

# The JAY

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*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.*

November - December 2023

## More Trees, Less Overheating Natural Solutions in Underserved Communities

By Sam Kendall

Reports I have been reading tell how the one-year-old Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is already reducing greenhouse gases (GHG) with clean energy solar, wind and battery installations, while boosting new photovoltaic (PV), electric vehicle (EV) and EV battery manufacturing plants in Georgia, Ohio, and other states. I haven't seen many articles on how the IRA actually takes GHG out of the atmosphere. Removal of CO<sub>2</sub> is absolutely essential to put the brakes on runaway climate heating. The Audubon position is to maintain and restore natural habitats. Old growth forests have been the mainstay for carbon storage. But, fires in the west and Canada have reduced millions of acres of trees and habitat to ashes, sending particulate matter (PM) as far as Florida.

An article on the Audubon website describes how a grant program from the U.S. Forest Service is expanding tree planting.<sup>1</sup> \$1.5 billion has been allocated through the IRA to tree-planting projects across the country. But, there's a twist. The money isn't going into restoring old forests that have suffered from fires, droughts or invasive, land-clearing humans. The grant money targets underserved communities. These communities are almost always poor, left behind without the resources to build and restore the tree canopy. Concrete in city sidewalks and streets absorbs daylight energy from the sun and then releases that heat-energy at night. Trees shade concrete and reduce this "heat island" effect. Temperatures in favored, tree-covered communities can be lower by 11 to 19 degrees compared to hapless communities left treeless.

Griffin Park in Orlando is just one example of underserved local communities suffering from heat island effects. It is in an almost tree-less doughnut-hole, surrounded on all sides by major highways, and the residents are subjected to scorching heat and dangerously poor air quality due to incessant vehicle emissions. Planting more pollutant- and CO<sub>2</sub>-absorbing, shade-providing trees here would help reduce these problems.



Source: [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/florida-poor-black-neighborhood-air-pollution\\_n\\_5a663a67e4b0e5630072746e](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/florida-poor-black-neighborhood-air-pollution_n_5a663a67e4b0e5630072746e)  
Photo by Chris McGonigal

# More Trees, Less Overheating Continued from page 1

Three hundred eighty-five (385) projects across all fifty (50) states have been selected for funding. Twenty-three (23) cities in Florida are receiving project funding including Orlando and Kissimmee. Other programs in the IRA provide funding for private reforestation projects but this program provides the most money overall. We should expect a lot of trees!

City trees bring peaceful beauty to neighborhoods and contribute to good mental health. They also add color to often dull, grey spaces. They conserve energy, provide cooling shade, capture stormwater, filter particulates from the air and provide habitat for insects, birds, and other wildlife. And, urban forests capture CO<sub>2</sub> just like their rural siblings.



George W. Touhy Park in Sanford, Florida.  
An example of an urban forest benefitting local people and wildlife

Source: <https://www.mysanfordherald.com/article/sanford-cultural-guild-team-preserve-historic-trees>

You can learn how the IRA reduces total energy costs in this pdf file.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Inflation-Reduction-Act-Guidebook.pdf>

## Yarborough Ranch Property

A letter of support from Seminole Audubon Society (SAS) was included with the Seminole County application to add the Yarborough Ranch property to *Florida Forever*. Phyllis Hall spoke on behalf of SAS at the public hearing in DeLand on October 5, 2023 to advocate adding this property to *Florida Forever*. Commissioners Dallari and Herr spoke on behalf of Seminole County Commissioners, and Gabbie Milch spoke representing Seminole Soil and Water Conservation District 4. This 1,313 acre property, which has been identified as a Priority 1 critical linkage for the Wildlife Corridor, is a vital missing link that currently



forms a gap in the Little Big Econ State Forest and Kilbee Ranch Conservation Easement complex. Adding this property to *Florida Forever* will provide further protections to the Big Econlockhatchee Drainage Basin. The final decision to add this property to *Florida Forever* will be made in Tallahassee in December, 2023.

Scan to learn more about  
Florida Forever





# Welcome 2023 Conservation Leadership Initiative Students: Marie Sebastiani and Alex Barath.

Conservation Leadership Initiative (CLI) is a year-long co-mentoring program that provides networking and learning opportunities to students of Florida's colleges and universities that are interested in a career in environmental conservation. From October, 2023 to May, 2024, students in the CLI Cohort are immersed in Audubon Florida, learning more about our grassroots conservation efforts while developing valuable professional skills. CLI students have access to one-on-one mentorships, leadership skill-building, professional development, field trips, project-planning opportunities, and more. It is a great honor to be selected as a CLI student. Only 25 were selected from over 100 statewide applicants.

This year, Phyllis Hall is mentoring two CLI students: Marie Sebastiani and Alexandra (Alex) Barath.



Marie Sebastiani

**Marie** is a senior majoring in Environmental Studies at Rollins College. She enjoys drawing, playing video games, and partaking in aquascaping as well as playing with her two lovely, adored pet cats.

**Alex** is a junior at UCF with dual majors in Environmental Studies and Emerging Media (Computer Animation). Alex helps run the campus Audubon chapter, Knighthawk Club, and states she absolutely loves birds and bird watching as well as being a huge fan of wildlife photography, hiking, and drawing.



Alex Barath

## Fall Bird Profile: The Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*)

By Cecilia Carey



Eastern Phoebe

Photo by John Carey

Have you heard the raspy 'phoebe' call of the Eastern Phoebe lately? This flycatcher has just started to arrive for the winter in Central Florida. In neighborhoods, look for it perched on a fence or a low tree branch. The Eastern Phoebe has an upright posture when perched and wags its tail up and down almost constantly. Watch this bird sally forth to catch a flying insect before returning to the same perch. It eats a variety of insects including wasps, dragonflies, moths, butterflies, and beetles. The Eastern Phoebe does not usually come to bird feeders. It may, however, come to a bird bath or be attracted to a yard that has a pollinator garden or native plants that support insects.

To hear the Eastern Phoebe's songs and calls visit <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/eastern-phoebe>.

# Welcome to New SAS Board Members:

## Connie Dolan and Tracey Comazzi



Connie Dolan

Connie Dolan is a recently retired registered nurse. She is currently volunteering at Seminole Hospital as well as the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland. Connie represents SAS on the board of Crystal Lake Preserve. She has participated in the annual butterfly survey there beginning in 2018 with Faith Jones and she now co-chairs this survey with Tracey Comazzi. Connie also volunteers at the banding station at Lake Lotus Park in Altamonte Springs. She has a keen interest in growing native plants in her garden to provide food, shelter, and natural habitat for wildlife, insects, and local and migratory birds. In her spare time, Connie is learning to identify Florida's insects and native plants in their natural environments. She identified an extraordinary ninety-six species at the Seminole County Natural Lands' 2023 Econ River Wilderness Area BioBlitz held this month!

Tracey Comazzi recently graduated from Hamilton Holt School, Rollins College with a degree in Environmental Studies and Sustainable Urbanism. She wrote a landscaping plan to convert the 14,000 square foot front lawn of St. Richard's Episcopal Church in Winter Park to a native plant garden. This will help restore natural habitat for wildlife and pollinators and help St. Richard's in its goal of becoming more sustainable. The first stage of this plan has been completed thanks, in large part, to a grant from the National Audubon Society that was secured by Phyllis Hall under the plants for birds initiative. Tracey interned with the Florida Native Plant Society Cuplet Fern Chapter in 2021, and she was also an Audubon Florida Conservation Leadership Initiative student, 2021-2022, under Phyllis's mentorship. She has participated in the annual Crystal Lake Preserve butterfly survey since 2021 and now co-chairs this annual survey with Connie Dolan. This year, she assumed from Faith Jones the role of compiling The Jay newsletter.



Tracey Comazzi



### Binoculars to Donate?

If you have an extra pair of binoculars you aren't using, consider donating them to SAS. They can be used as loaners on field trips for new birders. Bring them to a meeting or, to ask someone to pick them up, contact [seminoleaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:seminoleaudubon@gmail.com).

Source: <https://clipart-library.com/clipart/112480.htm>



# Program and Field Trip Notes

## Florida's Wading Birds and The American Flamingo

Sunday, September 10, 2023

By Phyllis Hall

Cecilia Carey provided interesting facts about Florida's wading birds: herons, egrets, bitterns, ibis, spoon-bills, and wood storks. She focused on the special behaviors of each type of bird and how to identify them. Wading birds have common characteristics of thin legs with agile toes. They are dependent on wetlands and ponds for foraging, nesting, and roosting. They are found in fresh water, salt water and brackish water. They have a wide variety of diet including fish, worms, insects, frogs, snakes, etc.

Leslie Martin made a successful trek to the Clearwater area to find the American Flamingos blown in by hurricane Idalia. She shared her great photos and also discussed the ethics of bird photography, mainly, if you are close enough that you are affecting bird behavior, you are too close.



American Flamingos  
Photos by Leslie Martin

## Night Walk, Geneva Wilderness Area

Saturday, September 16, 2023

By Leslie Martin

We had a fantastic turnout of 38 attendees for this after-dark field trip at Geneva Wilderness Area led by Seminole County Natural Lands Program Coordinator, Natalie Swanson. The Geneva Wilderness Area is a 180-acre site and part of the Seminole County Natural Lands Program. The site contains an array of Florida's native ecological communities: mixed hardwood swamp, mesic flatwoods, scrubby flatwoods, and a lake system, all supporting a diverse collection of wildlife. There were many frogs, a pair of Southern Two-striped Walkingsticks (*Anisomorpha buprestoides*) and a strange fungus that Natalie encouraged us to smell. It smelled like cocoa to me! We would like to extend a big thank you to the young experts on the hike who were not afraid to handle any creature we came upon.



Left:  
Night Hike Group



Right:  
Pair of Southern Two-  
striped Walkingsticks  
(Look for two pairs of  
antennae!)

Photos by Leslie Martin

# Program and Field Trip Notes

## Big Sit! at Lake Jesup Park

Sunday, October 8, 2023

By Leslie Martin

The Big Sit is an annual, international event hosted by New Haven (Connecticut) Bird Club. This year's count, which took the place of our regular monthly meeting, was on the first cool morning of the fall—we didn't even need a tent for shade! 10 people attended this easy birding event, and together we sighted 41 species. Surrounded by Swamp Sunflowers in full bloom, we were serenaded by multiple Limpkins (*Aramus guarauna*).

Since SAS first started field trips to this location, the property has changed quite a bit. It is now much cleaner, and some vegetation has been removed providing greater visibility of the open water. Unfortunately, the water level was quite high and covered the newly created sand flats, allowing little opportunity to see more shorebirds.

Leslie Martin found a resident Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) in the wooded area of the park. Since it was outside the designated Big Sit! circle, we couldn't count it, but it was a great opportunity to see one. We also talked with a boatload of alligator hunters transporting the alligator they had just caught. Through them, we learned a great deal about the rules for alligator hunting.



Limpkin and Swamp Sunflowers  
Photo by Leslie Martin

## Econ River Wilderness Area Birding Hike

Sunday, October 21, 2023

By Chuck Honaker, Florida Master Naturalist



Photo by  
Chuck Honaker

Econ River Wilderness Area (ERWA) is one of seven areas and a preserve that make up Seminole County's Natural Lands properties. Acquired in 1994, it is a 240-acre parcel consisting of pine flatwoods and live oak hammock and bordered by the Econlockhatchee River. The area has 3-plus miles of easy, accessible, flat hiking trails. It is a popular oasis with walkers and hikers in the fast-developing area around UCF in the eastern part of our county. Our own professional artist, Kate Dolamore, grew up on Red Ember Road in the area just north of the ERWA property, and recalls enjoying the wildlife, woods, and swampy areas near her home. Now, a new

walled subdivision is under construction there and bears the name *Red Ember*.

Starting at 7:30a.m. on October 21, 2023, I was pleased to lead a 2.5-mile birding hike with seven participants (see right) who were birders and others simply out to enjoy the birds, fall wildflowers and the cooler weather. Our group had to brush aside pesky mosquitoes early on, but that did not deter us from seeing a good variety of birds. Photos of some of our sightings accompany his article thanks to the



Photo by  
John Carey



## Econ River Wilderness Area Birding Hike *Continued from page 6*

camera skills of John Carey. Squeaky and active, little Brown-headed Nuthatches were a special species that we encountered at a couple of intervals in the tall pine trees along the trail. We had a great look at one that flew to a low branch. Fall migrants such as Palm Warblers, House Wrens and Gray Catbirds were abundant among the 23 species we documented. Eastern Bluebirds are residents here and are seen throughout the property. A host of other common birds were evident: Northern Cardinals and Northern Mockingbirds, Tufted Titmice, Eastern Towhees, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Pine Warblers, Carolina Wrens, a Brown Thrasher, and Red-bellied, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers. Flying above our heads, we noted Common Grackles, a Little Blue Heron, American Crows, Sandhill Cranes, and Black and Turkey Vultures.



Brown-headed Nuthatch  
Photo by John Carey



Photo by  
Chuck Honaker

I have led a monthly bird survey team of SAS members and others this year at Econ River Wilderness Area. This was a resurrection of an activity that our organization did many years ago. We were asked by Natural Lands Seminole County Natural Resources Program Coordinator and Biologist, Allegra Buyer, to document numbers and species of birds for a wildlife database that will be used to monitor population trends. Prescribed fires were part of recent habitat maintenance and restoration efforts on the property. Our October 20, 2023 bird survey here was part of a larger BioBlitz which documented birds, plants, insects, and other wildlife during the week-long activity.

I encourage you to make plans to explore the Econ River Wilderness Area in the near future and enjoy a natural piece of Florida in our busy section of the state. Natural Lands have no access fees and are a big part of why Seminole County is officially called "Florida's Natural Choice."



Top left: Gray Catbird  
Top center: Pine Warbler  
Top right: House Wren  
Bottom left: Eastern Bluebird  
Bottom right: Eastern Towhee  
Can you see him?

Photos by John Carey



# Upcoming Programs and Field Trips

Meetings are held on the second Sunday at 2 pm except the April meeting will be on the third Sunday in 2024. Meeting **Location:**

IFAS Extension Education Building  
University of Florida/IFAS  
Extension Seminole County  
250 W. County Home Rd. (off 17/92)  
Sanford, FL 32773

## Monthly Bird Surveys at Econ River Wilderness Area

If you would like to help with these surveys, contact Chuck Honaker at [chonakerjr@gmail.com](mailto:chonakerjr@gmail.com). All levels of birding experience are welcome.



Brown-headed Nuthatch  
Photo by Jay McGowan  
Macaulay Library



Northern Parula female  
Photo by Oscar Johnson/  
Macaulay Library



Red-headed Woodpecker  
Photo by Ryan Saunderson  
Macaulay Library

## Program: November 12, Sunday. Prescribed Burns

Allegra Buyer, Seminole County Natural Resources Program Coordinator, will describe the role of the “burn boss” in planning and running a prescribed burn. She will explain how a burn benefits the environment and the creatures who live in fire-dependent ecosystems.



## Field Trip: November 18, Saturday. Birding at Central Winds Park



Central Winds Park is ranked #3 for eBird hotspots in Seminole County. It is located on the south shore of Lake Jesup and has a mix of upland and wetland birds.

Meet at the fishing pier at the end of Hicks Avenue at 7:30a.m. Central Winds Park, 1000 Central Winds Drive, Winter Springs. Moderate walking over uneven terrain.

**Limited to 15 people. Registration is required.** Contact Cecilia Carey at [cacarey@cfl.rr.com](mailto:cacarey@cfl.rr.com) for reservations.



# Upcoming Programs and Field Trips *Continued from page 8*

## North Shore Birding Festival.

**November 30-December 4, 2023**

There are 61 trips over 5 days.

Here's the link to the updated festival website schedule page:

<https://northshorebirdingfestival.com/schedule>.

Reservations for birding trips fill quickly so sign up as soon as you can.



## Program: December 10, Sunday. Inland Flooding from Rainstorm Events

Gabbie Milch is both the St. Johns River Middle Basin Coordinator and the Seminole Soil and Water Conservation District 4 Representative. Gabbie will discuss how climate change impacts our natural systems, water quality and quantity, inland flooding, and increased rainstorm events, as well as the possible impacts to the riparian zone of the river. Resilience is defined as "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties." In the context of climate change, resilience refers to the ability of a community or ecosystem to withstand and bounce back from a disturbance such as a natural



disaster. Gabbie will provide an update on the regional work being done by the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council in the middle St Johns River area, including the Regional Resilience Collaborative. She has been participating with this group since 2020.

## Field Trip: December 16, Saturday. 124<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count

This is the longest-running, citizen-science project in the world. SAS will form groups to survey in the Sanford area. The results will be used to help determine the long-term health and status of bird populations. Using a circle with a 15-mile diameter, SAS will concentrate on Zones 10 and 11 in Sanford and Lake Mary. No birding experience necessary. Beginning birders will be paired with more experienced birders. To volunteer, contact Leslie Martin at [woodstork.martin@gmail.com](mailto:woodstork.martin@gmail.com).



## Seminole County Gardening Expo 2024

**Saturday, February 24, 2024**

The Seminole County Gardening Expo 2024 will be held on Saturday, February 24, 2024 from 9a.m. to 3p.m. at 250 W County Home Road, Sanford, Florida.

Come visit us at our display tent.



# WELCOME

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

Judith Borrero  
Steven Cottrell  
Dixie Dabney  
Brenda Feliciano  
Maria L. Gonzalez  
Sharon Hall

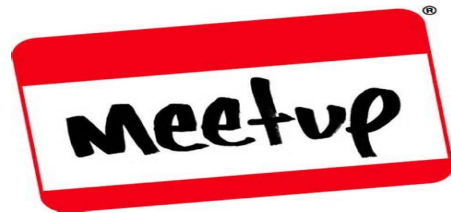
Sanford  
Winter Springs  
Sanford  
Orlando  
Sanford  
Oviedo

Maureen Camp Lavery  
Mario Mendez  
Frances Miller  
Liona Sheplan  
Glendoria Stephens

DeBary  
Deltona  
Lake Mary  
Altamonte Springs  
Deltona

**Keep Up With SAS**

Visit our website **SeminoleAudubon.org**



## Audubon Membership

Your membership contribution supports our chapter and makes you a partner in our mission to promote the awareness and protection of wildlife and the environment that supports it. In addition, you receive membership in the National Audubon Society and Audubon Florida including the Audubon and Florida Naturalist magazines.

Join on our website: <https://seminoleaudubon.org/membership/>

**Donations** are always appreciated to support chapter activities. Consider honoring someone with a donation to Seminole Audubon Society. Just click on the Donation icon on our website. Payment is with credit card or PayPal at <https://seminoleaudubon.org/>.



Image by nadzeyashanchuk/freeoik.com



## 2023-2024

### Board of Directors & Committee Chairs (eff. 7/1/23)

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

Board	Name	Term
President	Phyllis Hall	2022/2024
Vice President	Leslie Martin	2023/2026
Treasurer	Jan Peters	2023/2025
Secretary	Peggy Stickney	2022/2024
At-Large	Lewis Gray	2023/2025
At-Large	Tracey Comazzi	2023/2026
At-Large	Connie Dolan	2023/2025

*Per 9/11/2022 board meeting, keep the board at 7 members. Add a year to a term as needed to keep the terms balanced.*

### Committees

#### **Bird Surveys**

- The Big Sit! Leslie Martin
- Christmas Bird Count. Leslie Martin
- EagleWatch: Sarah Donlan, Michelle Vaughn, Chuck Honaker, Phyllis Hall
- Econ River Wilderness Area. Chuck Honaker (Chair)
- Jane Isle Survey: Lewis Gray (Chair), Marguerite Terwilleger, Leslie Martin
- Jay Watch: Chuck Honaker

**Conservation:** Phyllis Hall (Chair), Sam Kendall (Energy), Chuck Honaker, Sarah Donlan, Cecilia Carey, John Carey, Marguerite Terwilleger, Tracey Comazzi

**Conservation Leadership Initiative (CLI).** Phyllis Hall

**Crystal Lake Preserve (CLP).** Connie Dolan (Chair), Corrinne Wertz

**Butterfly Survey** co-chairs: Connie Dolan & Tracey Comazzi

**Education.** Garden clubs, libraries, schools and scouts, eco-camp, etc. Cecilia Carey (Chair), John Carey, Joy Rector

**History Archives.** Stored in Seminole County History Museum. Electronic files: Phyllis Hall

**The JAY Newsletter.** Tracey Comazzi (Chair), Corrinne Wertz

**Lake Monroe Purple Martin Nests.** Jim Peters (Chair), Jan Peters, John & Cecilia Carey

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

**New Member Welcome Letter.** Margaret Loring

#### **Media:**

- **Meetings PowerPoint, MailChimp, Meet Up, Facebook.** Cecilia Carey
- **Website.** Phyllis Hall

**Membership.** Marty Shepherd

**Outreach/Festivals.** Phyllis Hall (Chair), Marty Shepherd, Cecilia Carey, Leslie Martin, Joy Rector

**PO Box Mail Pickup.** Marty Shepherd (Backup: Marguerite Terwilleger)

**SAS Gmail Inbox.** Phyllis Hall (Backup: Cecilia Carey)

**Programs & Field Trips.** Phyllis Hall (Chair), Leslie Martin, Cecilia Carey. Release keeper: Peggy Stickney

**Scholarships Eco-Camp.** Marguerite Terwilleger (Chair), Corrinne Wertz, Joy Rector, Michelle Vaughn