

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society Meeting January 14th, 2016

**Treasurer Report:**

\$2,025.61 presently in checking account.

New activity: \$ 50.00 Donation received from City of Ormond Beach in memory of Linda Hardenberg.

50/50 raffle raised \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_

**Swallowtail kite tracking update:**

Our sponsored swallow tail kite named Day may have died. The tracking sensor has shown no change in location. Remainder of funds will be used to send someone to the site to see if they can determine what happened.

**Conservation Report by Lamont Ingles:**

House and Senate are back in session SB 318 is the companion bill of HB 191. These are the fracking bills and we must be ever vigilant in letting our political leaders know that we are against this due to the harm that fracking causes to the habitat and wildlife. 370,000 acres have been damaged by hydra fracking. Brevard County has banned it. New Smyrna Beach also passed a resolution banning fracking. In fact half of all Florida communities do not want it. Water usage is an issue already with Florida's projected population growth. Since 2005 over 250 billion gallons of water has been used for fracking. This water required for fracking can never be reused again due to all the chemicals involved in the process. A third of the fracking fluids contain known carcinogens.

State Parks are under attack due to the possibility of golf courses and hunting activities that will forever change the serenity that our parks provide. Please contact your state representatives and tell them not to change the parks and not allow golf and hunting on them.

**Request from Orange Audubon:**

Dear Central Florida area Chapter Leaders:

You have probably heard about the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive on the 20,000 acre St. Johns River Water Management District Lake Apopka North Shore. The 11-mile Drive, which starts at 2803 Lust Rd, Apopka, FL,

opened May 1st and is open Friday, Saturday, Sunday and federal holidays. Many of your chapters have already had field trips there. Orange Audubon Society has long been advocating for conservation in the Lake Apopka North Shore and worked to have the Drive and a 15-mile Loop Trail for hiking and bicycling opened. Information and maps are at the District's site: <http://floridaswater.com/recreationguide/lakeapopka/>

Although opening the Drive and Loop Trail are successes, there are still threats to the public ownership and access to the 20,000 acres of Water Management District land. The Senator from that area is Alan Hays, the one who derailed Amendment 1 funding saying “we have enough conservation land.” There is also a legislatively-appointed group called the Harris Chain of Lakes Restoration Council whose members include a fishing guide that wants the Lake Apopka North Shore flooded to increase fishing habitat (Lake Apopka already has 30,000 acres of open water). Removal of dikes and subsequent flooding would result in reductions in wetland habitat for shore and wading birds, ducks and other wildlife, as well as reduced recreational and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Another threat is that entities still trying to make an economic recovery after the closing of the farm economy are trying to build ecotourism and they have latched onto the idea of air boat rides, marketed to tourists visiting the Orlando area, as a new economic engine. We worry that air boat traffic near the Loop Trail and Wildlife Drive could hinder the tranquil enjoyment visitors are experiencing and could scare away wading birds and other wildlife.

Will you help us preserve this large open area now being enjoyed by so many birders? Two requests:

1. The Lake Apopka Wildlife Festival & Birdapalooza.

Four years ago Orange Audubon (Bob Stamps and Loretta Satterthwaite) worked with a coalition of partners to launch Birdapalooza this year Saturday February 6th. It is a FREE fun family festival showing off the North Shore, with guided bus tours and hikes, including children's hikes, photo hikes, bird banding, and other children's activities. Its success proved that the local residents have interest in the North Shore, which helped get local elected officials enthusiastic about it.

Here is the event on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/events/516674098514365/> and we have listed it on national and state sites. Next year we hope to move the event up one week so it doesn't conflict with the Palm Coast Feather Fest event and is only a week later than the Space Coast event, so we can both get some bigger name trip leaders and more easily recruit participants. Please let your board and other members know about this new Birding Festival (Friday February 5th) and help us prove that birding is an economic engine. Email me if any questions on the festival.

2. The Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive is getting more and more popular. We now are managing a Facebook page where people are posting what they have seen and photographed (<https://www.facebook.com/lakeapopkawildlifedrive/>). This could be an important communication tool to the public if threats arise. Please consider LIKING it and posting photos after trips (to the Page with over 1000 LIKES). You can post to the Group too, but our communication tool is the Page- <https://www.facebook.com/lakeapopkawildlifedrive/>).

Also, please let us know if you have a field trip to the area so we can make a list of Audubon chapters that have visited to share this information with the elected officials. Tell us when you visited and how many participated. On your next trip, if you let us know and anyone from Orange Audubon is available, we will meet you out there and share some sightings.

Thank you!

Deborah Green, Orange Audubon Society President

**Other business:**

Thank you to Richard, Gail, and Lamont who volunteered for the Shorebird/piping plover survey.

Christmas bird count numbers are in:

129 species were seen and 89,000 birds were counted.

Unusual sightings: Franklin's Gull and Harry Woodpecker

**Field Trip Report:** December's trip was to Merritt Island where lots of birds were sighted. There weren't many ducks. 2 areas had feeding frenzies.

The next field trips are:

Jan 16th: Merritt Island

Jan 22nd: Oakhill, Seminole Rest and Shiloh

Jan 30th: Fiera wetlands

**Guest speaker:**

Mr. David Hartgrove the Conservation Chair for Halifax River Audubon and a dedicated grandfather, naturalist, conservationist and avid birder.

His birding epiphany came in 1973 when he saw a small bird dispatch and consume an even smaller bird in order to feed its nestlings. The bird on the menu was a House Sparrow and the consumer was a Loggerhead Shrike. In 1986 he became a volunteer with the Florida Breeding Bird Atlas Project and during the next six years spent a substantial amount of time in the field with some of the most experienced birders in Florida.

In December, 2014 David organized a birding trip to Cuba under the auspices of Down East Nature Tours. He calls the presentation, "Birding Cuba, A Trip To That Beautiful Land To Our South."

This was a captivating and educational slide show that made you feel that you were right there gazing at these wonderful Cuban endemic bird species.

The next meeting will be held at the Marine Discovery Center on February 11, 2016.