FL 32707 Attendance is limited to 15 people. Reservations required. Contact Leslie Martin at woodstork.martin@gmail.com.

**13th Annual Seminole Gardening Expo., February 25, 9 am – 3:00 pm**

Come visit us at the SAS booth and purchase some native plants from Cuplet Fern Native Plant Society in the booth next to ours. The Expo includes: how to clinics, speakers, plant vendors, exhibitors, demonstration gardens, ask an expert booth and opportunity to talk to master gardeners. Also, there will be activities for children. Location: Seminole County Extension Service, 250 W. County Home Rd., Sanford, FL 32773

# WELCOME

**NEW MEMBERS** or **NEW** to **OUR Chapter**

Cheryl Balboa, Deltona

Jacqueline Bush, Lake Mary

Elizabeth Chapo, Sanford

Arjun Dubey, Lake Mary

Marion H. Dudek, Sanford

Chandra Griesse, Sanford

Christy Hazelwood, Lake Mary

Beverly Lituchy, Lake Mary

Ericha Loch, Lake Mary

Marya Medlock, Sanford

Sheri Murphy, Lake Mary

William Nealon, Sanford

Thomas Peters, Lake Mary

Daniel Reese, DeBary

Jeff Small, Sanford

Laurie Tanner, Lake Mary

## AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

**Introductory offer For New Members Only     \$20.00/ 1 year**

*Join on our website [SeminoleAudubon.org](http://SeminoleAudubon.org) using Chapter Code E31*

Make checks payable to **National Audubon Society**. Complete this form and mail with your check to:  
Seminole Audubon Society, P.O. Box 2977, Sanford FL 32772-2977

**Seminole Audubon Associate Membership \$10.00 / year**

Available to Audubon Society members assigned to other chapters.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 2022-2023 Board of Directors & Committee Chairs (eff. 7/1/22)

[SeminoleAudubon@gmail.com](mailto:SeminoleAudubon@gmail.com)

Term	Name	Office/Committee	Email
2022/2024	Phyllis Hall	President, Website, History	<a href="mailto:phylliscath814@gmail.com">phylliscath814@gmail.com</a>
2021/2023	Leslie Martin	V.P., Ornithology, SAS Premiums	<a href="mailto:woodstork.martin@gmail.com">woodstork.martin@gmail.com</a>
2021/2023	Jan Peters	Treasurer	<a href="mailto:jan@janetkpeters.com">jan@janetkpeters.com</a>
2022/2024	Peggy Stickney	Sec., Publicity, Release Keeper	<a href="mailto:stickneymargaret@gmail.com">stickneymargaret@gmail.com</a>
	C.Carey P. Hall, L. Martin	Programs & Field Trips	<a href="mailto:cacarey@cfl.rr.com">cacarey@cfl.rr.com</a> , <a href="mailto:phylliscath814@gmail.com">phylliscath814@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:woodstork.martin@gmail.com">woodstork.martin@gmail.com</a>
2021/2023	Lewis Gray	At Large, Jane Isle Survey	<a href="mailto:lewisngray@bellsouth.net">lewisngray@bellsouth.net</a>
2021/2023	Nat Harrison	At Large, CLI Liaison	<a href="mailto:natsscem@gmail.com">natsscem@gmail.com</a>

Committee Chairs	Committee	Email
Marty Shepherd	Membership	<a href="mailto:gindad@cfl.rr.com">gindad@cfl.rr.com</a>
Margaret Loring	New Member Welcome Letter	<a href="mailto:MLoring@CFL.rr.com">MLoring@CFL.rr.com</a>
Marguerite Terwilleger	Past President, Big Sit data, Scholarships,	<a href="mailto:mterwilleger51@gmail.com">mterwilleger51@gmail.com</a>
Cecilia Carey	Meetings PowerPoint, Monthly Reminders on Meet Up, Facebook	<a href="mailto:cacarey@cfl.rr.com">cacarey@cfl.rr.com</a>
Jim Peters	Purple Martin Project	<a href="mailto:jim@jameshpeters.com">jim@jameshpeters.com</a>
Connie Dolan	Crystal Lake Preserve Liaison	<a href="mailto:spidconn318@juno.com">spidconn318@juno.com</a>
Sam Kendall	Energy	<a href="mailto:samuelk32@embarqmail.com">samuelk32@embarqmail.com</a>
Faith Jones	Newsletter Compiler	<a href="mailto:faithaudubon@gmail.com">faithaudubon@gmail.com</a>
Corrinne Wertz	Publications	<a href="mailto:cwertz127@aol.com">cwertz127@aol.com</a>

**Eagle Watch:** Michelle Vaughn, Sarah Donlan

**Jay Watch:** Chuck Honaker, Marty Shepherd

**Jane Isle Survey:** Lewis Gray (Chair), Marguerite Terwilleger, Leslie Martin

**Conservation:** Phyllis Hall (Chair), Sam Kendall, Faith Jones, Cecilia & John Carey, Mindy Hellman, Marguerite Terwilleger, Sarah Donlan

**SAS is represented on these community committees:** Wekiva Wild and Scenic River Advisory Committee, Wekiva River Basin Commission, Central FL Audubon Regional Conservation Committee. In addition, Seminole Planning and Development agendas are reviewed weekly.

**Outreach:** Phyllis Hall (Chair), Marty Shepherd, Leslie Martin, Cecilia Carey

Events: Seminole Garden Expo – February, Altamonte Springs/Lake Lotus Festival – around Earth Week, Casselberry EarthFest - Earth Week, Seminole State College Earth Week, Altamonte Springs Family Festival Cranes Roost

**MailChimp, Facebook & Meet Up:** Cecilia Carey (Backup: Phyllis Hall)

**PO Box Mail Pickup:** Michelle Vaughn (Backup: Marguerite Terwilleger)

**Lake Monroe Purple Martin Nests:** Jim Peters. Helpers: Jim & Cecilia Carey, Phyllis Hall, Richard Hagen

**Lake Jesup Park Clean Up:** Leslie Martin, (Chair), Marguerite Terwilleger

**Scholarships:** Marguerite Terwilleger (Chair), Corrinne Wertz, Joy Rector, Michelle Vaughn

**School/Eco-Camp Connections:** Eco Camp-Ed Yarbrough Nature Center: Marguerite Terwilleger for scholarships.

Using Audubon Adventures & SAS speakers for camps

Bentley Elementary– Sanford: Joy Rector

Central FL Zoo Camp: Michelle Vaughn

Goldsboro Elementary - Sanford: Joy Rector

TW Lawton Elementary - Oviedo: Phyllis Hall

Walden Community School – Winter Park: Phyllis Hall

Seminole State College - Phyllis Hall