



Santa Fe Audubon Society  
Melrose, FL

# JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

<http://www.santafeaudubon.org>

and



Santa Fe Audubon Society - Florida



# Happy New Year



## SPEAKER SERIES PROGRAM

### PADDLING & SAILING IN EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

Tuesday, JANUARY 14  
speaker Richard Rathe

6:45 PM at Trinity Episcopal Parish Hall  
204 SR 26 downtown Melrose

You do not need to be a Santa Fe Audubon Society chapter member to attend our Speaker Series programs. All are welcome! Please join us for Richard Rathe's bird stories, lots of photos, etc from his 28 trips in Everglades National Park.

<https://richard.rathe.org/everglades/>



Photos © Ricahrd Rathe

**The safety of our membership is of utmost importance, we encourage everyone to, please, wear a mask.**

Our in-person Speaker Series may be postponed or canceled on short notice due to health related concerns.

## Saturday, FEBRUARY 22

### FIELD TRIP

### MIKE ROESS GOLD HEAD BRANCH STATE PARK



Join us as we explore examples of prescribed fire seen at the December 10th "Prescribed Fire" program, along with some bird watching. Approx. 2 - 3 hours

**DIFFICULTY LEVEL 2:** May involve uneven terrain; 1 to 2 miles.

To reserve your spot contact  
Anne Pierce [santafeaudubonfl@aol.com](mailto:santafeaudubonfl@aol.com)

#### Entry Fee:

**\$5 per vehicle (two to eight people)  
\$4 single-occupant vehicle and motorcycles**

Meet at Gold Head's picnic/parking area  
(1.7 miles from the entrance) **at 8:30 AM**

Entrance address is  
6239 State Road 21, Keystone Heights  
ask for a park map to locate the picnic/parking area

#### **RESTROOMS ARE AT THIS LOCATION**

We ask that all observe personal distancing and suggest bringing a mask for everyone's protection, in case it is needed.

Reservations for each trip will be filled on a first-come first-served basis with waiting lists in case of participant cancellation. Please be sure to include the field trip name and date along with your name, phone number(s) and e-mail address, in case we need to notify you of any changes.

# The Great Backyard Bird Count



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**FEBRUARY 14 - 17, 2025**

## **GBBC**

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was the first online citizen science project (sometimes referred to as “community science”) to collect data on wild birds and display results in near real time. Birds Canada joined the project in 2009 to better support participation in Canada. In 2013, the GBBC became a global project when it started using the app eBird (world’s largest biology related citizen science project) for data entry.

## **Project Goal**

Each February, for four days, the world comes together for the love of birds. During these four days people are invited to spend time in their favorite places watching, counting, and reporting as many birds as they can find. These observations help scientists better understand global bird population trends right before Spring migrations.

## **For 2025**

In 2020 a new website was designed to make understanding and recording your 4-day count easier than ever. Santa Fe Audubon encourages everyone to participate. The minimum time requirement is only fifteen minutes, and you can do it in your own backyard or any other favorite birdwatching spot.

*For further details and rules for participation, see the website: <https://www.birdcount.org>*



**UF | IFAS**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Join us for a celebration of Florida's forests and the role of fire in maintaining and enhancing their beauty, diversity, and habitat value.

**FREE**  
Family-Friendly  
Event for  
All Ages



# FLATWOODS FIRE AND NATURE FESTIVAL

## Saturday, February 1

UF/IFAS Austin Cary

Forest Campus

10625 NE Waldo Rd,  
Gainesville

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

<https://bit.ly/2025-fire-festival>



Educational exhibits,  
**live animals,**  
and activities

**Prescribed burn**  
demonstrations

**Visit from Burner Bob,**  
the bobwhite quail

Food trucks, live music,  
and more!



This event is made possible by these and many more supporting organizations:



# Melrose Area Christmas Bird Count December 20, 2024

by Laura Berkelman, CBC Compiler

72 volunteers, over 42,000 individual birds and approximately 121 species counted!!!! Thank you to all the volunteers for another successful year! The complete article will appear in the February Kite.

If anyone from a CBC 2024 team has any photos they would like to share with the complete article in February, please email them to [santafeaudubonfl@aol.com](mailto:santafeaudubonfl@aol.com).



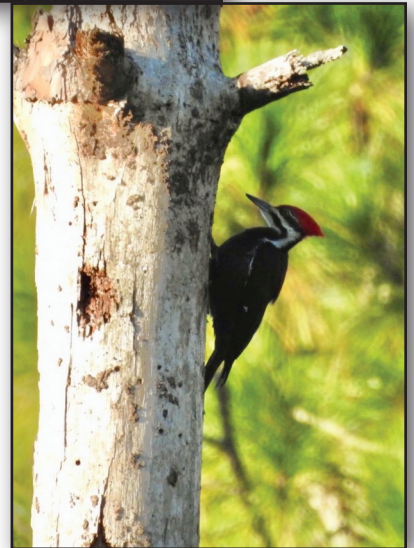
*Vesper Sparrow*  
Sallie Carlock



*Summer Tanager*  
Jacqueline Williamson



*Loggerhead Shrike*  
Sallie Carlock



*Pileated Woodpecker*  
Ida Little

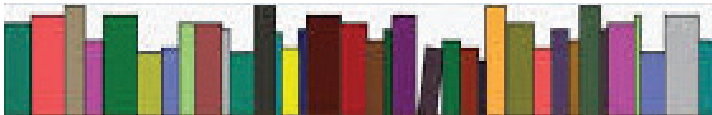


*Northern Mockingbird-*  
Sallie Carlock



*Little Blue Heron*  
Sallie Carlock

More information on Christmas Bird Count is available at  
<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>

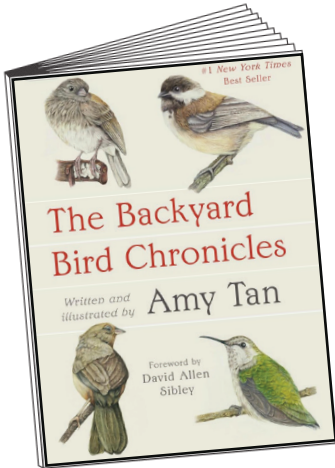


**RECOMMENDED READING**  
from Jacqueline Williamson

**THE BACKYARD BIRD  
CHRONICLES**

by Amy Tan

**#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER**



A gorgeous, witty account of birding, nature, and the beauty around us that hides in plain sight, written and illustrated by the best-selling author of *The Joy Luck Club*.

With a foreword by David Allen Sibley.

**GOOD NEWS**  
from Jacqueline Williamson

**OKEFENOKEE NWR  
TO ADD ACREAGE**



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently announced a proposal to add approximately 22,000 acres to the acquisition boundary of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. This proposed expansion could preserve the integrity of Okefenokee Trail Ridge from mining, conserve wetlands and protect wildlife habitats.

**BIRD OF THE MONTH**

**HOODED MERGANSER**  
(*Lophodytes cucullatus*)  
band code "HOME"



"Hooded" is something of an understatement for this extravagantly crested little duck. Adult males are a sight to behold, with sharp black-and-white patterns set off by chestnut flanks. Females get their own distinctive elegance from their cinnamon crest. Hooded Mergansers are fairly common on small ponds and rivers, where they dive for fish, crayfish, and other food, seizing it in their thin, serrated bills. They nest in tree cavities; the ducklings depart with a bold leap to the forest floor when only one day old.



Drake (male)



Hen (female)

**COOL FACTS:**

Hooded Mergansers find their prey underwater by sight. They can actually change the refractive properties of their eyes to improve their underwater vision. In addition, they have an extra eyelid, called a "nictitating membrane," which is transparent and helps protect the eye during swimming, like a pair of goggles.

The oldest recorded Hooded Merganser was a male and at least 14 years, 6 months old....in Mississippi in 2009. He had been banded in Minnesota in 1995.

For more information about Hooded Mergansers, and test your duck and waterfowl skills, visit:

[www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Hooded\\_Merganser/overview](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Hooded_Merganser/overview)

**Fun Fact:** A group of ducks are collectively known as a "brace", "flush", "paddling", "raft", or "team" of ducks.

# FIELD TRIPS 2025

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED FOR ALL FIELD TRIPS

**Saturday, February 22**

**Mike Roess Gold Head Branch State Park**

Keystone Heights, FL

**Saturday, March 8**

**Salt Marsh** location to be announced

**Saturday, March 29**

**O'Leno State Park** High Springs, FL

For spring migration

**Friday, April 18**

**Sweetwater Wetlands Park** Gainesville, FL

For Bobolinks and more

*Field trips are subject to date change  
or cancellation due to weather, etc.*

## ABOUT FIELD TRIPS

**RESERVATIONS REQUIRED  
FOR ALL FIELD TRIPS**

*When you make your reservation, please be sure to include your name, phone number and email & the number of participants.*



- **BRING:** Water, binoculars, hat, sunscreen, rain gear and face covering.
- **WEAR STURDY WALKING SHOES.**
- **SFAS has sanitized binoculars to loan.**

*We all must remember to maintain safe personal distancing. We suggest you bring your face mask just in case it is needed. It is easy to forget during the excitement of bird watching.*

**Stay hydrated, be safe and have FUN!**

# SPEAKER PROGRAMS 2025

**February 11**

**SALT MARSH & CLIMATE RESILIENCE**

speaker Heather Nagy

**March 11**

**CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR AWARD**

*presented to Dr Ken Meyer,*

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS and PHOTO SHOW**

**April 8**

**Putnam Land Conservancy's Film**

**"O2O PATH TO CONNECTION**

**Protecting The Florida Wildlife Corridor"**

**May 13**

**HOW TO BECOME A RECIPIENT PROPERTY**

**AND WHY ARE GOPHER TORTOISES SO**

**IMPORTANT AND FUN TO HAVE AROUND**

speaker Aaryn Tarver

*You do not need to be a Santa Fe Audubon Society chapter member to attend our Speaker Series programs.*

*All are welcome!*

*Program topics and speakers are subject to change at the last minute for various reasons.*