

# The JAY

March - April - May 2026



[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.*

## Purple Martin Gourd Raising for 2026 Season

By Jim Peters, Chairman, Purple Martin Committee

On January 14, 2026, a group of 20 volunteers from the Seminole Audubon Society (SAS), SE Volusia Audubon Society, and City of Sanford Staff "raised the gourds" in Sanford for the 2026 Purple Martin season. There are two new sites in addition to the existing two at the Sanford Marina. A new pole with 18 gourds was added along Lake Monroe near the Marina Isles Assisted Living Center, and another new pole, also with 18 gourds, was installed across from the hospital and along Lake Monroe.

The City ordered two new commercial-grade poles and 36 gourds in the Fall of 2025 and work began on their installation on December 31, 2025. Three City staff and Jim Peters poured two concrete foundations adjacent to Lake Monroe. On January 8, 2026, Jim and Jan Peters, along with Kristin Broadway, assembled the two new poles and City Staff inserted the poles into the foundations. Kristin Broadway and her son had fitted the 36 new gourds with crow-guard tunnels to prevent crow intrusion.



Volunteers for the 2026 Purple Martin Gourd Raising at Sanford Marina

Photo by Tish Hart

On the day of the gourd-raising, volunteers gathered at the Sanford Marina to help stuff the gourds with pine straw. Opening remarks were made by Phyllis Hall, Seminole Audubon Society President, and a purple ribbon was cut at the new installation at the Marina Isles Assisted Living Center. Participants then attached the gourds to the poles' supporting arms. Three poles with a total of 54 gourds were then raised to their 2026 season height of 16 feet: two at the original site and one at the Assisted Living Center. While these habitats were

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# Purple Martin Gourd Raising for 2026 Season Continued from page 1

being assembled, Jim and Jan Peters raised 18 gourds at the hospital location. Three Purple Martin decoys were placed on the two newest poles to lure the Purple Martins to these sites. At 72 gourds on four poles, this season brings a record number of homes ready to welcome Purple Martin arrivals from Brazil.

Last year, the first sightings were on February 8th by Kristin Broadway. This year, Kristin spotted two Purple Martins at the nesting habitats on the 15th and when Jim checked three days later, the number had grown to 13! When Jim visited the sites on the 20th, the birds on the original pole were too numerous to count.

## The 2026 Raising the Purple Martin Gourds at Sanford Marina



Above from Left to Right: City of Sanford staff installing the new foundations, pole assembly by Jan and Jim Peters, City staff installing a pole.  
Photos by Jim Peters



Left to Right: The City staff who made this happen are : Matt Coleman, Patrick Higgins, Henry Dye, Dantav Tillman, and Edric Diaz.  
Photo by Tish Hart



Ribbon-cutting  
Photo by Tish Hart



Volunteers stuffing gourds with pine straw  
Photo by Tish Hart



Raising one of the poles  
Photo by Tish Hart



Jim and Jan Peters at the new hospital nesting habitat.  
Photo by Jim Peters



Right: The first Purple Martins to arrive  
Photo by Kristin Broadway

# Lake Proctor Wilderness Area Bird Surveys

By Chuck Honaker, Florida Master Naturalist and Tracey Comazzi



Lake Proctor Wilderness Area  
Photo by Chuck Honaker

A new year brings a new Seminole County Natural Lands property into the survey fold. Monday, January 12th, saw the initial bird survey of 2026 by a Seminole Audubon Society (SAS) group of volunteers at Lake Proctor Wilderness Area (LPWA). This 475-acre property lies to the east of the town of Geneva in Central Florida. If you have not visited the area before, you might want to start at the Geneva museum and cemetery for some local history. Next, you can explore the trails within the wilderness area.

The main red trail is a 2.6-mile loop, which allows for views of Lake Proctor and traverses various habitats such as sand hills, oak hammock and pine flat woods. There are shorter trails, which wander into the sandhill area or follow the edge of the lake. In the rainy season, some trails may be flooded. This property is also a key recharge area for the Geneva area aquifer.

The survey team recorded 43 species including two Red-headed Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) that had been heard only during last year's October Bio-Blitz. We were able to take photographs and hear

them drumming on various dead pine trees. Other species of note were flocks of American Robins in flight, Pine Warblers and other warblers, Wood Ducks on the lake, always awesome Bald Eagles and Brown-headed Nuthatches that were seen on a snag near the end of our hike. Below is a summary of the birds observed at LPWA in January and February this year.

It is a quiet, well-maintained property with marked trails and our group of five surveyors had it all to ourselves. We could clearly hear a Barred Owl and Sandhill Cranes calling. This site also accommodates equestrians on the trails, so be sure to check it out.

The surveys are at 7:30 a.m. the 2nd Monday of each month. If you would like to participate, email Chuck at [cwh.jr@hotmail.com](mailto:cwh.jr@hotmail.com). You'll find more property details and maps at [www.seminolecountyfl.gov/leisure/natland/](http://www.seminolecountyfl.gov/leisure/natland/) or call 407-349-0959.

## LPWA Bird Survey Data for 2026

<b>Total Species to Date: 43</b>	<b>(Total species plus other taxa)</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>
<b>Avg. Monthly Species: 41</b>	<b>Monthly Total Species:</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>43</b>

Common Name	Scientific Name	Jan	Feb
Anhinga	( <i>Anhinga anhinga</i> )		x
Bluebird, Eastern (Eastern)*	( <i>Sialia sialis ssp.</i> )	x	x
Bobwhite, Northern	( <i>Colinus virginianus</i> )		x
Cardinal, Northern	( <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i> )	x	x
Catbird, Gray	( <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i> )	x	x
Chickadee, Carolina	( <i>Poecile carolinensis</i> )	x	x
Crane, Sandhill	( <i>Antigone canadensis</i> )	x	x
Crow, American	( <i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i> )	x	x
Crow, Fish	( <i>Corvus ossifragus</i> )	x	x
Dove, Mourning	( <i>Zenaida macroura</i> )	x	x
Duck, Ring-necked	( <i>Aythya collaris</i> )		x
Duck, Wood	( <i>Aix sponsa</i> )	x	x
Eagle, Bald	( <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> )	x	x



Bald Eagle at LPWA  
Photo by Chuck Honaker

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# LPWA Bird Survey Data for 2026 Continued from page 3

<b>Total Species to Date: 43</b>	<b>(Total species plus other taxa)</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>
<b>Avg. Monthly Species: 41</b>	<b>Monthly Total Species:</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>43</b>

Common Name	Scientific Name	Jan	Feb
Egret, Great	( <i>Ardea alba</i> )		x
Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray	( <i>Polioptila caerulea</i> )	x	x
Grackle, Boat-tailed	( <i>Quiscalus major</i> )		x
Grackle, Common	( <i>Quiscalus quiscula</i> )	x	x
Grebe, Pied-billed	( <i>Podilymbus podiceps</i> )		x
Hawk, Red-shouldered	( <i>Buteo lineatus</i> )	x	x
Heron, Little Blue	( <i>Egretta caerulea</i> )		x
Jay, Blue	( <i>Cyanocitta cristata</i> )	x	x
Kestrel, American	( <i>Falco sparverius</i> )	x	
Killdeer	( <i>Charadrius vociferus</i> )		x
Kingfisher, Belted	( <i>Megaceryle alcyon</i> )	x	x
Kinglet, Ruby-crowned	( <i>Corthylio calendula</i> )	x	x
Mockingbird, Northern	( <i>Mimus polyglottos</i> )	x	x
Nuthatch, Brown-headed	( <i>Sitta pusilla</i> )	x	x
Owl, Barred	( <i>Strix varia</i> )	x	
Phoebe, Eastern	( <i>Sayornis phoebe</i> )	x	x
Robin, American	( <i>Turdus migratorius</i> )	x	
Shrike, Loggerhead	( <i>Lanius ludovicianus</i> )		x
Sparrow, Swamp	( <i>Melospiza georgiana</i> )		x
Swallow, Tree	( <i>Tachycineta bicolor</i> )		x
Titmouse, Tufted	( <i>Baeolophus bicolor</i> )	x	x
Towhee, Eastern (White-eyed)**	( <i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i> ssp.)	x	x
Turkey, Wild	( <i>Meleagris gallopavo</i> )	x	
Vireo, Blue-headed	( <i>Vireo solitarius</i> )	x	
Vireo, White-eyed	( <i>Vireo griseu</i> )		x
Vulture, Black	( <i>Coragyps atratus</i> )	x	x
Vulture, Turkey	( <i>Cathartes aura</i> )	x	
Warbler, Black-and-White	( <i>Mniotilta varia</i> )		x
Warbler, Palm	( <i>Setophaga palmarum</i> )	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
Warbler, Yellow-rumped	( <i>Setophaga coronata</i> )	x	x
Woodpecker, Downy	( <i>Dryobates pubescens</i> )	x	x
Woodpecker, Pileated	( <i>Dryocopus pileatus</i> )	x	x
Woodpecker, Red-bellied	( <i>Melanerpes carolinus</i> )	x	x
Woodpecker, Red-headed	( <i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i> )	x	x
Wren, Carolina	( <i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i> )	x	
Wren, Northern House	( <i>Troglodytes aedon</i> )	x	
Yellowthroat, Common	( <i>Geothlypis trichas</i> )	x	



Eastern Bluebird  
Photo by John Carey



Downy Woodpecker  
Photo by John Carey



Tree Swallow  
Photo by John Carey

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

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

# Rodent-Proofing Your Home Safely

By Phyllis Hall and Tracey Comazzi

With many wildlife species struggling to survive after the recent winter freeze, many people are providing nectar for hummingbirds, bees and butterflies. Helping the more vulnerable species survive until natural food sources return and insect populations rebuild themselves is essential, and so is protecting the larger species we tend to think can look out for themselves, like our predators. They are no match, however, for the toxins used to control rodent populations. These toxins do not just poison the rodent, they poison whatever consumes that rodent after it has been poisoned, including dogs and cats. Killing the very creatures that naturally control rodents makes no sense. Stopping rodents from becoming a nuisance does. For more information on rodent-proofing and safer alternatives to rodenticides, please visit:

[https://cityofsafetyharbor.com/DocumentCenter/View/16140/Are-You-Poisoning-Wildlife-and-Pets?fbclid=IwDGRleAP2uONleHRuA2FlbQlxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZA8xNzM4NDc2NDI2NzAzNzAAAR7MQV5-hNqm1LrUWUr3sSquWGW3t81iVE7wmKi3\\_jc98VWyLidYqWo4qnlFhw\\_aem\\_PpKDMovDYXCe7ZO4ji-lfA](https://cityofsafetyharbor.com/DocumentCenter/View/16140/Are-You-Poisoning-Wildlife-and-Pets?fbclid=IwDGRleAP2uONleHRuA2FlbQlxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZA8xNzM4NDc2NDI2NzAzNzAAAR7MQV5-hNqm1LrUWUr3sSquWGW3t81iVE7wmKi3_jc98VWyLidYqWo4qnlFhw_aem_PpKDMovDYXCe7ZO4ji-lfA)

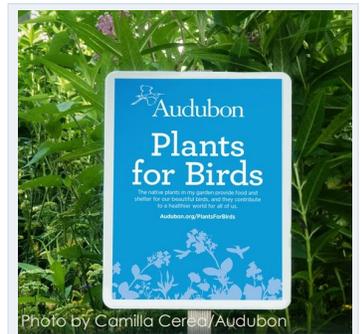
## How You Can Help with Conservation Issues!

Sign up for the Audubon Florida Advocate newsletter. You will also receive notices so you can contact appropriate legislators easily using Audubon Florida's letters. Every voice counts!

Use the following link to sign up: [Policy and Advocacy in Florida | Audubon](#)

## Volunteers Needed at the New Goldsboro Museum

Last year, Seminole Audubon Society received a grant funded by Florida Power and Light/Audubon Florida Plants for Birds Grant program to provide native plant landscaping at the new Goldsboro Museum. The museum is expected to be completed in late spring/early summer 2026. If you are interested in helping with planting, please contact Phyllis Hall at [phylliscath814@gmail.com](mailto:phylliscath814@gmail.com). The date will be announced as soon as the building is completed and the area prepared for planting. Please plan to bring your own planting tools.



## Program and Field Trip Notes:

### Birding at Hontoon Island Field Trip

Saturday, December 13, 2025

Seminole Audubon had a great trip to Hontoon Island State Park on December 13, 2025. The group, led by Cecilia and John Carey, took the ferry boat for a short ride across the St. John's River to Hontoon Island where Adam Hull, Park Services Specialist, gave a brief presentation and offered guidance on the best spots for birding. Over 220 species have been documented at this park. The birders started out along the banks of the St. John's River and then went through a hydric hammock to the pine flatwoods.

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# Program and Field Trip Notes: *Continued from page 5*

## Birding at Hontoon Island Field Trip *Continued*

Thirty-one species were observed including the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Orange-crowned Warbler, White-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos, Common Yellowthroat, and multiple Pileated Woodpeckers.



Hontoon Island and the Field Trip Group

Photos by: Cecilia Carey

## 126th Audubon Christmas Bird Count Event

Saturday, December 20, 2025

By Leslie Martin

While some folks were busy shopping and wrapping on the last Saturday before Christmas, some of Seminole Audubon Society's elves were busy counting birds for the Wekiva Basin Christmas Bird Count. Our group counts Zones 10 and 11 of the circle, which includes parts of Lake Mary and Sanford.

A big thank you to Joy Rector, Chuck Honaker, Bob Harmon, Sarah Donlan, Michelle Vaughn, Lewis Gray, Cecilia Carey and John Carey for their contributions. A total of 85 species was counted between the two zones on that day. Highlights of this year's tally include 9 Wild Turkeys, 11 Bald Eagles, 10 Eastern Bluebirds, 4 Orange-crowned Warblers, 4 Swamp Sparrows, 4 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and 3 Southeastern American Kestrels.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
Photo by: John Carey



Orange-crowned Warbler  
Photo by: John Carey



Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
Photos by: John Carey

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

## Florida Scrub-Jays Program by Alan Alshouse

Sunday, January 11, 2026

Alan Alshouse is a wildlife ecologist who works with Environmental Science Associates (ESA) which manages the Yankee Lake Florida Scrub-Jay habitat, among other projects. Yankee Lake Treatment Facility is the only location to find Florida Scrub-Jays in Seminole County. Along with Audubon Florida, SAS was instrumental in officially preserving this habitat in 1993 when the treatment facility was being planned. The Florida Scrub-Jay is endemic to Florida, living exclusively in Florida's low-growing scrub oak, sandy soil environment. Extensive development and habitat fragmentation in Florida threaten this bird's already small population. It was officially listed as a threatened state species by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in 1975 and it was listed as a threatened federal species by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 1987.

Florida Scrub-Jays nest from March to June, laying 2-5 eggs that hatch after about 18 days. They fledge in about 18 more days. They are social birds living in extended family groups with the young remaining to help their parents at subsequent nests until they find a territory of their own. They live 4-5 years on average but can live up to 11 years. They eat insects, frogs, lizards, and acorns. Currently, at Yankee Lake, there are 2 family groups for a total of 10 birds. Over the years, this population has varied from 4 to 10. They do not migrate and only fly about 7 miles so they do not mix easily when habitats are spread out. This is a concern for maintaining a healthy gene pool. ESA is considering acquiring permits to relocate some Scrub-Jays from other areas. Nearby populations can be found in Seminole State Forest, Rock Springs Run, Blue Spring State Park, and Lyonia Preserve.

ESA manages the 200-acre habitat around their Florida Scrub-Jays nesting cycle. In January each year, ESA plans habitat enhancement activities. In February and March, they determine the birds' territories and the appropriate trapping locations for banding. April through June is when the birds are nesting and they are left undisturbed. At that time, ESA conducts other habitat enhancements such as controlling invasive and exotic plants, and, in early July, they look for the recently-hatched juveniles. Identification at this time is a challenging task since the adults are molting. In late July, ESA deploys dummy traps using peanuts as bait. Then, in the first week of August, once the Scrub-Jays have grown curious enough to try to take the peanuts, ESA traps and bands them. The bands have specific meanings. They all receive silver bands,



Florida Scrub-Jay at Yankee Lake Treatment Plant

Photo by: Lewis Gray

Source: <https://esassoc.com/projects/seminole-county-scrub-jay-monitoring-and-land-management/>



Florida Scrub-Jay At Yankee Lake Treatment Plant.

Note the different banding on the left leg from the bird in the photograph above.

Photos by: Lynn Folts

which are for federal identification, and hot pink for the Yankee Lake location on their right legs. Each individual is assigned a unique set of two different color bands on its left leg. Fire management of the habitat is ideal, but because Yankee Lake has housing developments nearby and main roads adjacent to it, smoke and the volatility of fire would be problematic. Instead, the habitat is maintained primarily through mechanical means such as roller chopping to remove trees that have grown too tall and to provide sandy spaces for the birds to forage and store food.

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

## Yankee Lake Treatment Plant: Florida Scrub-Jays Field Trip

Friday, January 16, 2026

It was a chilly morning, but we were able to ride comfortably in the Environmental Science Associates' trucks. We stopped twice to see nearly all of the ten Florida Scrub-Jays. We also saw deer, a Red-shouldered Hawk, a Red-tailed Hawk, and a small covey (5-6) of Northern Bobwhite quail. Seminole County Commissioner Dallari was able to join us. Along with Audubon Florida, SAS was instrumental in preserving this habitat in 1993 when the treatment facility was being planned, so we visit this property each year.



Top: Field Trip Group Photo by: Phyllis Hall  
Bottom: Yankee Lake Florida Scrub-Jay  
Photo by: Lynn Folts



Yankee Lake Treatment Plant Field Trip Group  
Photos by: June Rhodes

## Lyonia Nature Preserve Field Trip

Saturday, January 17, 2026

by Chuck Honaker, Florida Master Naturalist

A group of twelve bird enthusiasts and photographers set out to find one of the denizens of the oak scrub habitat, the Florida Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*). The field trip was led by Chuck Honaker and Lyonia Nature Preserve's conservation chairperson from West Volusia Audubon, Stephen Kintner. Stephen has been a staunch advocate for the Preserve for several years, helping to protect this unique 400-acre property in Deltona and its population of Scrub-Jays. Stephen led our group on a 3.3-mile (7,700 steps) hike that started at 40 feet above sea level and then climbed a steep sand ridge trail to the Preserve's highest point of 85 feet above sea level atop Mt. Fu. We reached the lowest point of 15 feet above sea level near an ephemeral pond bordered by lyonia shrubs and sand pines on the east side of the Preserve.

Some members of our group scored a "lifer" bird for their lists. We had several spectacular closeup views of Florida Scrub-Jays in flight or perched as sentinels atop 10-foot-high scrub oaks that produce the staple of their diet: the acorn. Our photographers took great shots of these gregarious birds of the *Corvid* family. When out of view, we could hear their raspy



Lyonia Nature Preserve Field Trip Members  
Photo by Chuck Honaker

*Continued on next page*

# Program and Field Trip Notes: *Continued from page 8*

## Lyonia Nature Preserve Field Trip *Continued*



Two Sentinels on alert atop a scrub oak.

Photo by Chuck Honaker

calls from the oak thickets. A group of five unattached male birds flew along and over the trails as we hiked. Scrub-Jays are non-migratory, and as cooperative breeders, they stay with parent birds as helpers for a year or so after fledging. A single Florida Scrub-Jay may bury 6,000-8,000 acorns yearly. To sustain the birds during fall and winter, the birds bury the acorns in the sandy soil, tend to them and later dig them up for a meal. Insects, lizards and mice add protein to their diets. March to June is nesting season and June/July is when Florida Audubon Jay Watch surveys happen at Lyonia. For three consecutive days, volunteers count existing Florida Scrub-Jays and new fledglings, called "brownies", as part of this annual survey.

Attrition is high in young birds. Our group observed the Scrub-Jays' top predator, the Cooper's Hawk, perched on a snag and on the lookout for prey. Snakes are also a threat to nestlings and eggs. But, as Stephen shared in his comments, loss of oak scrub habitat to

development is a huge factor in our increasingly populous state affecting the federally-listed and state-threatened Florida Scrub-Jays immensely. Isolation from other Scrub-Jays and the lack of connected scrub areas has a negative effect on this species. Lyonia Preserve uses mechanical roller chopping rather than fire as a land-management technique as the smoke from fires can be hazardous to surrounding homes and roadways.

Overgrown shrub is not optimal, so periodic roller chopping is employed to create open areas of sand and reduce perches for Cooper's Hawks. The gopher tortoise, a keystone species, is also affected by loss of habitat, although it, too, has protected status. It is a vital part of the natural environment at Lyonia Preserve. Its burrows support over 300 other animal species such as mice, snakes and frogs. If you missed the field trip, be sure to visit Lyonia on your own. Hike the hilly scrub trails and tour the indoor scrub habitat model inside the preserve's Environmental Center. You will enjoy this unique preserve and a close-up experience with our state's endemic bird species, the Florida Scrub-Jay.



One of Lyonia Nature Preserve's Florida Scrub-Jays perched on a sand pine.

Photo by: Paul Comazzi

## How to Landscape for Bird Habitat Program by Fred Milch

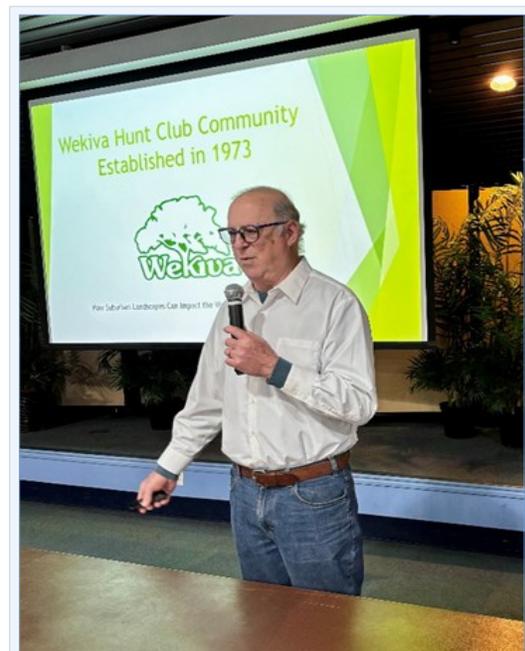
Sunday, February 8, 2026

Fred Milch is recently retired from East Central Florida Regional Planning Council where he coordinated the Development of Regional Impact review programs and Low Impact Development training among other programs. He and his wife, Gabbie, live in the Wekiva Hunt Club Community. Fred worked with his HOA of 2,600 homes to help them understand how traditional landscaping is adversely impacting Wekiva Springs and the river. Wekiva Springs watershed is protected by the Wekiva River Protection Act of 1988 that required the rural character be maintained in the aggregate and that the viability, conservation and preservation of natural resources be considered for the Protection Area as a whole. *Continued on next page*

## Program and Field Trip Notes: *Continued from page 9*

### How to Landscape for Bird Habitat *Continued*

In 2004, the Florida Legislature enacted the Wekiva Parkway and Protection Act authorizing the construction of the Wekiva Parkway. There are 70 endangered species, threatened species or species of special concern that reside in the Wekiva River Basin. The Wekiva River has been designated as impaired with elevated levels of pollutants from fertilizers and septic tanks causing growth of algae. An 80% reduction in nitrates is needed to reverse this trend according to the Basin Management Action Plan. Fred gave a presentation to his HOA to educate them on how they can have an impact in their community. The Florida Friendly Landscaping statute limits the ability of HOAs to prohibit homeowners from adopting landscaping practices that conserve water or are otherwise environmentally sustainable. These practices include placing the right plant in the right place, efficient watering, appropriate fertilizing, mulching, responsible management of pests, reduction of stormwater runoff, and waterfront protection. Fred suggested that the HOA provide educational information to address unacceptable lawns and landscape designs, including using plants that require little or no watering or fertilizer such as native plants. The HOA subsequently changed how they address violations and are more tolerant of yards that include more native vegetation.



Fred Milch  
Photos by: Phyllis Hall

Fred also showed examples of Low Impact Development (LID), a land-planning and engineering design approach to manage stormwater runoff as part of green infrastructure. LID emphasizes conservation and use of on-site natural features to provide more natural drainage and protect water quality.

National Audubon Society has a native plant database that is sortable by location, sun/shade, etc. It can be found at [Native Plants | Audubon](#).

You can also find information on native plants at the Florida Native Plant Society website: [Florida Native Plant Conservation | Florida Native Plant Society](#).

## Orlando Wetlands Field Trip

Thursday, February 12, 2026

Cecilia and John Carey led a tram tour of the Orlando Wetlands on February 12th. After an introductory talk about the Orlando Wetlands by John, the group boarded two trams to explore the Wetlands and look for birds. The group walked on the cypress boardwalk and enjoyed close-up views of nesting Roseate Spoonbills, Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons and Black-crowned Night-Herons. During the tram ride, they spotted a female Vermillion Flycatcher, a Least Bittern, American Bitterns, Gray-headed Swampheens, Swamp Sparrows, and Marsh Wrens. Over 45 upland and wetland species were observed during the trip!



American Bittern  
Photo by: Cecilia Carey

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## Program and Field Trip Notes: *Continued from page 10*

### Orlando Wetlands Field Trip *Continued*

Sally Crawford, a member of the field trip, took some remarkable photographs. Below are just a handful of them.



Black-crowned Night Heron



Nest-building by a pair of Great Blue Herons

Photos by:  
Sally Crawford



Least Bittern



Female Vermillion Flycatcher

## Upcoming Programs and Field Trips

Meetings are held on the second Sunday of the month at 2:00 p.m. There will be no program meetings, April through August, 2026.

### 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](mailto:cwh.jr@hotmail.com). All levels of birding experience are welcome.

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# Upcoming Programs and Field Trips *Continued from page 11*

## **Program: March 8, 2026, Sunday. Bird Anatomy by Jenny Bouchenot**

Jenny will provide an overview of avian anatomy including feathers, bone structure, internal organs and muscles of birds through a lens of homology. Homology explains the similarity in anatomical structures between organisms of different taxa due to shared ancestry, regardless of current functional differences.

Jenny Bouchenot is a University of Central Florida Integrative and Conservation Biology PhD candidate. She received a bachelor's degree in biology and then a master's degree defending her thesis on non-lethal predictors of organ level metal contaminants in Red-shouldered Hawks. Her current PhD dissertation research investigates pollutants in 23 species of Florida raptors. She is presently a graduate teaching assistant for the comparative vertebrate anatomy dissection laboratory at UCF. Jenny has volunteered for eight years with the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, was a founding officer of the Kighthawk Audubon campus chapter at UCF, and a Florida Audubon CLI alumna, class of 2017.

## **Annual Meeting Notice: March 8, 2026, Sunday.**

The annual meeting to vote on upcoming board terms will take place at the March 8th monthly program meeting. (Remember the time change!) If you would like to be on the board or have a nomination for the board, please contact [SeminoleAudubon@gmail.com](mailto:SeminoleAudubon@gmail.com).

## **Field Trip: March 14, 2026, Saturday. Emeraldal Marsh**

This conservation area is owned by St. Johns River Management District and actively managed for the continued restoration of the water resources of Lake Griffin and the Ocklawaha River. The focus of the district's ongoing water resource efforts here is to reduce excess nutrients flowing into the lake while increasing the coverage of submerged aquatic vegetation through focused efforts to reduce phosphorus and pesticides that remain from past farming activities and to restore connectivity of the marsh systems to Lake Griffin. Among the special highlights of this property is its seasonal wildlife drive that allows visitors to see the district's restoration work, view the marsh and see wildlife from the comfort of their vehicles. It is open to vehicular access only February to May. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at 36900 Emeraldal Island Rd, Leesburg, FL 34788. Access: East of Weirsdale. Public parking areas and access are provided off County Road 452. 28°53'12.0"N 81°47'26.0"W. Coordinator: Leslie Martin. For more information and map of the conservation area visit: <https://www.sjrwmd.com/lands/recreation/emeraldal-marsh/>.

## **Field Trip: April 18, 2026, Saturday. Bird-Watching Cruise**

**St. Johns River Eco Tours** offers the best possible way to learn first-hand about the rich history and the diverse wildlife of the river. You will experience our central Florida wildlife in a completely natural environment. The majority of our journey will be exploring the back waters on board our eco-friendly, 35-foot hybrid gas/electric pontoon boat. Restrooms at the dock.

Meet by 9:30 a.m. to pay. \$35/person; \$30 seniors, vets, 1<sup>st</sup> responders & students; \$20 children 12 and under. Our 2-hour tour departs promptly at 10 a.m., 488 W. Highbanks Road, DeBary, FL.

**Limited to 28 people. Reservation is required.** Contact Phyllis Hall at: [phylliscath814@gmail.com](mailto:phylliscath814@gmail.com).

## **April – Enjoy local Earth Month events**

There will no programs in April and through the summer. They will resume in September 2026.

## Other Programs and Events

### Marine Discovery Center Winter Birding Tours 2026

Marine Discovery Center's (MDC) Winter Birding Tours returned in 2026 to offer avian enthusiasts an opportunity to observe migratory birds.



MDC's Winter Birding Tours give guests a chance to learn more about shore-bird species from naturalists and local Audubon chapter leaders. The tours offer transportation to Disappearing Island onboard MDC's Discovery boat. The remaining tours will take place in March and April and on the following dates:

- 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 seen only in this area during the winter months.

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](http://www.marinediscoverycenter.org) to make reservations.



### Other hikes, classes and events are available through Seminole County Natural Lands.

To see the Seminole County Greenways & Natural Lands fall newsletter, copy and paste the following link into your browser:

[https://www.seminolecountyfl.gov/docs/default-source/pdf/2026-winter-spring-seminoletracksnewsletter-ada.pdf?sfvrsn=35afd077\\_3](https://www.seminolecountyfl.gov/docs/default-source/pdf/2026-winter-spring-seminoletracksnewsletter-ada.pdf?sfvrsn=35afd077_3).

SAS is listed as a partner for leading birding trips, providing programs, and providing Eco Camp scholarships. See page 8 of the newsletter using the link above.

### Help Birds Avoid Window Collisions



Feather Friendly® window markers are an easy-to-use, scientifically-proven solution for preventing bird collisions with glass surfaces. Feather Friendly® window markers are highly effective in making the area visible to birds and preventing deadly collisions while remaining unobtrusive to humans. Endorsed by *American Bird Conservancy* and *National Audubon*.

<https://www.featherfriendly.com/residential>



# WELCOME

New Members or New to Our Chapter !

Rebecca Bailey

Lake Mary

Ellen B. Thomas

Deltona

Edna Crandall

Lake Mary

Jeanette Varela

Sanford

Fernando Martinez

Okahumpka

Robert Walters

Lake Mary

McKinzie McTyeire

Lake Mary

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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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 Terwilliger, Leslie Martin
- **Jay Watch.** Chuck Honaker

**Conservation.** Chuck Honaker (Chair), Phyllis Hall (Co-chair), Sam Kendall, Sarah Donlan, Cecilia Carey, John Carey, Marguerite Terwilliger, 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 & Cecilia Carey, Kristin Broadway

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

**New Member Welcome Letter.** Joy Rector

**Media:**

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

**Membership.** Phyllis Hall (Interim)

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

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

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

**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 Terwilliger (Chair), Corrinne Wertz, Joy Rector