



The Limpkin Call

The newsletter of the Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society, a chapter of Audubon Florida and the National Audubon Society and a not-for-profit organization.

Published a minimum of four times a year.

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<https://oklawaha-valley-audubon.org/>

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VOLUME XXXVI

November - December 2019

Number 3

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Hallothanksmas

Halloween is just around the corner
Thanksgiving is soon to follow
With Christmas on its tail
And New Years will hear us holler

The birds are still migrating
Their navigation process, is quite fascinating
We start to count them in December
For the [Christmas Bird Count](#) we band together
- December 14 - January 5

Eagles are nesting all around us
With hopes of fledglings making lots of fuss
Our eyes are wide open as Eagle Watch starts
To count our nation's mascot with our big raptor hearts
- [Eagle Watch](#) started October 1

[Jay Watch](#) was completed
With outstanding results to share
To celebrate the huge success
Please pull up a chair
- November 23 Jay Watch appreciation dinner at the Archbold Biological Station

This year's Festival of Flight and Flowers
Was a huge success
We doubled our numbers
And did not fail to impress
- Keep on the lookout for next years dates

Thank you enduring my attempt, at a little fall poem. I can't wait to see you soon at our November 3 program, the November 16th or 17th field trips, the Owl Prowl on December 7, or the holiday luncheon on December 8.

I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season.

Until then, happy birding,
Lori



AT A GLANCE: Nov 2019 – Jan 2020

November

- 3 – Program: Birds of Panama
- 16 – Field Trip: St. John's Heritage Boat Tour
- 17 – Field Trip: Adventures at Split Oak Forest

December

- 5-8 – OAS Field Trip: Florida Panhandle
- 7 – Field Trip: Owl Prowl
- 8 – Holiday Luncheon
- 20 – Emerald Marsh CBC

January

- 5 – Program: Living with Florida Black Bears
- 11 – Field Trip: Black Bear Wilderness Hike
- 15 – Lunch on the Lawn: Ellis Acres Preserve
- 16-20 – North Shore Birding Festival
- 22-27 – Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival



Yellow-throated Vireo (photo by Stacey Kelly)

OVAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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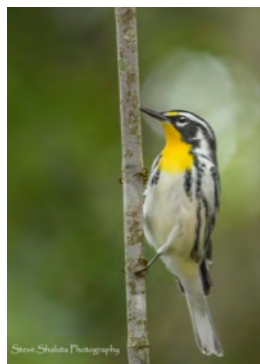
By now you may have heard that [our new study](#) published in the journal Science [September 19, 2019] lays bare [a shocking finding](#): More than 1 in 4 birds have vanished from our skies since 1970.

This rapid population decline is alarming, but there is hope. Some groups of birds, such as waterfowl and raptors, have shown resilience, rebounding as they've benefited from increased protections and habitat conservation. Simple changes to our daily lifestyle can also add up collectively to help save the birds we love.

So, how can you help make a [bird-friendly planet](#)?

- **Reduce lawn, plant natives.** Native plants add interest and beauty to your yard and neighborhood, and provide shelter and nesting areas for birds. The nectar, seeds, berries, and insects will sustain birds and diverse wildlife.
- **Keep cats indoors.** Save birds and keep cats healthy by keeping cats indoors or creating an outdoor "catio." You can also train your cat to walk on a leash.
- **Make windows safer.** On the outside of the window, install screens or break up reflections—using film, paint, or Acopian BirdSavers or other string spaced no more than two inches high or four inches wide.
- **Avoid Pesticides.** Consider purchasing organic food. Nearly 70% of produce sold in the U.S. contains pesticides. Reduce pesticides around your home and garden.
- **Use Less Plastics.** Avoid single-use plastics including bags, bottles, wraps, and disposable utensils. It's far better to choose reusable items, but if you do have disposable plastic, be sure to recycle it.
- **Drink Shade-Grown Coffee.** It's a win-win-win: it's delicious, economically beneficial to coffee farmers, and helps more than 42 species of North American migratory songbirds that winter in coffee plantations, including orioles, warblers, and thrushes.
- **Do Citizen Science.** Join a project such as [eBird](#), [Project FeederWatch](#), a [Christmas Bird Count](#), or a [Breeding Bird Survey](#) to record your bird observations. Your contributions will provide valuable information to show where birds are thriving—and where they need our help.

Printed with permission from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology



Yellow-throated Warbler (photo by Steve Shaluta)

On October 10, 2019 National Audubon released [Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink](#), forecasting how North American birds will be react to the greatest threat they ever encountered: climate change. Click on the title above to read the report and access the toolkit, which allows you to explore impacts throughout North America.

Audubon summarized their methods: *Scientists took advantage of 140 million observations, recorded by birders and scientists, to describe where 604 North American bird species live today—an area known as their “range.” They then used the latest climate models to project how each species’ range will shift as climate change (temperature increases from 1.5 to 3.0 deg C) and other human impacts advance across the continent.*

Audubon concluded: *The results are clear: Birds will be forced to relocate to find favorable homes. **And they may not survive.** Two-thirds of North American birds are at increasing risk of extinction from global temperature rise.*

In Lake County there are 18 species that are classified as Highly or Moderately Vulnerable, meaning they may lose more than ½ of their existing habitat to climate change. Some of these vulnerable species include the Whooping Crane, Red-headed Woodpecker, Gray King Bird, Fish Crow, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Brown Thrasher, and Yellow-throated Warbler. Throughout Florida, there are 29 species in these two highest threat categories. Most of the birds in these categories are Eastern Forest Birds.

Our future and that of other fauna and flora are linked to our birds, literally our “canary”. That future depends on our actions to improve coastal resiliency, shift to renewable energy sources, and to conserve critical habitats and wildlife corridors. It is not too late, but we must act now. The results suggest that more than ¾ of these potentially affected species may be spared if we act quickly and sufficiently.

Florida is not a member of the U.S. Climate Alliance and does not have a Renewable Portfolio Standard. Renewable energy accounts for but 1.1% of the state's energy sources; fossil fuel (mostly natural gas) accounts for nearly 84%. Florida has fallen short of its potential with renewable energy, but is now making up ground for solar-energy generation. We must do more.

Join with Audubon and other conservation organizations and advocate to meet this threat head-on!

Sheryan Epperly Chester

Festival of Flight and Flowers 2019 – Focus on Conservation and Restoration



The second annual Festival of Flight and Flowers kicked off Friday, October 11, 2019 at the Eustis Women's Club with keynote speakers Jaret Daniels, Associate Curator and Program Director at the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity in Gainesville, Craig Huegel, biology professor at St. Petersburg College, and author of *Native Plant Landscaping for Florida Wildlife and The Nature of Plants*, and Eliana Ardila and Marc Kramer, birders extraordinaire, who went birding by bus for a year in Valentina, their Volkswagen bus.

Workshops on photographing birds of prey, plants for birds, fall blooms and art journaling were the highlights of the Saturday festival at the Eustis Community Center and environs.

Presentations on the Monarch butterfly, Florida Wildlife Corridors, snakes and reptiles, and bats

(with live snakes and bats) added to the fun.

The Festival offered 20 field trips over the 3 days. Among the field trips on offer were a hike in the Seminole State Forest to visit Scrub Jay habitat, a primer on bringing wildlife to yards at Ellis Acres Preserve, a paddle on Lake Norris and Blackwater Creek, and a walk in the Clearwater Lake Restoration area to see the Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

A huge thank you to everyone involved for a wonderful Festival! Photos below are courtesy of Stacey Kelly, Peg Lindsay, and Hiroshi Araki.

Susan Vergnan



COMING EVENTS - Programs

All Programs are at 2:00 pm on the first Sunday of the month, September through June, at Trout Lake Nature Center (520 East Country Road 44), Eustis, unless otherwise noted.

We suggest a \$2 donation when you attend.

Birds of Panama

Sunday, November 3, 2019 at 2:00 p.m.



photo by Alex Chester

Beginning in 1959, Clyde and Phyllis Stephens lived in Central America, including The Republic of Panama. Phyllis taught school and Clyde worked for Chiquita Banana as an entomologist and focused on insects, but they enjoyed all the flora and fauna of their tropical home. Imagine the delight of living and birding where there is the possibility of seeing a harpy eagle or hearing a Three-wattled Bellbird.

Clyde will be our speaker. You will enjoy the splendor of Panama's birds with photos by Alex Chester and others who have joined Clyde on one of his tropical tours. And, there are sure to be just a few "Clyde stories" to go with the birds, like the one about the "Bat Falcon", to give the presentation an adventurous and humorous side.

NOTE: Our December gathering will be held on the second Sunday of the month instead of our regular day, which falls on the Thanksgiving Weekend.

**Sunday, December 8, 2019 at 1:00 pm
Holiday Luncheon with our Environmental Friends**

OVAS will host their traditional holiday luncheon at Trout Lake Nature Center with our friends from Lake Beautyberry Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society and Trout Lake Nature Center. We will begin at 1 pm with a potluck buffet and ask that each guest bring a holiday dish to share. We will provide drinks and table settings. Following lunch we will present the 2019 Lake County Conservationist of the Year award.

We need raffle and silent auction items. Clyde and Phyllis Stephens are coordinating this for us again. Contact them at (352) 343-6468. You can bring items to Nov meeting.



OVAS Group Enjoys Latest Lunch on the Lawn Event

The latest Lunch on the Lawn outing took place on September 20th at Lavon Silvernell's charming home in Astatula. Originally a "stick built" house by Jim Walters Industries, Lavon transformed the exterior and enclosed the downstairs, to create what she lovingly refers to as the "Cracker" look. Whatever the moniker, her home is a gem, surrounded by five acres of scrub, (she once had Florida Scrub Jays on her property) with a variety of native plants for visitors to enjoy.

After coffee and goodies from the Yalaha bakery, (Thank you, Peg Lindsay) Lavon led the group on a garden tour. Among the plants identified--- mainly scrub and sandhill natives--- were the endangered Rosemary and Old Man's Beard; other natives seen were Dayflower, Palafoxia, Partridge-pea, Blazing Star, and Garberia, as well as Sand Holly, Beautyberry Bush and Deer Moss (lichen). Fascinating insects sunning themselves that morning included the Thread-waisted Wasp (subfamily Sphecinae) and the Green Lynx Spider.

Next we carpoled a short way from Lavon's home to another scrub area managed by the St. John's River Water Management District, which is part of the Lake Apopka Restoration Area. Here we enjoyed the beautiful restoration work done by St. John's land manager, Rosie Mulholland. Species identified there were Summer Farewell, Scrub Mint, Scrub Palmetto, Blazing Star, Rayless Sunflower, Sandhill Milkweed and Pawpaw, along with various native bunch grasses, including Purple Lovegrass, Wiregrass, and Bluestem species.

Our final stop before heading back to Lavon's home for lunch was past her 4-acre pasture where three lovely horses board, to a wet prairie, that is part of a large cattle ranch. Here we spotted the Glossy Ibis, Cattle Egret, and Great Egret for a total of 26 species identified overall that day.

Many thanks to Lavon and her son Mathew for their gracious hospitality.

Susan Vergnan

COMING EVENTS - Programs

Living with Florida Black Bears Sunday, January 5, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.

We all love nature, but not necessarily when it weighs about 200 pounds and wants to clean your BBQ grill for you. Bear Response Contractor, Kathy Connolly, will join OVAS for a program on Florida Black Bear. She will tell us how we can help keep bears out of trouble by removing any food source, like that grill, that might attract them to our property; how to react if you meet one in the forest while birding, hiking, etc. And, what Florida Fish and Wildlife is doing to manage bear habitat to so they can meet their needs in the wild, most of the time.



COMING EVENTS - Field Trips

Field Trips are subject to change due to weather or other circumstances. Please contact the trip leader to confirm a space and for more information, including carpooling instructions. For most trips you will need outdoor shoes, insect repellent, sunscreen, a hat, raingear or jacket, binoculars (of course), water, and a snack or lunch. We suggest a donation of \$10/adult for each field trip for OVAS members and \$15/adult for non-members; children are free. Actual costs, such as entry fees, etc., are separate, and are noted in each write-up. Check our [website](#) for updated information and to register, and to view photos from recent field trips.

Lunch on the Lawn events are short, easy birding hikes led by Peg Lindsay and Bob Putman. Bring a brown bag lunch. If you are willing to volunteer your house and lawn, contact Peg at pegcondor@embarqmail.com. If you don't have email, you can call 352-326-2045.

Scenic Narrated St. John's Heritage Boat Tour

Saturday, November 16, 2019
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

The 2-hour boat tour is a nature lover's and photographer's paradise allowing us to see the natural beauty of the unspoiled and original Florida – in the same pristine condition it has been over the centuries. The boat will take us through Hontoon Island State Park, then continue south cruising by Lake Beresford, Blue Spring State Park and through a historic cypress logging canal. The tour exits the canal into a tributary – Hontoon Dead River for the return trip to Hontoon. Along with the tranquility of the St. Johns River, we will also see abundant wildlife, including alligator, anhinga, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Osprey, Turtles, frequent sightings of Manatee, and much more. The Captain is happy to stop and give us ample opportunity to photograph, view and discuss the wildlife and nature scenes encountered.

Upon returning to Hontoon Landing, we can all have lunch on our own at the Dockside Deli. Prices range from \$6.99-\$11.99, plus beverage and tax.

**After lunch, we can all head home, or take the FREE ferry across the river and wander through Hontoon Island State Park. The ferry operates about 100 yards from Hontoon Landing. Please wear close-toe shoes.

QUESTIONS: email us at OklawahaAudubon@gmail.com

MEET: 9:45 a.m. at Heritage River Tours out of Hontoon Landing Resort & Marina, 2317 River Ridge, Deland, FL 32720

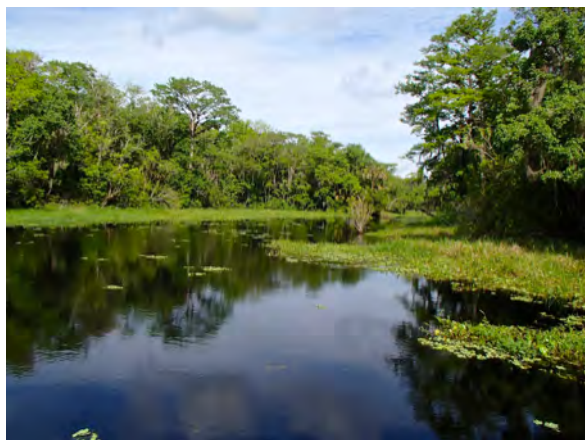
REGISTRATION: Advance reservations are required. Register and pay online at <https://oklawaha-valley-audubon.org/events/>

COST: \$20 per OVAS member, \$25 per non-member. A \$10 donation (\$15 for non-members) to OVAS would be appreciated.



above: Judy Knizner, speaker for Sep program, "Pampering Your Feathered Guest"

below: St. John's River near Hontoon Island (photo by Alex Chester)



COMING EVENTS - Field Trips

Check our [website](#) for updated information and to register, and to view photos from recent field trips.

Adventures at Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area Sunday, November 17, 2019 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Notable for its namesake – a live oak tree more than two centuries old that split down the middle and still lives – Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area encompasses more than 2,000 acres set aside as a mitigation bank for the sea of development that now creeps up to its western border. It is an open prairie landscape, dotted with lakes and ponds and oak hammocks, a habitat mix perfect for the Sandhill Cranes that reside here. The loop trail system provides several different ways to see the park, including a full circuit of 7.8 miles on the perimeter trail. Our Field Trip Leader will be Valerie Anderson of Friends of Split Oak Forest. This is an easy to moderate walk of 1.5 to 2 miles. Valerie Anderson, who is active in protecting the Area, will be our guide.

Wildlife viewing is most productive along the hiking trail system, and at overlooks and pasture areas. The Gopher Tortoise, Sherman's Fox Squirrel, and Sandhill Crane are a few of the state protected wildlife species that can be seen on this area. Two viewing platforms/overlooks are located along the hiking trail (one along the South Trail and one on the Lake Loop overlooking Lake Pond). The wetland fringes offer excellent viewing opportunities for wading birds. Visitors may also see some of the White-tailed Deer and Wild Turkey that are common on the area. The Eastern Coachwhip snake, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Red-headed Woodpecker, Gray Fox and Box Turtle are some of the additional wildlife species that are found in this area.

Check out other species recorded from Split Oak Forest WMA, or add observations of your own, by visiting <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/florida-wma-split-oak-forest-wildlife-and-environmental-area>.

QUESTIONS: email us at OklawahaAudubon@gmail.com or contact Lavon Silvernell at (352) 223-4761.

MEET: 8:30 a.m. at Split Oak Forest Wildlife and Environmental Area, 10525 Clapp Simms Duda Rd, Orlando, FL 32832. Carpooling may be available.

Please meet at 6:45 a.m. (departure at 7:00 a.m.) at the Winn Dixie parking lot in Eustis at the intersection of 19 and 44. It will take 1 hour and 10 minutes to travel the 64 miles.

RESERVATIONS: Reservations are required. Register and pay online at

<https://oklawaha-valley-audubon.org/events/>

COST: We suggest a donation to OVAS (\$10/adult for members; \$15 for non-members.)



Owl Prowl at Geneva Wilderness Area Saturday, December 7, 2019 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

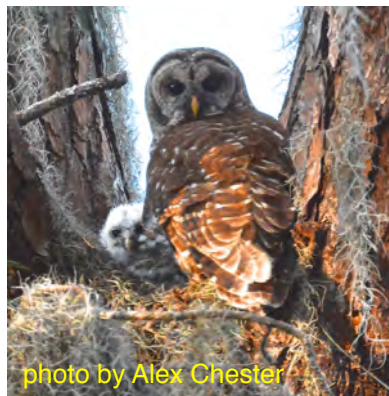


photo by Alex Chester

Come join us and Patti Smith, our hike leader for the evening, from Seminole County Greenways & Natural Lands.

We will hike in the wilderness at Geneva Wilderness Area looking for owls. Patti will teach us about owls and how to make owl calls. If we are

good at it, hopefully they will call back and fly by to check things out.

The hike is 1 to 1.5 miles. It is a slow-going hike as we will be talking, and on the prowl for our feathered friends. This is an easy to moderate walk, but we will be covering some uneven terrain at times.

Please make sure that you bring mosquito repellent.

QUESTIONS: email us at OklawahaAudubon@gmail.com or contact Stacey Kelly at (352) 408-2901.

MEET: 5:30 p.m. at 3485 N. County Road 426 Geneva, Florida 32732. Carpooling may be available for this trip. Please meet at 4:00 p.m. (for 4:15 departure) at the Winn Dixie parking lot in Eustis at the intersection of 19 and 44. It will take an hour to travel 46 miles to our destination.

RESERVATIONS: Reservations are required. Register and pay online at <https://oklawaha-valley-audubon.org/events/>
COST: We suggest a donation to OVAS (\$10/adult for members; \$15 for non-members.)

Call for Missing History

We are compiling OVAS's history and digitizing it for safekeeping. Remarkably, we have archived nearly all the annual brochures (since 1970) and newsletters (since 1984), but we are missing a few. If you still possess any of the following, please allow us to borrow them to be scanned. Contact Sherry Chester (epperlychester@gmail.com) to arrange the loan.

OVAS Program/Field Trip brochures
1997-1998
2016-2017

Limpkin Call newsletters
Vol. VII, No. 3 Oct 1990
Vol. XXI No. 1, 2, 3, & 4 fall 2005 - spring 2006
Vol. XXV, No. Jan/Feb 2010
Vol. XXV, No. 4 Mar/Apr 2010

In addition, we have scanned all our scrapbooks, but there were none after 2000. We've received some photos from 2008-present. If you have any photos of OVAS members doing anything OVAS-related 2001-present, or newspaper clippings about OVAS for 2001-present, please send them to Sherry.

COMING EVENTS - Field Trips

Check our [website](#) for updated information and to register, and to view photos from recent field trips.

Orange Audubon Society Invitation Panhandle Trip December 5-8, 2019

For the 5th year, Orange Audubon Society has organized a trip to the Florida Panhandle. It will be December 5-8, 2019, and OVAS folks are welcome to join the fun. This year's pilgrimage includes a private, hands-on tour at Seacrest Wolf Preserve; birding the Red Hills Region with Jim Cox, Tall Timbers Research Station; and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Highlights are behind-the-scenes visit to Tall Timbers, including banding of Bachman's Sparrows, which last year allowed great views of Henslow's Sparrow and other species, plus observation of Brown-headed Nuthatch research and views of 400-year old longleaf pines and the well-burned wire grass community. Our guide at St. Marks is Jeff O'Connel of Apalachee Audubon Society. At this time ducks are in, and the American Flamingo is being seen again! And, of course, the wolves. Weekend cost is \$100 for Audubon members or students/\$115 non-members and includes guides, Seacrest admission, 3 lunches and grill night. Seacrest private tour only will cost \$45/\$55 non-members and includes Seacrest admission and lunch. For registration, lodging and other details contact Teresa at mwilliams@cfl.rr.com or (407) 644-0796.

Seacrest's Brat Pack exchange howls with Brent Mobley and Susan Kirby. Photo: OAS archives.



Christmas Bird Count Friday, December 20, 2019

Our OVAS chapter has been sponsoring the Emerald Marsh Christmas Bird Count since 1987. The CBC is one of National Audubon Society's Citizen Science projects; this will be the 120th year. This year's count for the Emerald Marsh will be held on Friday, December 20th. Volunteers are needed.

You do not need to be an experienced birder to participate. If you are willing to drive your car carrying a team, or keep a checklist record of the birds your team sees, or even identify and count the birds you find in your assigned territory, PLEASE VOLUNTEER to help. Make new friends. Freeze your butt off. Spend a day outside in nature. Have fun. To participate, contact Compiler Barbara Gay: Email: stkite52@gmail.com Home: 352-751-6069 Cell: 734-516-5757

Many of us also participate in other local counts. The ones we know of so far are:

12/14/2019 Wekiva (Seminole State Forest)– Jay Exum
jay.h.exum@gmail.com (321) 229-5653

12/19/2019 Zellwood– Gallus Quigley gallusq@gmail.com
(407) 242-7833

1/5/2020 Clermont– John Thomton john.thomton@gmail.com
(630) 201-3864

Current year CBC information has not yet been posted to the National Audubon Website, but you can check later in the year for other dates at:

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>

Local information also is posted on [OVAS' CBC website](#).



COMING EVENTS - Field Trips

Check our [website](#) for updated information and to register, and to view photos from recent field trips.

Hike the Black Bear Wilderness Area Saturday, January 11, 2020 8:00 a.m. - noon

The Black Bear Wilderness Area is about 1600 acres of natural wonder in northwest Seminole County. It features a variety of wetland habitats—wet prairie, hydric hammock and cypress swamp—within the St. John's River floodplain. These habitats form a mosaic of diversity which host white-tailed deer and Florida black bear and an impressive number of bird species. Its large size and proximity to other public lands make this an important piece in a puzzle connecting natural areas between the Wekiva/St. John's basins and the Ocala National Forest.

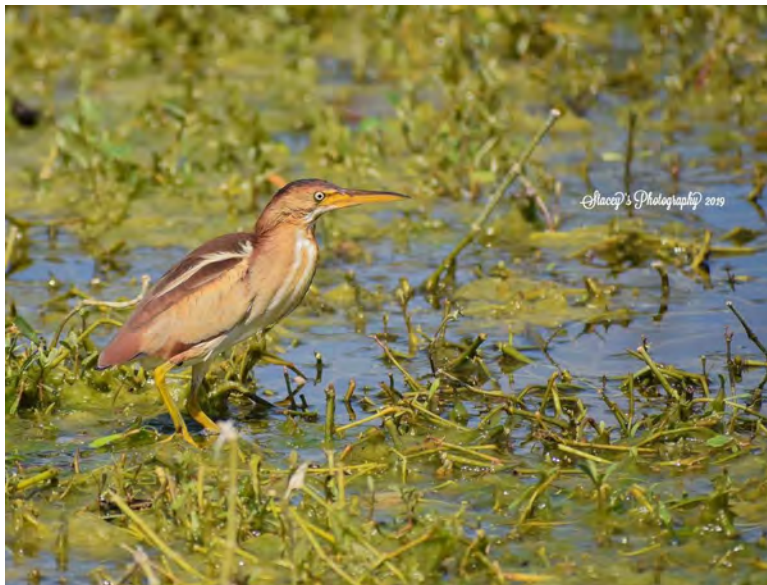
Our trip leader is Patti Smith. The group will have a couple of options: we can take the boardwalk and trail to the St. John's River. The trail is shaded with a canal/pond alongside to the river; or we can be more adventurous and explore the 7.1-mile loop trail along the St. John's River. This option takes about two hours.

QUESTIONS: email us at OklawahaAudubon@gmail.com or contact Stacey Kelly at (352) 408-2901.

MEET: 8 a.m. at 5301 Michigan Avenue in Sanford. Carpooling may be available for this trip. Please meet at 7 a.m. (for a 7:10 departure) at the Winn-Dixie parking lot in Eustis, located at intersection of 44 and 19.

RESERVATIONS: Reservations are required. Register and pay online at <https://oklawaha-valley-audubon.org/events/> or by contacting Stacey at 352-408-2901.

COST: \$5 for the trip leader. We also suggest a donation to OVAS (\$10 for members and \$15 for non-members).



Lunch on the Lawn: Ellis Acres Preserve - A former cattle ranch to a promising natural area...

Wednesday, January 15, 2020, noon

January mornings in Florida are often too cold for comfort. So this adventure will begin at noon with a BYO lunch on the porch of the museum (former Ellis home) at Ellis Acres Preserve in Paisley. Peg will supply the dessert. While we enjoy our lunch, naturalist and wildflower enthusiast Wendy Poag will tell us about the history of the property. The birding and wildflower gardens around the former homestead are awesome. Following lunch, we can walk the property at our leisure. Depending on her time availability, Wendy may lead those interested on a short hike around the property to educate us on the challenges and rewards of converting a former cattle ranch into a natural area.

RESERVATIONS: Register and pay online at <https://oklawaha-valley-audubon.org/events/> If you have questions contact Peg Lindsay at pegcondor@embarqmail.com

Cost: We suggest a donation to OVAS (\$10 for members and \$15 for non-members).

Conservationist of the Year Nomination Guidelines

Since 2008, Oklawaha Valley Audubon has presented a Conservationist Award at the annual December luncheon with our environmental friends. Two of those awards were an award for Conservationist of the Decade and the other for a Lifetime of Conservation, the remaining awards have been Conservationist of the Year.

The Conservationist of the Year award recognizes persons who contribute to conservation in Lake County. The recipients have ranged from citizen activists to a journalist, and to a County Commissioner. We would like to invite your organization to submit nominee(s).

Please provide a brief narrative (500 words or less) that provides the following information.

Name of Nominee:

Nominee's affiliations:

How long the nominee has been active in conservation in Lake County:

Background, and Projects/Accomplishments of the Nominee:

Please submit your nominations via email to Sherry Chester (epperlychester@gmail.com) and Lavon Silvernell (lavonsilvernell@gmail.com) no later than Friday, November 17. They will review the nominations and make recommendations to the Oklawaha Valley Audubon Board of Directors at their scheduled Nov. 20 Board meeting. The award will be presented at our Holiday potluck luncheon on December 8 at Trout Lake Nature Center. Besides a certificate of honor, the award also includes a Lifetime Membership in Oklawaha Valley Audubon.

COMING EVENTS - Field Trips

Field Trips are subject to change due to weather or other circumstances. Please contact the trip leader to confirm a space and for more information, including carpooling instructions. For most trips you will need outdoor shoes, insect repellent, sunscreen, a hat, raingear or jacket, binoculars (of course), water, and a snack or lunch. We suggest a donation of \$10/adult for each field trip for OVAS members and \$15/adult for non-members; children are free. Actual costs, such as entry fees, etc., are separate, and are noted in each write-up. Hope you can make them! Check our [website](#) for updated information and to register, and to view photos from recent field trips.



above: Crested Caracara (photo by Stacey Kelly)

below: Snail Kite (photo by Alex Chester).



OVAS Overnight Trip to the Everglades February 12, 13, 14, 2020

The annual overnight trip long has been the highlight of the Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society's field trips program. Clyde Stephens, who over the years has taken us to some of Florida's most scenic, educational and adventurous spots, has assembled a three-day, two-night excursion that will preserve that tradition.

On Day One, the group will carpool to Fisheating Creek Outpost for a picnic lunch, birdwatching, a visit to the former wilderness home of Naturalist Tom Gaskins, and a look at Lake Okeechobee from atop the levee.

The trip then will continue through wild lands with ponds, marshes and almost no human habitation to the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation in the Everglades. The group will spend two nights in cabins on the Reservation.

Day Two: Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation is the home of Native Americans whose ancestors were hunted like wild animals by the white man in the 1800s. A few Seminole survivors barely escaped to the swamps of the Everglades and learned to live off the land. They ate native plants and animals and grew pumpkins, bananas and corn on hidden hammocks just above water levels. Their survival is a remarkable example of how man can be compatible in a harsh environment by respecting and conserving nature.

To understand the historic Seminole community, the group will visit one of the most outstanding, modern museums of its kind. Birdwatching and nature watching will continue on a mile-long boardwalk through a cypress dome and wetlands. Following lunch in the Seminole Indian Village Restaurant, the group will go on a guided safari in the Everglades.

On Day Three, the group will travel to Moore Haven, then through the Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation for a brief visit. Crested Caracaras are a common sighting along SR 721 from Brighton to Fort Basinger. At historic Fort Basinger, the group can see where the Kissimmee River was channelized into a drainage canal. At Riverwoods Field Lab, the group will see programs on the restoration of the river, which resulted in the return of many bird species to the area, including Snail Kites. Pontoon boat tours can be arranged at Riverwoods.

COST: About \$250 per person plus the cost of food.

RESERVATIONS FOR THIS TRIP ARE REQUIRED. Those seeking reservations should contact Clyde Stephens at 352-343-6468 or at bananabyte@aol.com.

For those attending, additional trip details will be issued later.

*This trip has **SOLD OUT**. Contact Clyde to get placed on a waiting list.*

COMING EVENTS - Field Trips

Check our [website](#) for updated information and to register, and to view photos from recent field trips.

Lunch on the Lawn: A multi-stop trip around Leesburg with a variety of birds in the offing

Wednesday, February 26, 2020
8:30 a.m. to early afternoon

On this trip we begin at Ski Beach (201 E. Lake Harris Drive) in Leesburg at 8:30 a.m. with coffee and donuts. Peg Lindsay will supply the donuts, but because of the location coffee is BYO.

At about 9 a.m., we'll take a leisurely stroll along the northern shore of Lake Harris, walking from Ski Beach to Venetian Gardens and back to our cars. The City of Leesburg has upgraded both parks, making them even more attractive and interesting. There are lots of bird species to be seen. If you don't have Purple Gallinule on your life list, we can almost guarantee you'll see one there.

At 11 a.m. we will caravan south for a quick stop at Singletary Park (boat launch on the east side of U.S. 27) to look for wading birds as well as overwintering Bonaparte's Gulls. Then we'll continue south on U.S. 27 to the community of Hawthorne, where Peg Urban has reserved the picnic pavilion for us. Perhaps Peg will take us—a few at a time—to view her backyard birders, which attract a surprising number of overwintering passerines.

RESERVATIONS: Register and pay online at <https://oklawaha-valley-audubon.org/events/> If you have questions contact Peg Lindsay at pegcondor@embarqmail.com

Cost: We suggest a donation to OVAS (\$10 for members and \$15 for non-members).

below: OVAS birders on a recent Lunch on the Lawn event
(photo by Peg Urban)



Florida Museum of Natural History

Saturday, February 22, 2020
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Located on the University of Florida campus in Gainesville, the Museum of Natural History will help adults and children alike gain a deeper understanding of the history of Florida through outstanding exhibits of animals, plants and cultural artifacts. The one-hour tour highlights selected sections of the museum's world-renowned permanent exhibitions and includes hands-on learning activities for kids.

Additionally, the group will visit the Butterfly Rainforest, getting up close and personal with an amazing collection of butterflies on a tour led by the Exhibit Manager of the Rainforest. Learn about butterfly identification, lifecycle, nectar plants, and end the one-hour tour with a behind-the-scenes look at the Butterfly Rearing Lab.

The Museum has an excellent gift shop and, near the entrance, sells butterfly-friendly plants for visitors who want to attract butterflies to their gardens.

QUESTIONS: email us at OklawahaAudubon@gmail.com

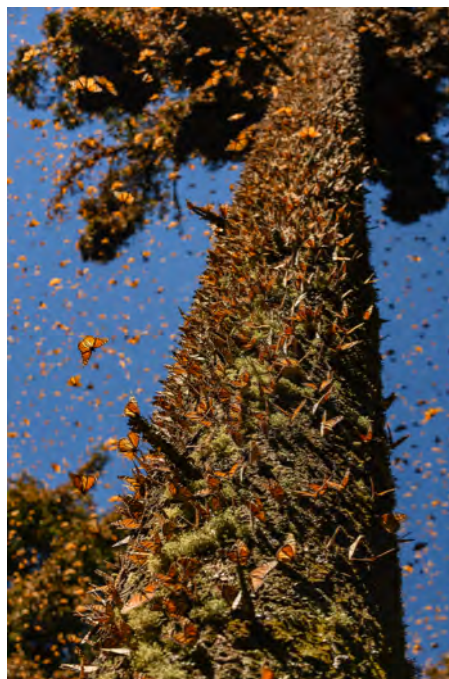
TIME: Meet trip leader Sherry Chester at the Winn-Dixie parking lot at routes 19 and 44 in Eustis at 8 a.m. for the 90-minute trip to Gainesville. The tour of the Museum and Butterfly Rainforest will begin at 10 a.m. and last till approximately 3 p.m. Bring a lunch or buy lunch at the Museum's Camelia Court Café.

RESERVATIONS: Advance reservations are required.

Register and pay online at <https://oklawaha-valley-audubon.org/events/> If you have questions, contact Sherry at epperlychester@gmail.com or 352-409-7444. Let her know if you are interested in carpooling.

COST: \$30 per person includes the tour of the Museum and the Butterfly Rainforest.* We also suggest a donation to OVAS (\$10 for members and \$15 for non-members).

*For those who may be interested, an optional tour of the CROC—Ancient Predators in the Modern World exhibit is available at a additional cost of \$6.50 (self-guided) or \$8.50 (guided).



Monarch Butterflies overwintering on Oyamel Fir trees in the mountains of Mexico, Feb 2019
(photo by Kristen Grace/Florida Museum)

COMING EVENTS - Festivals Galore!



January 22-27, 2020

The 23rd Annual Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival has Something for Everyone

<https://scbwf.org>

Central Florida Regional Conservation Committee, Audubon Florida

On Sunday, October 6, members of the Central Florida RCC met to discuss issues of regional concern.

Charles Lee, Audubon Florida staff advisor to our RCC, provided a list of pre-session bills which are being watched by Audubon Florida policy staff. Although these bills are still in developmental stages, interested chapter members should review them and become familiar with the general gist of the proposed legislation. Contact your chapter RCC representative for a copy of this list.

Last year a transportation bill was passed and signed by Governor DeSantis authorizing 3 new major toll roads. Audubon Florida was instrumental in amending the bills to ensure consideration would be provided for conservation lands and limiting sprawl. The planning task forces have since been named, and Charles Lee and Dr. Paul Gray, AF staff, are among the environmental representatives.

Jefferson County residents showed up in large numbers to speak against the Suncoast Connector and Taylor and Dixie County residents are concerned the new road will divert traffic from their business centers. The Northern Turnpike Connector has also received negative feedback. One of the Task Force members for the SW-Central Florida Connector has stated his commitment to co-locating the proposed roadway along I-27, not to building a new road.

The Northeast Connector Expressway Extension is showing little movement. Orange County Land Use staff have expressed their concerns to CFX and many residents have provided negative feedback.

West Volusia and Seminole Audubon Societies are working with all pertinent local, State and Federal entities to find a suitable new home and establish a process to relocate Florida Scrub Jays living on property in Deltona which is slated for development.

Our group approved the 2020 Regional Conservation Priorities which will be presented to the general membership for approval at Audubon Assembly in October. Our two priorities remain essentially the same as last year. We added Green Swamp as a high priority property on our second goal.

These are just a few of the many conservation issues being monitored by Audubon Florida and/or the local chapters in central Florida. We encourage a representative from every chapter to attend our meetings in 2020. Going forward, we may hold our meetings via conference call, allowing even our chapters from long distances to attend. Details about time/dates will follow.

Paula Wehr
Central Florida Chapters Representative
Audubon Florida Board of Directors
paulawehr@cfl.rr.com

PLANTS FOR BIRDS

Protect Biodiversity and Catbirds, too - Plant a Winged Sumac

By Lavon Silvernell,
President, Lake Beautyberry Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society
and
OVAS 1st Vice President

I'll grant you my preference in plants is a little atypical, but I love winged sumac, *Rhus copallinum*. It has so much to recommend it.

It's beautiful. Its compound leaves, with their a slightly "winged" mid-rib, give it a dainty fern-like appearance. Plus, it has a little or a lot of Fall color; its leaves turn bright red or yellowish. I use clusters of Sumac in of my wildflower meadow/lawn to provide filtered sunlight on new transplants to keep them alive until they set seed. It seems the plants which grow from self-seeding are more drought and heat tolerant.

Fruit eating birds love it. Grey catbirds are the most obvious. With their meowing call they let me know when they arrive for the Winter. And even though Catbirds are known for skulking in thickets, they often fly from one thicket-y area to another so they are easily seen. When they are here in Florida, they are primarily fruit eaters: Beautyberries, tough Bully Berries, and Winged Sumac in my yard. But it is the Winged Sumac they are still eating late into the Spring before they depart, even though by then the fruits are black and dry. Maybe they even like it better since the tart malic acid has been washed off by Winter rains.

Winged Sumac is part of the food chain for other animals too. Around August, when it has beautiful clusters of whitish flowers, the pollinators and the insects and birds which eat the pollinators are clustered around them. So, they play a role in the food supply for insect eating birds too.

Why some gardeners may not love it:

It suckers. They easily are pulled or cut off.

It's deciduous. It loses its leaves in Fall.

It's messy. The clusters of beautiful red berries turn brown/black and stay on the tree. A tidy gardener may be tempted to dead head them, but that may be when birds need them the most. Catbirds are one of the last birds to leave and I have seen them eating last year's berries late into the Spring.

I could go on about Winged Sumac's use by people as a "lemonade" and a spice. If you want to know more about its culinary uses check out: Green Deane's website: <http://www.eattheweeds.com/sumac-more-than-just-native-lemonade/>

Consider planting a Winged Sumac. Yes, there are many non-native plants – many already proven invasive – with fruits or berries that birds will eat, too; but, the birds distribute those seeds, contributing to the loss of diversity and loss of other native species, like the little Red-banded Hairstreak which feeds on decaying winged sumac leaves in the leaf litter.

So, the next time birds kindly deposit a Winged Sumac in your yard, let it grow.



OVAS - Join/Renew/Support

You are what hope looks like to a bird.

We're in a race against time to give birds and wildlife a fighting chance in a changing world. Show your love today by joining, renewing, or donating to Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society (OVAS).

Membership benefits include: Household membership; Timely, relevant news about birds, their habitats, and the issues that affect them; Planned birding, environmental, and community events happening near you; A powerful voice in the fight to protect birds and wildlife, plus advocacy opportunities; Receive Oklawaha Valley Audubon's bi-monthly newsletter and other communications; Helping support OVAS partner organizations; Special offers and discounts available only to members.

By joining or renewing your local Audubon chapter, you support Oklawaha Valley Audubon directly. All funds stay with our chapter and support the organization of educational programs, field trips, our conservation efforts, as well as allow us to help our partner organizations locally.

We appreciate your support annually at the beginning of each FY/program year, which is July 1. Membership is not a requirement to attend or participate in the OVAS programs or field trips. There are 3 ways to join/renew OVAS locally.

You can use the renewal form below. Mail your check to OVAS, PO Box 268, Eustis, FL 32727.

You can pay at a monthly program with cash or check.

You can go to <https://oklawaha-valley-audubon.org> and click on Join Audubon and pay with PayPal.

OVAS Membership Application

New _____ Renewal _____ Today's Date _____

Print Name _____

Mailing Address _____

E-mail Address(es) _____

Phone number(s) _____

Committee that you would be willing to volunteer assistance:

_____ Citizen Science Committee- help organize or participate in the annual Emeraldalda Christmas bird count, monthly bird counts, monitor local rookeries, and /or record field trip reports data

_____ Fundraising Committee – Assist with Donation box, boat rides, raffles, and special events

_____ Hospitality Committee – Help with refreshments for membership meetings and 2 potlucks

_____ Membership Committee – membership and e-mail list, new name tags, sign-in book

_____ Conservation Committee - attend public meetings, help write letters to legislators

_____ Outreach Committee - Set up display at events, maintain bulletin board at TLNC, advertise events in newspapers/internet

_____ Digital Communications Committee - website, e-mail blasts, Facebook and social media

_____ Newsletter Committee - bi-monthly electronic newsletter and OVAS brochures

OVAS is a Florida Not-for-Profit Corporation

<https://oklawaha-valley-audubon.org> (352) 432-8866

<https://www.facebook.com/Oklawaha-Valley-Audubon-Society>



Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society

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TO: