



santafeaudubon

<http://www.santafeaudubon.org>



Santa Fe Audubon Society - Florida



Happy New Year



SPEAKER SERIES PROGRAM

BLACK BEARS

Tuesday, JANUARY 13

speaker Allan Hallman

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!



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.

Santa Fe Audubon Society
Melrose, FL

JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

Saturday, JANUARY 10 FIELD TRIP CAMP BLANDING

Join us for a rare hike on the restricted Camp Blanding property with our January speaker, Allan Hallman. There is always the possibility of seeing a Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

**For further details and
to reserve your spot contact**

Celina Rohman

VIA TEXT

904 860 6458

Approx. 2 - 3 hours

DIFFICULTY LEVEL 2:

May involve uneven terrain; 1 to 2 miles.

Meet at the Melrose Winn Dixie parking lot
3212 SE State Rd 21 Melrose
at **7:20AM** to caravan to Camp Blanding

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 13 - 16, 2026

Join the world in connecting to birds February 13–16, 2026. Watch the video to learn more about the count.

Spend time in your favorite places watching birds—then tell us about them! In as little as 15 minutes notice the birds around you. Identify them, count them, and submit your counts to help scientists better understand and protect birds around the world. If you already use eBird or Merlin, your submissions over the 4 days count toward GBBC.

Project Goal

Each February, for four days, the world comes together for the love of birds. Over these four days we invite people to spend time in their favorite places watching and counting as many birds as they can find and reporting them to us. These observations help scientists better understand global bird populations before one of their annual migrations.

Our History

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was the first online participatory-science project (also referred to as community science or citizen science) to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real time. Birds Canada joined the project in 2009 to provide an expanded capacity to support participation in Canada. In 2013, we became a global project when we began entering data into eBird, the world's largest biodiversity-related participatory science (community science or citizen science) project.

For further details and rules for participation, go to:

<https://www.birdcount.org>

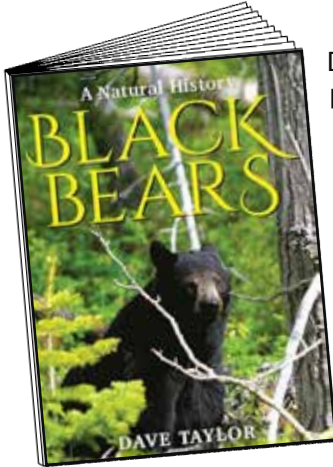


RECOMMENDED READING

from Jacqueline Williamson

BLACK BEARS A Natural History

by Dave Taylor



Dave Taylor has spent his life photographing and writing about North American wildlife. In this full color book with more than 100 photographs, maps and charts, *Black Bears* introduces the reader to this shy, reclusive and largely misunderstood animal with an encyclopedic examination of the black bear's world by state, province and territory.

GOOD NEWS

from Kai Sucsy

MELROSE GREENBELT

On Friday, December 5th the Putnam Land Conservancy, a nonprofit land trust, assisted in the state acquisition of the 2,585-acre Melrose Greenbelt through the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. The Melrose Greenbelt Conservation Easement consists of two disjunct tracts totaling 2,585 acres across Alachua, Bradford, Clay and Putnam Counties. The Melrose Greenbelt is bordered by lakeside residential communities and mixed pasture and forest, much of which is projected to be developed by 2040 according to the University of Florida's development projections. State acquisition of these large undeveloped tracts surrounding the Melrose community will protect the natural communities and resources from being lost to development, while ensuring Melrose never loses its small town charm.

2,600 Acre Melrose Greenbelt - Now Conserved!



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

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

Melrose Area Christmas Bird Count - December 19, 2025

by Laura Berkelman, CBC Compiler

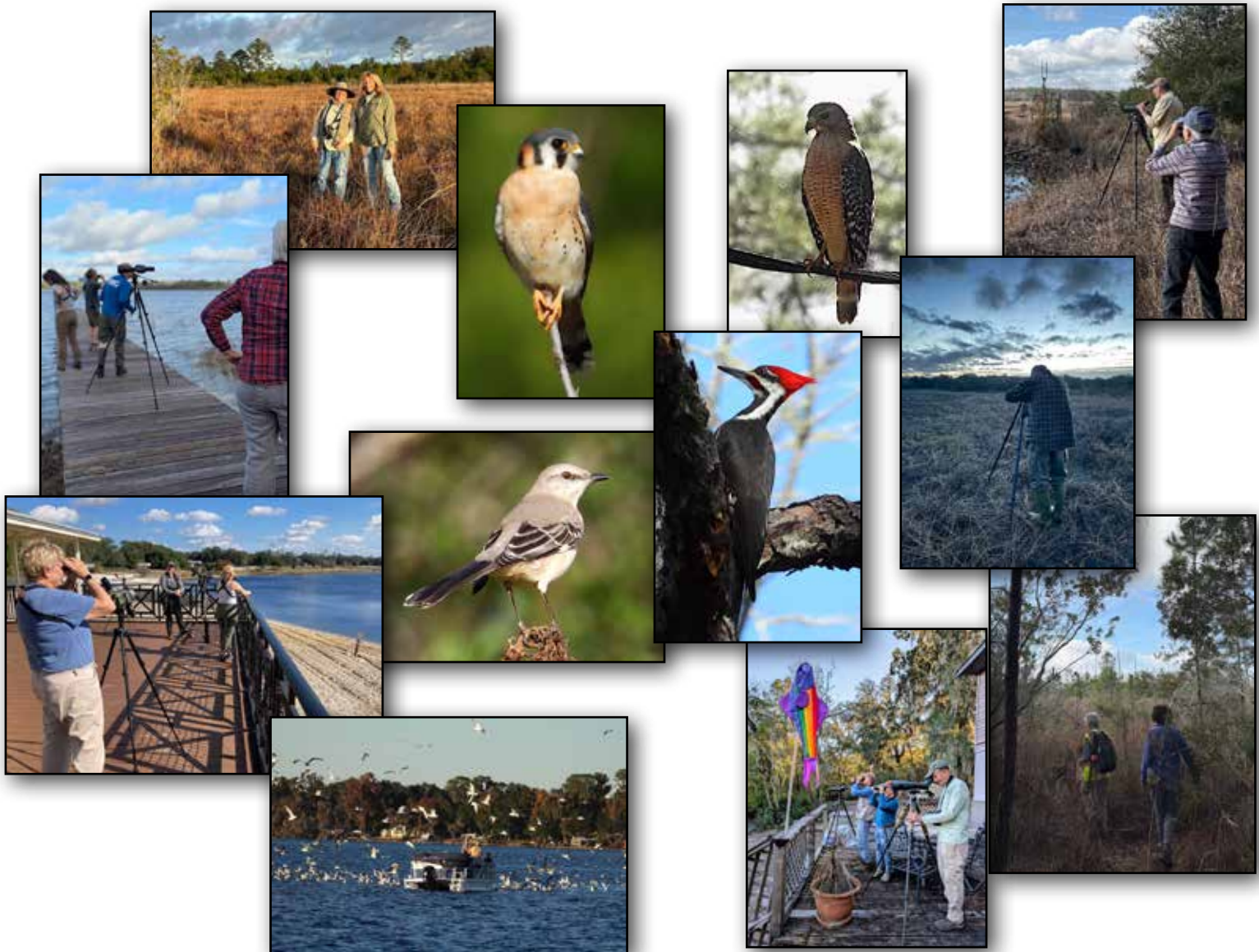
Birdwatchers with eyes, ears, binoculars, telescopes, and cameras took to the roads, fields, forests, and lakes on December 19, 2025, for the 36th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) of the Melrose Circle.

Volunteers surveyed the same area (a circle center at the intersection of SR 100 and CR 219 and covering over 175 square miles) that has been surveyed by local volunteers on a single day each December since 1990 as a part of a National Audubon Society project that “constitutes the longest running and geographically most widespread survey of bird life in the Western hemisphere.”

This year 71 volunteers tallied 122 species and 24,922 individuals. It was the fifth highest number of species counted locally and the fourth highest number of individual birds.

This extraordinary example of citizen science began in 1901 when Florida’s iconic water birds were nearly hunted to extinction in the name of fashion. Melrose, interestingly, had one of the earliest counts, led by the Rev. Walter I. Eck in 1907. However, consistent annual local counts began in 1990, when 35 species and 1,145 individual birds were recorded in our circle by far fewer observers with much less sophisticated equipment than today’s.

Santa Fe Audubon Society thanks all participants, including employees at some restricted properties and volunteers from the wider region - Gainesville, Eustis, Palatka, Orange Park, and Penney Farms, and others – who join local observers. Thanks, also, to the numerous private property owners who allow us to cover their properties from parts of Gold Head Branch State Park and Camp Blanding to the Lake Region from Keystone Heights, Florahome, Melrose, Earleton, and Grandin to Melrose Landing.



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

SPEAKER SERIES PROGRAMS 2026

February 10 **BUTTERFLIES & POLLINATORS** - speaker Dr. Jaret Daniels

March 10..... **SFAS Conservationist of the Year, Election of Officers & Photo Show**

April 14..... **HORSESHOE CRABS** - speaker Dr. Jane Brockmann

May 12..... **FROGS & AMPHIBIANS** - speaker Dr. Jon Johnson

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

FIELD TRIPS 2026

Reservations will be required. Field trips are subject to date change or cancellation due to weather, etc.

Saturday, February 21 Masters Tract Stormwater Treatment Facility - Hastings

Saturday, March 21 Satsuma Springs Easement Property - Satsuma

Saturday, April 18 Orange Lake Overlook - Micanopy

FRIDAY, May 22..... Anastasia Island Beach Bird Nesting - St. Augustine

ABOUT FIELD TRIPS

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED FOR ALL FIELD TRIPS

So we may contact you in case of last minute change or cancelation. Please be sure to include your name, phone number, email and the number of participants.

Please see contact info on page 2, to make your reservation.



- **BRING:** Water, binoculars, hat, sunscreen, rain gear and face covering.
- **WEAR STURDY WALKING SHOES.**
- **STAY HYDRATED, be safe and have FUN!**

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.