

The JAY

January - February 2026



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.

Recognizing Marty Shepherd

By Phyllis Hall, President, Seminole Audubon Society



Phyllis Hall (left) and Marty Shepherd (right).

Photo by Leslie Martin

Marty has served as Membership Chair for Seminole Audubon Society (SAS) for over 20 years. Each month, she has downloaded the National Audubon member roster and updated her master spreadsheet. She then sent an update of new members to Corrinne Wertz in order for their names to be added to the next newsletter, and she included Joy Rector and Cecilia Carey who coordinate sending new member welcome letters to the new members. Marty also has answered all questions related to membership at meetings and throughout the year. She has participated in many outreach activities throughout the years including the Seminole Garden Expo. Marty has decided to take a well-deserved break as membership chair. She will continue to check SAS mail at the Post Office each week.

At the December 2025 program meeting, to show our appreciation, we gave Marty a framed photo by SAS member Jim Peters of the Purple Martin nests at Lake Monroe. This photo was selected from 140 submissions to be included in the 2026 Sanford calendar. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Marty for the countless hours she has dedicated to our chapter.

Seminole Forever Update

By Phyllis Hall

At their meeting on November 18, 2025, Seminole County Commissioners received an update on the recommendations for ten properties reviewed by the Acquisition and Restoration Committee (ARC). Rick Durr, Director of Seminole County's Parks & Recreation Department, gave the presentation. Each property was evaluated and scored by the ARC. The Commissioners voted to move forward with due diligence on these properties:

- Recommended for purchase by Florida Forever: Hi-Oaks (669.4 acres) and Lee Ranch (360 acres). Both properties are in the Florida Wildlife Corridor.
- Recommended for purchase by Seminole Forever: Buchholz (32.5 acres), de Arcos (203.8 acres) in partnership with St. Johns Water River Management District, and Lawlor (5.89 acres). *Continued on next page*

Seminole Forever Update Continued from page 1

The Lawlor property is in the area of the Park System Master Plan identified as a priority for neighborhood park development and is on the spur of the Seminole Wekiva Trail.

- The Lessard property (84.8 acres) could be purchased through the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant. This property is adjacent to Mullet Park and is in the floodplain.
- The Parker property (8.2 acres) could be acquired using other funds for stormwater management.
- The remaining properties will be held on the list for future consideration.

Applications may be received any time throughout the year. The next evaluation period will probably be at the end of 2026.

For more information on Seminole Forever, Seminole County's land acquisition program, please visit <https://www.seminolecountyfl.gov/departments-services/parks-recreation/parks-trails-and-natural-lands/seminole-forever/index>.

For more information on Florida Forever, the state's land acquisition program, please visit <https://floridadep.gov/lands/environmental-services/content/florida-forever>.

Rodman Reservoir Draw Down

By Marguerite Terwillegar and Leslie Martin

On December 5, 2025, we had the pleasure of joining Margaret Spontak, Executive Director of the Great Florida Riverway Trust, along with local officials and members of the media, to explore Rodman Reservoir during the draw down period. The reservoir impounds a section of the Ocklawaha River, which was dammed in 1968 as part of the Cross Florida Barge Canal project, construction of which was halted in 1971.

The draw down of the water level, which occurs every 3 or 4 years, offers a glimpse of the original river, its lost springs, and the remains of a flooded forest. The water has been lowered from 18 feet to 11 feet until March 15, 2026 to manage invasive aquatic vegetation and debris. Advocates hope to permanently restore the river to its natural flow.

The bird species highlight of the tour was an American Bittern, but seeing 6 Limpkins in a single tree was also very exciting!

Thank you, Margaret, for this remarkable opportunity!

Visit <https://www.floridastateparks.org/learn/rodman-reservoir-drawdown-faq> to learn more about the Rodman Dam Draw Down.



Great Egrets perched atop the remains of a forest which was flooded when the Ocklawaha River was dammed forming Rodman Dam.

Photo by Leslie Martin

Black Hammock Wilderness Area Bird Surveys

By Chuck Honaker, Florida Master Naturalist and Tracey Comazzi

This month concluded our year of monthly bird surveys at this Seminole County Natural Lands property. We want to thank the core group of SAS members and others who joined us in conducting the surveys: Joy Rector, Kate Dolamore, Connie Dolan, John & Cecilia Carey, Lewis Gray, Susan Angermeier, Lorri Lilja, Paul & Tracey Comazzi and other volunteers who helped intermittently during the year. We also want to acknowledge Ron Chicone, Natural Lands Biologist, and his interns from UCF who supported our efforts and joined the surveys at times. The total number of species seen in 2025 was 83!

In 2026, the surveys will be conducted at Lake Proctor Wilderness Area in Geneva. They will be held on the second Monday of every month beginning January 12, 2026. The team meets at 7:30 a.m. and surveys for 2.5-3 hours. Contact Chuck Honaker for details at cwh.jr@hotmail.com.

BHWA Bird Survey Data for 2025

Total Species to Date: 83	(Total species plus other taxa)	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Avg. Monthly Species: 27	Monthly Total Species:	35	36	18	24	30	32	19	24	25	40	21	23

Common Name	Scientific Name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Anhinga	(<i>Anhinga anhinga</i>)	x											
Blackbird, Red-winged	(<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>)		x										
Bluebird, Eastern (Eastern)*	(<i>Sialia sialis</i>)		x			x		x			x		
Bunting, Indigo	(<i>Passerina cyanea</i>)										x		
Cardinal, Northern	(<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Catbird, Gray	(<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>)	x	x	x	x						x	x	x
Chickadee, Carolina	(<i>Poecile carolinensis</i>)	x											
Crane, Sandhill	(<i>Antigone canadensis</i>)	x	x	x	x						x		x
Crow, American	(<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Crow, Fish	(<i>Corvus ossifragus</i>)	x	x	x							x		x
Cuckoo, Yellow-billed	(<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>)										x		
Dove, Common Ground	(<i>Columbina passerina</i>)					x	x	x	x	x			
Dove, Mourning	(<i>Zenaida macroura</i>)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Duck, Black-bellied Whistling	(<i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>)					x	x						x
Duck, Wood	(<i>Aix sponsa</i>)										x		
Eagle, Bald	(<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	x	x		x						x	x	x
Egret, Great	(<i>Ardea alba</i>)					x	x				x	x	x
Egret, Snowy	(<i>Egretta thula</i>)							x					
Egret, Western Cattle	(<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>)					x		x	x				
Flicker, Northern (Yellow-shafted)	(<i>Colaptes auratus</i>)	x										x	
Flycatcher, Great Crested	(<i>Myiarchus crinitus</i>)				x	x	x		x				
Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray	(<i>Polioptila caerulea</i>)				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Goldfinch, American	(<i>Spinus tristis</i>)				x								
Grackle, Common	(<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>)	x	x	x		x	x				x		x
Gull, Ring-billed	(<i>Larus delawarensis</i>)	x											
Harrier, Northern	(<i>Circus hudsonius</i>)	x											
Hawk, Red-shouldered	(<i>Buteo lineatus</i>)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Hawk, Red-tailed	(<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)										x		x
Hawk, Short-tailed	(<i>Buteo brachyurus</i>)		x										x
Heron, Little Blue	(<i>Egretta caerulea</i>)	x		x									
Hummingbird, Ruby-throated	(<i>Archilochus colubris</i>)				x				x				
Ibis, White	(<i>Eudocimus albus</i>)	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x

Continued on next page

BHWA Bird Survey Data for 2025

Continued from page 3

Common Name	Scientific Name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Jay, Blue	(<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>)	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		
Junglefowl, Red (Domestic type)**	(<i>Gallus gallus</i>)						x						
Kestrel, American	(<i>Falco sparverius</i>)	x									x		
Killdeer	(<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>)	x	x										
Kinglet, Ruby-crowned	(<i>Corthylio calendula</i>)	x	x									x	
Kite, Swallow-tailed	(<i>Elanoides forficatus</i>)						x	x					
Mockingbird, Northern	(<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	x					x						
Nighthawk, Common	(<i>Chordeiles minor</i>)									x			
Nuthatch, Brown-headed	(<i>Sitta pusilla</i>)	x				x					x		
Osprey	(<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>)								x				
Ovenbird	(<i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>)									x	x		
Owl, Barred	(<i>Strix varia</i>)		x							x			
Parula, Northern	(<i>Setophaga americana</i>)	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Phoebe, Eastern	(<i>Sayornis phoebe</i>)	x	x								x		
Redstart, American	(<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>)					x			x		x		
Robin, American	(<i>Turdus migratorius</i>)	x	x	x								x	
Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied	(<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>)		x								x		
Shrike, Loggerhead	(<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)												x
Snipe, Wilson's	(<i>Gallinago delicata</i>)											x	
Sparrow, Swamp	(<i>Melospiza georgiana</i>)									x	x		
Stork, Wood	(<i>Mycteria americana</i>)	x				x	x						
Swallow, Barn	(<i>Hirundo rustica</i>)								x	x			
Swallow, Tree	(<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>)		x										
Swift, Chimney	(<i>Chaetura pelasgica</i>)					x		x		x			
Thrasher, Brown	(<i>Toxostoma rufum</i>)						x		x		x		
Thrush, Gray-cheeked	(<i>Catharus minimus</i>)										x		
Titmouse, Tufted	(<i>Baeolophus bicolor</i>)	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Towhee, Eastern (White-eyed)***	(<i>Pipilo erythrrophthalmus</i> ssp.)	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Turkey, Wild	(<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>)						x				x		
Vireo, Blue-headed	(<i>Vireo solitarius</i>)										x		
Vireo, Red-eyed	(<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>)				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Vireo, White-eyed	(<i>Vireo griseus</i>)		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Vireo, Yellow-throated	(<i>Vireo flavifrons</i>)								x				
Vulture, Black	(<i>Coragyps atratus</i>)	x	x		x	x	x	x			x	x	x
Vulture, Turkey	(<i>Cathartes aura</i>)	x	x		x	x	x				x	x	
Warbler, Black-and-White	(<i>Mniotilla varia</i>)								x	x	x		
Warbler, Palm	(<i>Setophaga palmarum</i>)		x							x	x	x	
Warbler, Palm (Western)	(<i>Setophaga palmarum</i> ssp.)	x											
Warbler, Palm (Yellow)	(<i>Setophaga palmarum</i> ssp.)		x										
Warbler, Pine	(<i>Setophaga pinus</i>)		x				x		x		x		x
Warbler, Yellow-rumped	(<i>Setophaga coronata</i>)	x	x								x	x	x
Warbler, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle)	(<i>Setophaga coronata coronata</i>)	x	x	x									
Warbler, Yellow-throated	(<i>Setophaga dominica</i>)									x			
Waxwing, Cedar	(<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>)		x										
Woodpecker, Downy	(<i>Dryobates pubescens</i>)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Woodpecker, Pileated	(<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Woodpecker, Red-bellied	(<i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Woodpecker, Red-headed	(<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>)	x		x									
Wren, Carolina	(<i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i>)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Wren, Northern House	(<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>)										x	x	
Yellowthroat, Common	(<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>)					x					x		x

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BHWA 2025 Bird Survey Data for 2025 Continued from page 4

* According to the Florida Bluebird Society, eBird now uses Eastern Bluebird (Eastern) (*Sialia sialis*) for the Eastern Bluebirds seen in Florida.

** The Red Junglefowl is a species native to Southeast Asia and the ancestor of domestic chickens. eBird recognizes the non-native chicken as Red Junglefowl (Domestic type) (*Gallus gallus domesticus* or *Gallus domesticus*)¹.

*** The full scientific name for the White-eyed Towhee is *Pipilo erythrophthalmus allenii/rileyi*.

According to the Audubon phone app, Eastern Towhees we see in Florida and parts of the southeast have white eyes which can appear somewhat yellow. The northern Eastern Towhees have red eyes. While southern birds are typically permanent residents, northern populations move short distances south to winter in the southeastern United States.

1. Eda M. Origin of the domestic chicken from modern biological and zooarchaeological approaches. *Anim Front.* 2021 Jun 19;11(3):52-61. doi: 10.1093/af/vfab016. PMID: 34158989; PMCID: PMC8214436.

Volusia Audubon Field Trip and Social

By Jim and Jan Peters

At the invitation of the Volusia Audubon to the Seminole Audubon, several members of Seminole attended a field trip and social on November 20 at the Marine Discovery Center (MDC) in New Smyrna. Bud Swiger and Joan Ramsey along with Jim and Jan Peters attended the evening event. A number of birds were identified during a birding walk in the MDC's large nature area. It includes an actual skeleton

of a Right Whale and a Motus wildlife tracking system. This Canada-based system was recently installed at the MDC to study the movement and behavior of birds, bats, and insects. There are 17 such units in Florida, about 1,000 in the American continents with a total of 2,344 stations around the world. These units receive signals from transmitters attached to creatures as small as butterflies up to large birds. So far this Fall, the Volusia tracking system has been "pinged" by three birds, including one from Nova Scotia.



An actual Right Whale skeleton.

Photo by Jim Peters

After the field trip, the group adjourned to the Tiki Bar in New

Smyrna Beach for a social hour and meal. Jim and Jan enjoyed conversation with a couple who had met on a birding field trip. Bud and Joan were former active members of the Volusia Audubon so enjoyed meeting their friends once again.



Field trip spotting birds within the MDC nature center.

Motus Antenna, above left, and in the foreground above right with the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse in the background.

Photos by: Jim Peters

Program and Field Trip Notes:

May All Your Blues be Birds Presentation by Faith Jones

Sunday, November 9, 2025

Faith is a founding member of the Florida Bluebird Society and currently serves on their Board of Directors. She was the former Secretary, President, and Birding Instructor of SAS. Bluebirds are part of the Thrush family and are unique to the Americas. There are 3 species: Western, Mountain, and Eastern. They hunt from a perch and they like open fields. They were abundant when early farmers provided nest boxes for them, but, with the introduction of invasive house sparrows and European Starlings in the 19th Century and loss of habitat, bluebird numbers declined. Today, they are more stable thanks to the nestboxes people are providing. Other threats to bluebirds are: the Cuban tree frog that likes to shelter in their nestboxes, insecticides which poison the insects they eat and insecticide-treated seeds. Outdoor cats are another threat. They kill over 3.9 billion birds annually worldwide. Bluebirds produce 2-3 clutches a year with 4-7 eggs in each clutch. In Florida, nesting begins in January and they build their nests in 2-6 days. Eggs are incubated for 12-14 days and the young fledge in 16-21 days.

Bluebird nestboxes should have an entrance of 1½" in diameter with no perch. Chickadees and Tufted Titmouses might also nest in them as well as the invasive non-native house sparrow. Nestboxes should be spaced 100 yards apart and have good ventilation and drainage openings. The roof should be large enough to keep out rain, provide shade and

keep predators like the Red-shouldered Hawk from reaching through the entrance. Predator guards should be added to prevent cats, racoons, and snakes from accessing the nest. Nestboxes should be cleaned out at the end of each nesting season. Nestbox "Principles and Nestbox Monitoring Protocol", including cleaning, is available on the Florida Bluebird Society website under Resources. More information and how to contact the Florida Bluebird Society can be found at [Florida Bluebird Society | Dedicated to the conservation and protection of bluebirds](http://floridabluebirdsociety.org). Find nestbox plans at https://floridabluebirdsociety.org/bluebird_nestbox/.

You can help Eastern Bluebirds by planting native plants that provide seeds and insects for them to eat. Provide a nestbox on your property if you can and keep cats indoors.

Jim Peters, SAS member, makes bluebird nest boxes for the Florida Bluebird Society and he brought his latest batch to the meeting. He has made 150 boxes so far!



Jim Peters with a few of the bluebird nest boxes he has made.

Photo by: Jan Peters



Faith Jones (left) with longtime members Launa Orr (center) and Joy Rector (right)
Photo by: Brenda Orr

Sylvan Lake Park Field Trip

Saturday, November 15, 2025

by Chuck Honaker, Florida Master Naturalist

It was perfect weather for a field trip. I guided 24 enthusiastic birders and other participants on the approximately 1.5-mile easy Loop Trail hike at Sylvan Lake Park in northwest Seminole County. Many locals and some people from Deltona and Melbourne were making their first visit to this popular park. It is known for its soccer fields and tennis center, but it also borders beautiful Sylvan Lake. The park features a refurbished lakeside ADA*-approved boardwalk that meanders through the marsh-like part of the lake. It features swamp sawgrass, water lilies, Dahoon holly and pine trees, affording a great view of the lake.

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Program and Field Trip Notes: *Continued from page 6*

Sylvan Lake Park Field Trip

The trail starts near the park entrance and skirts the soccer fields as it takes an easterly course toward the lake. The walking path is bordered by sand live oaks, turkey oaks and pine trees. Once the trail gets near the lake, the noise and people from the soccer fields are left behind and the park becomes a calm and very natural setting.

There is a small fishing pier that is accessed from a wooded cul-de-sac parking area which is close to a grassy area on the lake. This is a great area for stationary birding. One can also drive directly to it from the entrance. This is where our group was excited to see



The Red-Shouldered Hawk was perched only a few feet off the ground, unperturbed by all the people watching it.

Photo by: Paul Comazzi

the white-tailed deer and the variety of birds, which included Yellow-throated Warblers, a Blue-headed Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-bellied and Piliated Woodpeckers, Tufted Titmouses, Pine Warblers, Blue Jays, Eastern Phoebe, a Red-shouldered Hawk, and others.

After leaving the lakeshore, the trail heads northwest and again a short boardwalk crosses another wet area before returning to the paved trail that heads west to the entrance. As the hike neared its end, we walked along the soccer fields and continued to see birds that were active

despite people and noise nearby—a Downy Woodpecker and a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Palm and Pine warblers, even an Eastern Bluebird was perched for a close-up view. Our main eBird species list stood at 27 different species.

If you have not visited Sylvan Lake Park, I encourage visiting on a weekday for a quieter venue. However, as we found on our Saturday hike, the park still affords a great, natural place on weekends to enjoy birding or an easy walking trail in a beautiful natural area along the lake.

*American Disabilities Act



Sylvan Lake Field Trip Group

Photos by: Tracey Comazzi



Field trip members resting on the refurbished boardwalk.

Photo by Chuck Honaker

Birding at Ponce Inlet and a Birdy Christmas Card by Joan Tague

Sunday, December 14, 2025

Joan is the President of Halifax River Audubon and a guide on the Marine Discovery Center's Winter Bird Tours as well as a guide for the Northshore Birding Festival. Joan got her start in birding when she first went to the Pittsburgh Aviary where there were over 900 species from around the world. Charadriiformes is a diverse order of birds that includes approximately 390 species across 19 families. The suborder Charadrii includes shorebirds or waders such as sandpipers, plovers, and snipes. There are around 220 species in this group which are primarily found in coastal and freshwater environments.

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Program and Field Trip Notes: *Continued from page 7*

Identifying shorebirds can be challenging but rewarding. Be patient with yourself; spend time observing the birds and go with guides when you can. Joan showed photos of many species and provided tips on how to identify them by color, size, and behavior. For example, the Black-bellied Plover takes 3-4 steps and does a foot pat. When it takes off, you can see the black "arm pit." They breed in the Arctic tundra where there is a plentiful supply of food and nesting sites. The Wilson's Plover is very coastal. Its beak is almost square, short, and blunted. It has one neck band and rests on the dunes. A good resource for identifying shorebirds is the laminated guide "Shorebirds of North America: A Comprehensive Guide to All Species" by Kevin T. Karlson.

Joan also presented an interesting background on the birds in the song "The 12 Days of Christmas." The origins of the song are old English and Scottish so the birds are European. The 1st day is the Gray Partridge, 2nd day is the European Turtle Dove, 3rd day is the French Hen (jungle fowl/chicken), 4th day is the Eurasian Blackbird (Colly Bird), 5th day is the Yellowhammer (Scottish word is Yoldring), 6th day is Graylag Geese, 7th day is the Mute Swan, 8th day is the Nightjar (known colloquially as goat suckers), 9th day is the Black Grouse, 10th day are cranes, 11th day are pipers, 12th day drummers are woodpeckers. It really was all about the birds!



Joan Tague
Photo by Phyllis Hall



Black-bellied Plover

Left: Adult in breeding plumage.

Photo by Brian Kushner/
Audubon Photography Awards

Right: Non-breeding adult.
This is the typical plumage
observed in Florida.

Photo by Scott Kinsey/
Audubon Photography Awards



Upcoming Programs and Field Trips

Meetings are held on the second Sunday of the month at 2:00 p.m.

Meeting Location:

IFAS Extension Education Building

University of Florida/IFAS

Extension Seminole County

250 W. County Home Rd. (off 17/92)

Sanford, FL 32773

Seminole County Natural Lands Monthly Bird Surveys

Lake Proctor Wilderness Area in Geneva has been selected for the 2026 Seminole County Natural Lands bird surveys. Surveys are held on the 2nd Monday of each month from 7:30-10:30 a.m.

If you would like to help with these surveys and for site confirmation of the first survey, contact Chuck Honaker at cwh.jr@hotmail.com. All levels of birding experience are welcome.

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Upcoming Programs and Field Trips Continued from page 8

Program: January 11, 2026, Sunday. Florida Scrub-Jays by Alan Alshouse



Photo by Paul Comazzi

Learn about this round-headed, blue and gray Florida Scrub-Jay including its habitat and lifecycle. It is the only bird species that lives exclusively in Florida, where it occurs in patches of low-growing scrub oak in sandy soils. Extensive development and habitat fragmentation in Florida threaten this bird's already small population, placing it on the federal endangered species list. Conserving and managing its habitat is essential for its survival. Alan will also explain how habitat is managed at Yankee Lake Treatment Facility, the only habitat in Seminole County for Florida Scrub-Jays. Along with Audubon Florida, SAS played a key role in preserving this habitat in 1993 during the planning of the treatment facility.

Alan Alshouse is a wildlife ecologist, previously with Alshouse & Associates, LLC, a multi-service environmental consulting firm based in Central Florida that provides services throughout North America. Alan consults with private and public landowners in the areas of wildlife, forest, range, aquatics, prescribed fire, ecosystem management, permitting, land acquisition, invasive/exotic plant control and wildlife diseases. He is currently with Environmental Science Associates, which manages the Yankee Lake Florida Scrub-Jay habitat among other projects.

Field Trip: January 16, Friday. Yankee Lake Treatment Facility: Florida 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. Restroom in the administration building. We will be riding in the management company's pickup trucks. We may be joined on the tour by County administration staff. All levels and ages of birders are welcome. 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.

Limited to 12 people. Reservation is required. Contact Phyllis Hall at: phylliscath814@gmail.com

Field Trip: January 17, Saturday. Lyonia Nature Preserve

Lyonia Preserve is a joint project of Volusia County, the Volusia County School Board and the State of Florida to provide environmental education to the public and restore and maintain habitat for scrub-dependent species, including the threatened scrub jay and gopher tortoise. The preserve, named after the scrub plant rusty lyonia, consists of 360 acres of restored Florida scrub habitat. Our tour guide, Stephen Kintner, is a volunteer at the preserve and VP/Conservation Chair of West Volusia Audubon. All levels and ages of birders are welcome. Moderate walking over uneven terrain. Restrooms available in the Environmental Center. Donations to the preserve are appreciated. Meet at 8:00 am at the Lyonia Environmental Center, 2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona. **Limited to 15 people. Reservation is required.** Contact Chuck Honaker at: cwh.jr@hotmail.com



Program: February 8, 2026, Sunday. How to Landscape for Bird Habitat by Fred Milch

Fred will provide an overview of Low Impact Development (LID). LID is a land planning and engineering design approach to manage stormwater runoff as part of green infrastructure. It emphasizes conservation and use of on-site natural features to protect water quality. Fred will explain how he worked with his Wekiva HOA so they could understand how traditional landscaping is adversely impacting Wekiva Springs and the river. The HOA subsequently changed how they address violations and are more tolerant of yards that include more native vegetation. These techniques will help us provide a better landscape for wildlife, especially birds.

Fred Milch is retired from East Central Florida Regional Planning Council where he coordinated the Development of Regional Impact review program, Low Impact Development training, local comprehensive plan and ordinance writing, grant management, hurricane preparedness studies and traffic impact studies. He attended the University of Wisconsin and Texas A&M University for his Masters in Urban and Regional Planning.

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Upcoming Programs and Field Trips *Continued from page 9*

Field Trip: February 12, 2026, Thursday. Orlando Wetlands Park



Photo by: Tracey

Join us for birding on a guided tram tour of the park. Enjoy visiting the new education center and walking on the boardwalk. This is a premier birding area where over 220 bird species have been documented. Moderate walking over uneven terrain to the boardwalk. All levels and ages of birders are welcome. Meet at the parking lot at 8:00 a.m. at 25155 Wheeler Road, Christmas, FL 32709. Restrooms are available.

Limited to 16 people. Reservations required beginning in January.

Contact Cecilia Carey at: cacarey@cfl.rr.com.

Annual Meeting Notice: March 8, 2026

The annual meeting to vote on upcoming board terms will take place at the March 8 monthly program meeting. If you would like to be on the board or have a nomination for the board, please contact SeminoleAudubon@gmail.com.

Other Programs and Events

February 21, 2025, Saturday. Seminole Garden Expo

9:00 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Seminole County Extension Service

250 W. County Home Road

Sanford, FL 32773



February 13-16, 2026. The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual event that invites people from around the world to observe and count the birds in their local areas. This community science project helps researchers gather valuable data on bird populations and movements, contributing to global conservation efforts.

How to Participate

- Choose Your Location:** You can participate from your backyard, a local park, or any place where you can observe birds.
- Count Birds:** Spend at least 15 minutes observing and counting the birds you see or hear. You can do this on one or more of the four days of the event.
- Report Your Observations:** After counting, submit your bird list online through the GBBC website or via platforms like eBird or Merlin.

[Great Backyard Bird Count – Join us each February when the world comes together to watch, learn about, count, and celebrate birds.](#)

Marine Discovery Center Winter Birding Tours 2026



Photo by Jim Peters

Marine Discovery Center's (MDC) Winter Birding Tours return in 2026 to offer avian enthusiasts an opportunity to observe migratory birds. The first tour is set for Wednesday, January 28, 2026.

MDC's Winter Birding Tours give guests a chance to learn more about many shorebird species from naturalists and local Audubon chapter leaders. The tours offer transportation to Disappearing Island onboard MDC's Discovery boat.

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Marine Discovery Center Winter Birding Tours 2026

The tours will be offered once a month during January, March and April. The 2026 tours are set for the following dates and departure times:

- Wednesday, Jan. 28 - from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 18 – from 1-4 p.m.
- Wednesday, April 15 – from 1-4 p.m.

Cost per person for the 3-hour tours will be: \$55 for adults; \$52 for seniors (62+) and students; and \$37 for children under 12. Children participating on these tours must be under adult supervision at all times.

The Discovery boat will leave from the dock at 116 North Causeway in New Smyrna Beach and head to Disappearing Island at Ponce Inlet. Guests will disembark at Disappearing Island and walk the shoreline at low tide to view a variety of migratory species only seen in this area during the winter months.

The February Winter Birding Tour will be a joint expedition with MDC's Forever Explorers program – an adult outdoor education program geared for participants age 18 and over. That trip will be a 2.5-hour trip on Wednesday, Feb. 25, from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The goal is to expose Forever Explorer participants to a specific birding event, while also informing avid birders about the Forever Explorers program. Cost for the February Forever Explorers/Winter Birding trip will be: (MDC members) \$60 per person and (non-members) \$65 per person.

For more information about Forever Explorers or to make a reservation, visit marinediscoverycenter.org/forever-explorers.

Guests on all tours are encouraged to bring binoculars, viewing scopes, water, snacks and to wear comfortable, water-tolerant shoes to walk along the shoreline.

The Discovery is a 40-passenger boat equipped with an emergency marine head (toilet). Stairs will be provided for guests to disembark at Disappearing Island.

Call the Marine Discovery Center at 386-428-4828 or visit www.marinediscoverycenter.org to make reservations.



Source: <https://marinediscoverycenter.org/boat-tours/>



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.

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



WELCOME

New Members or New to Our Chapter !

Stephen Chontas

Linda Coetzee

Jayma Caroline Edman

Marcia Fenton

Lake Mary

Deltona

Sanford

Sanford

Linda McGraw

Vanessa Suarez

Renee Thompson

Deltona

Deltona

Sanford

The National Audubon Society has updated and is still refining its roster system. If you are a new member and do not see your name here, be sure to sign up on our website, www.seminoleaudubon.org, and select "Join Our Newsletter" to be included on our mailing list.

Keep Up With SAS



Visit our website at <https://seminoleaudubon.org/>



Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/seminoleaudubonsociety/>



Find us on Meetup at <https://www.meetup.com/seminoleaudubon-com/>

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/>.

Jay Newsletter Articles

If you would like to submit an article for the Jay newsletter, contact SeminoleAudubon@gmail.com for information on the deadline for the next issue as well as the guidelines for submission.

2025-2026
Board of Directors & Committee Chairs (eff. 7/1/25)
SeminoleAudubon@gmail.com

Board	Name	Term
President	Phyllis Hall	2024/2026
Vice President	Leslie Martin	2023/2026
Treasurer	Jan Peters	2025/2027
Secretary	Peggy Stickney	2024/2026
At-Large	Lewis Gray	2025/2027
At-Large	Tracey Comazzi	2023/2026
At-Large	Connie Dolan	2025/2027
At-Large	John Carey	2025/2027

Committees

Bird Surveys:

- **The Big Sit!** Leslie Martin
- **Christmas Bird Count.** Leslie Martin
- **EagleWatch.** Sarah Donlan, Chuck Honaker, Phyllis Hall
- **Seminole County Natural Lands.** Chuck Honaker (Chair)
- **Jane Isle Survey.** Lewis Gray (Chair), Marguerite Terwillegger, Leslie Martin
- **Jay Watch.** Chuck Honaker

Conservation. Chuck Honaker (Chair), Phyllis Hall (Co-chair), Sam Kendall, Sarah Donlan, Cecilia Carey, John Carey, Marguerite Terwillegger, Tracey Comazzi, Fred Milch, Norman Moss

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

- **CLP 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 Carey, Cecilia Carey

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

New Member Welcome Letter. Joy Rector

Media:

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

Membership. Marty Shepherd

Nominating Committee. Phyllis Hall (Chair), Leslie Martin, Marguerite Terwillegger

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

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

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

Programs & Field Trips. Phyllis Hall (Chair), Leslie Martin, Cecilia Carey, Connie Dolan, John Carey, Chuck Honaker. Release keeper: Peggy Stickney

Scholarships, Eco-Camp. Marguerite Terwillegger (Chair), Corrinne Wertz, Joy Rector