



Fall 2023

Hosted by



Hillsborough  
County Florida

[www.fbnfestival.org](http://www.fbnfestival.org)

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# Suncoast

Youth Conservation Center



## Join Us!

- Field Trips
- Fishing Clinics
- Summer Camp
- Volunteering

For information about our programs  
contact us at:

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Centers Network  
[fyccn.com](http://fyccn.com)



# Welcome



**FLORIDA BIRDING  
& NATURE FESTIVAL**

We are delighted you have joined us! We are celebrating the wonders of the birds, wildlife, and natural lands that we enjoy in West Central Florida. We hope that you will see new birds, find new places to go, and learn new things about our area and its wildlife as you participate in this Festival.

## FIELD TRIPS

Our field trips showcase some of the best natural areas of our six county areas, protected as national wildlife refuges, state and county public parks, or nature preserves, or private lands. There are trips to search for birds, butterflies, dragonflies, and turtles. Most trips are on foot, but some are by boat, kayak, in wagons, or driving. Many trips are to places open by special arrangement to the Festival and led by the natural area managers themselves. In the west central region of Florida, long-term efforts to protect significant natural areas offer us a broad spectrum of natural habitats that are well managed -- and the wild animals, including birds, that these areas support for our field trippers to observe.

## SEMINARS

There are talks about birds, highlighting some of Florida's most beautiful and iconic species – including the extinction of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Florida Sandhill Crane, Burrowing Owls, and American Oystercatchers. Seminars about sparrow identification, bird nests, and the penquins of the Falkland Islands will be fascinating. Seminars about our other Florida animals include Long-spined Sea Urchin, butterflies of Florida, dolphins of Sarasota Bay, turtles, and sawfish. It's an amazing series, and we know you'll enjoy every talk by Florida's leading experts!

## KEYNOTES

Two Keynote talks include a reception with sumptuous appetizers and advanced discussions by preeminent experts in their field. On Friday night, naturalist, wildlife photographer, and writer Stan Tekiela will discuss "Bird Migration: The Incredible Journeys of North American Birds." Stan will also sign his books and you will have an opportunity to purchase them at the Keynote event. On Saturday night, David Johnson, the Director of the Global Owl Project, will discuss the taxonomy of Burrowing Owls in the Americas.

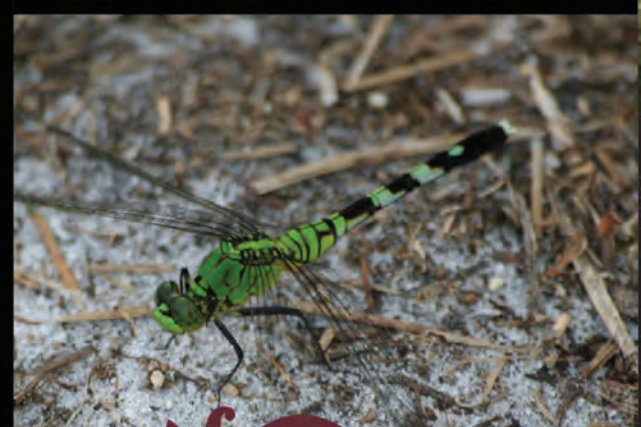
## NATURE EXPO

**Come one, come all.** The Nature Expo offers opportunities for the public to visit multiple tables of nature products, including binoculars, vendors, artwork, educational exhibits, native plants, conservation organization materials, environmental items, and other nature-related products. The Nature Expo is free and open to the public from 10 am to 5 pm on Friday and Saturday at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Suncoast Youth Conservation Center on Dickman Road in Apollo Beach, south of the Manatee Viewing Center.



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# Keynote Events

Keynote Events will all be held in the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center, 6650 Dickman Rd, Apollo Beach. Doors open at 6:00 pm, south of the Manatee Viewing Center in Apollo Beach.

FRIDAY October 13, 2023 | Doors Open 6:00 pm

## Stan Tekiela, Field Guides

### Bird Migration: The Incredible Journeys of North American Birds (Hosted by TECO and SYCC)

Migration is still a mystery in many ways. In this presentation Stan shows magnificent photographs of bird migrating along with fascinating facts that unlocks many of the secrets of bird migration. This presentation is full with information and fun stories of migrating birds. How do they find their way? How do they know when they arrived? How do they find their way back? Hundreds of award winning images of migrating birds. These questions and many more are answered in this lively presentation.



SATURDAY October 14, 2023 | Doors Open 6:00 pm

## David Johnson, Global Owl Project

### The Taxonomy of Burrowing Owls in the Americas (Hosted by Mosaic and Hillsborough County CELM)

Drawing on his two most recent books, *Becoming Wild* and *Beyond Words*, Carl Safina will discuss cognition, emotion, and culture in non-human beings. He will show and talk about, what makes us human and what makes many other species who they are. He will also talk about what is acutely at stake in this living world, for us and for all our co-voyaging species. Full event admission includes a buffet reception with hors d'oeuvres and a beer and wine cash bar.

# Seminars AT-A-GLANCE

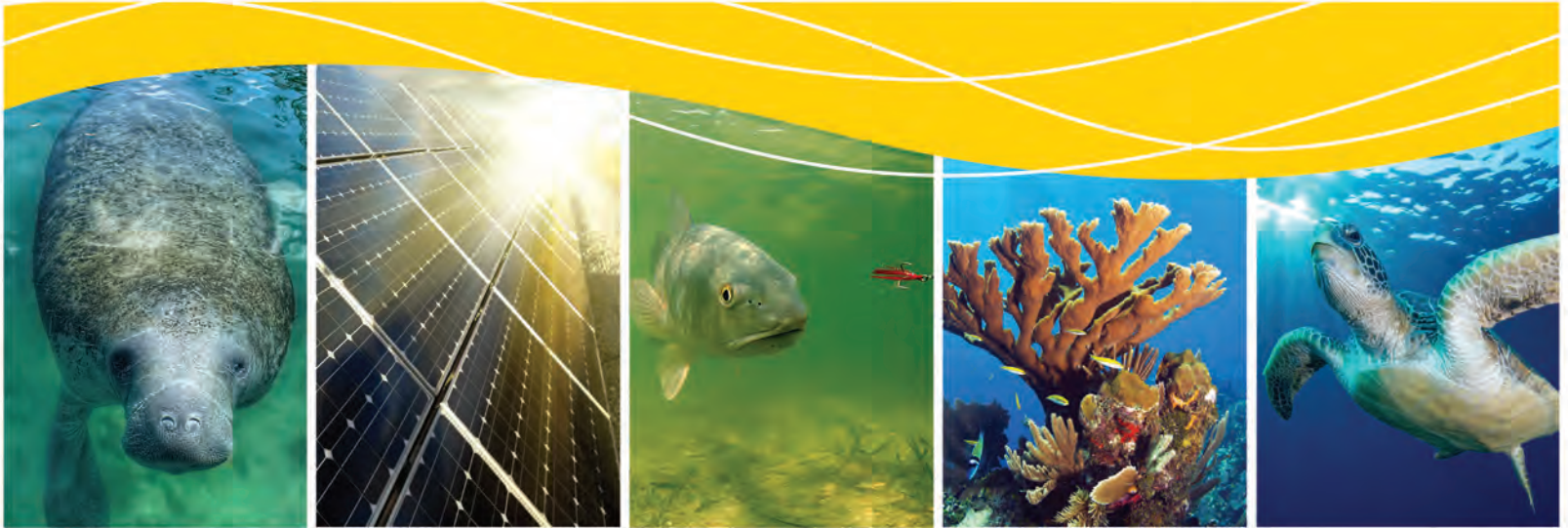
FRIDAY	9 am	Long-spined Sea Urchins, Dr. Joshua Patterson
	10 am	Birds of the Tampa Bay NWR, Joyce Kleen & Ann Paul
	11 am	Florida Butterflies, Marc Minno
	12 pm	Dolphins, Katie McHugh
	1 pm	Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, Andy Kratter
	2 pm	Sandhill Cranes, Dr. Stephen A. Nesbitt
	3 pm	Birding 101, Travis Blunden
	4 pm	Burrowing Owls, David Johnson
	5 pm	American Oystercatchers, Jeff Liechty
	SATURDAY	9 am
10 am		Photographing Herps, Chris Kirby
11 am		Birds & Turtles, Dr. J. Sean Doody
12 pm		Local Habitat Restoration, Danielle Ivey & Mary Barnwell
1 pm		Falkland Islands Penguins, Tom & Lindsay Bell
2 pm		Sparrow Identification, Adam Kent
3 pm		Bird Nests, Stan Tekiela
4 pm		Bird Tracking for Conservation, Gina Kent
5 pm	Sawfish, Tonya Wiley	

## Welcome to the 2023 Florida Birding & Nature Festival!



Thank you for coming to share some of the best birding in the Tampa Bay area with us! We and our surrounding counties have such a wealth of habitats, from saltwater marshes to pine flatwoods, we are delighted to show off the birds and wildlife they support. We've rounded up our best local experts, brought in others from across the state, and put together a line-up of field trips to help you find your wish-list birds, including our second time only, all-day Florida Specialties bus trip. The seminars range from sea urchins to turtles, sparrows to penguins, and plenty more. And we hope you won't miss either of the great keynotes, they're both so good. If you have questions, please find someone at the Registration table or the Tampa Audubon table. And most of all, have a great time!

*Mary Keith, Board Secretary, Florida Birding & Nature Festival*



## WELCOME TO THE Florida Birding & Nature Festival

*Tampa Electric is thrilled to once again host this event!*

The Florida Conservation & Technology Center (FCTC) campus includes four champions of the environment: Tampa Electric, the Florida Aquarium, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the University of Florida.

Tampa Electric is proud to provide our environmental partners the amenity-rich campus for their important research and educational outreach. Beyond the birds and the nature you're here to see, there's so much more!

**Tampa Electric's Manatee Viewing Center** is the cornerstone of FCTC. It's a sanctuary for the gentle giants and a fantastic and free way for visitors to see manatees and native Florida habitats.

**Tampa Electric's Clean Energy Center** features fun, interactive games to teach kids about clean energy. The working laboratory collects and monitors energy from its solar and wind generation.

**The Florida Aquarium** operates its Coral Conservation Center and Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Center - and more - on the FCTC campus.

**The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission** operates the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center at FCTC, providing field trips, summer camps and activities such as kayaking, fishing and hiking.

**The University of Florida** conducts important research on sea urchins, oysters, corals and more on campus and in the bay.

Learn more about the Florida Conservation & Technology Center at [tampaelectric.com/fctc](http://tampaelectric.com/fctc)



# Seminars

## FRIDAY

### Long-spined Sea Urchin Aquaculture

*Dr. Joshua Patterson*

**9:00 am**

The long-spined sea urchin *Diadema antillarum* was a keystone grazer on Caribbean coral reefs until a region-wide die off in the early 1980s. Ever since, scientists have been working on ways to aid population recovery. Intensive aquaculture technology is one option and, over the last five years, significant advances have been made at a facility right here in Apollo Beach.

### Birds of the Tampa Bay NWR - Historical & Present Day

*Joyce Kleen & Ann Paul*

**10:00 am**

The Tampa Bay Refuges have a long history of bird conservation. In 1880, Indian Key, now a National Wildlife Refuge, hosted the largest waterbird colony along the west coast of Florida. By 1886, it and the other Florida coastal colonies were abandoned. In 1990, Tarpon Key, now a NWR, hosted the third most important waterbird colony in Florida, according to the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, now the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Now no birds nest there. Egmont Key NWR and State Park hosted the largest seabird colony in Florida five years ago. Now only oystercatchers and Black Skimmers nest there. What happened? Where are the birds nesting now? Why do colonies persist for generations of birds and then disappear? Ann Paul and Joyce Kleen will tell their stories.

### Florida Butterflies

*Marc Minno*

**11:00 am**

Marc Minno, an expert on endangered butterflies and their habitats, has literally written the books on Florida's butterflies. He will share fascinating facts about these beautiful insects, including which ones we can see here, what they do and how we can interpret their behaviors, where they live, what their caterpillars eat, how they are doing in Florida, and how we can invite them to share our world. He loves butterflies, and his engaging talk is inspirational and highly informative.

### Sarasota Bay Dolphins

*Katie McHugh*

**12:00 pm**

We share the coastal environment with dolphins and other wildlife who call our local waters home. Learn more about Florida's dolphins and their estuarine and coastal habitats from the world's longest-running dolphin conservation research program - the Chicago Zoological Society's Sarasota Dolphin Research Program. The CZS-SDRP will share findings from 50+ years of work along the gulf coast as well as opportunities to engage with dolphin conservation.

### Extinction of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker

*Andy Kratter*

**1:00 pm**

Andy Kratter will review the story of the extinction of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker over the past 150 years. By the late 1800s, ornithologists, foresters, and woods-folk in the South knew that the woodpecker's population was dwindling. Unfortunately, in the ensuing 50 years, nothing was done to preserve this magnificent bird. Habitat destruction, overzealous collecting by museums and private collectors, and a complete lack of regulatory infrastructure conspired to almost certainly kill off the last remaining individuals by the mid-1940s. Andy Kratter will present the evidence about Ivory-billed Woodpeckers since that time from the perspective of a Records Committee Chair and a long-time active Field Ornithologist in the south.

### Life History of the Florida Sandhill Crane

*Dr. Stephen A. Nesbitt*

**2:00 pm**

After 35 years of working with dozens of known individual Florida Sandhill Cranes, Nesbitt, a retired biologist formerly with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, will discuss what they learned. How can you tell an old crane from a young crane? How can you tell a male from a female? Do cranes really pair for life? What is the typical home range for a pair of Florida Sandhill Cranes? What does it take for a pair to successfully raise a chick to the age of independence? How long can a Florida crane live? What does the future for cranes in Florida look like? These are some of the topics to be discussed.



# Seminars

## FRIDAY

### Birding 101

Travis Blunden

3:00 pm

Curious about the many different birds around you? Do you wonder why people travel across the state, the country, and even the world to look at birds? Designed for the beginning or casual birder who wants to learn more, Birding 101 explains what birding is, what you need to get started, and lots of tools and tips to help you learn "how to do it". Topics include choosing binoculars, identification, using field guides, cell phone applications, and online tools. Be warned: birding can be addictive!

### Burrowing Owls of North-Central Oregon

David Johnson

4:00 pm

As of 2008, there were only 3-4 pairs of Western Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*) left on the 6800 ha Umatilla Army Depot – a result of a coyote control project that had eliminated American Badgers (*Taxidea taxus*) to benefit an introduced population of Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*). The lack of burrows left no places for the owls to breed. We installed artificial burrows, and the numbers of owl pairs quickly responded with 9, 32, 61 and 65 nesting pairs in 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 respectively. We maintained a total of 92 nesting sites (196 artificial burrows) from 2013-2022, when an average of 53 pairs nested annually. Due to the ease of access into the artificial burrows, and advanced trapping methods, we were essentially able to capture and band all of the adults and young each year. Overall, we banded some 2800 individual owls during this study and tracked the outcomes of 608 nesting attempts. In the presentation, we will offer summarized data regarding mate selection, clutch sizes, Hatch Dates, number of young reaching banding age (20-25 days), longevity; dispersal, immigration and emigration, mortality issues, key predators, migration to wintering sites, lambda, burrow design and specific aspects regarding productivity and maintenance, burrow siting and installation. We finish with insights into the next steps for land management and the reintroduction of badgers at the Depot, and specific recommendations for others wanting to enhance or re-establish populations of Burrowing Owls in their regions.

### Ecology of American Oystercatchers

Jeff Lechty

5:00 pm

American Oystercatchers are bold, charismatic shorebirds with fascinating behaviors and life history. A threatened species in Florida, American Oystercatchers face many challenges including sea-level rise, habitat loss, and human disturbance. This presentation will highlight the ecology and conservation of American Oystercatchers in Tampa Bay, including their adaptation to these challenges by nesting in unusual places such as rooftops.

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# Seminars

## SATURDAY

### Identification of Florida Turtles

*George L. Heinrich*

**9:00 am**

Florida's wide variety of habitats support 28 of the 62 species known to occur in the United States, the most turtle-rich country. Significant habitat diversity and species richness make Florida a chelonian hotspot and critical to the conservation of many species. Attendees will learn basic identification techniques that will enhance their ventures into the field.

### Introductory Tips for Photographing Herps, Getting Down to Their Level

*Chris Kirby*

**10:00 am**

Different types of animals can present different challenges as photographic subjects. Many species of herps, such as frogs, turtles, and snakes, can make very compelling photo subjects. To get great shots though, you often have to start at the ground level.

### Birds as Predators & Prey of Turtles

*Dr. J. Sean Doody*

**11:00 am**

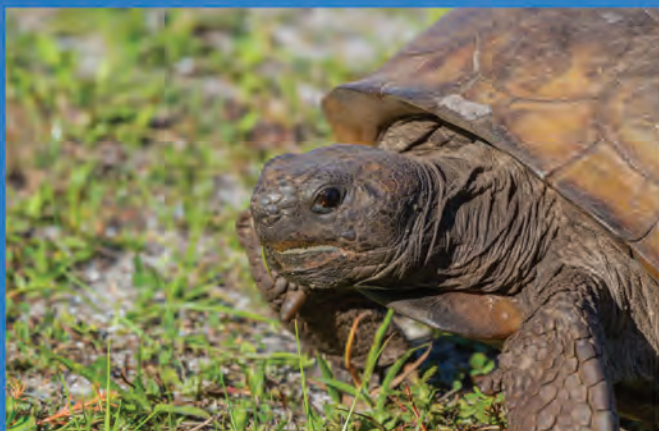
Turtles are generally thought of as both low-level predators and impervious to predation, but in fact they can prey upon birds and be taken by them as prey. Although the extent of these trophic interactions is not known, here Dr. Doody will explore the evidence. He will discuss patterns of these interactions and produce predictions to test with future observations and perhaps experiments.

### Restoring Local Habitat Benefits Bird Populations

*Danielle Ivey & Mary Barnwell*

**12:00 pm**

Hillsborough County Environmental Lands Management program conducts large-scale restoration projects that benefit a suite of wildlife species, including birds. This presentation will review ongoing wetland, upland and coastal projects and the various restoration techniques that are being used to improve and increase habitat for birds. It also will examine loss and gain of species-specific habitat over time as altered systems are restored and reach maturity, and management and restoration measures used to simulate disturbance cycles, including prescribed fire.



# Seminars

## SATURDAY

### Penguins of the Falkland Islands

*Tom & Lindsay Bell*

**1:00 pm**

Last November, Lindsay & Tom traveled to the fascinating Falkland Islands for the second time. These incredible, windswept islands are one of the last wildlife wonders of the world. Unspoiled beaches, rolling tussock fields and sheer cliffs provide a natural safe haven for many Falkland Island species and resource partitioning allows five species of penguins to nest there. The Bells will share their remarkable photographs and wildlife experiences as they introduce us to tens of thousands of penguins.

### Sparrow Identification

*Adam Kent*

**2:00 pm**

This talk introduces the identification and natural history of sparrows regularly found inland in Florida. Once you understand the basics of the combination of behavior, appearance, and distribution for this fascinating group of birds, you can begin to chip away at the term "little brown job" and get more out of your sparrowing experience.

### Bird Nests: Amazingly Ingenious & Intricate

*Stan Tekiela*

**3:00 pm**

Bird nests are among most amazing dwelling places in the entire animal kingdom. Few creatures craft such brilliant and involved homes as birds do. From holes drilled into trees to intricately woven cups, these magnificent structures are worthy of our admiration. This talk is full of fun details told with Stan's great sense of humor.

### Bird Tracking for Conservation

*Gina Kent*

**4:00 pm**

Gina Kent is a Senior Conservation Scientist for the non-profit Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI). For her M.S in biology from Georgia Southern University, she used VHF and satellite transmitters to study stopover ecology of migrating Swallow-tailed Kites in Cuba and the Yucatan Peninsula. Since 2000, she has tracking technologies to study survival, breeding and movement ecology, and habitat use of raptors, Magnificent Frigatebirds, wading birds, White-crowned Pigeons, and Mangrove Cuckoos. Many of the birds she studies move between Florida and the Caribbean, or migrate through Mexico, Central, and South America. In the process of tagging more than 1,000 individual birds of 25 species, ARCI has developed novel ways to safely trap and attach transmitters to several species. What does it mean to track birds? Why do scientists track birds? How do researchers get started tracking birds? How can tracking birds contribute to their conservation? These questions and more will be answered in this presentation on tracking technologies. Gina will review differences in bird tracking methods she has used including mark/relocate, geo-locators, VHF-transmitters, satellite transmitters, and GSM.

### The Endangered Sawfish of Florida: Past, Present, and Future

*Tonya Wiley*

**5:00 pm**

Sawfish are large shark-like rays that once were relatively common in Florida's coastal waters. Now, Florida's smalltooth sawfish is endangered and scientists are striving to learn as much as possible about this iconic and fascinating fish. During her presentation, Tonya Wiley (President of Havenworth Coastal Conservation) will share interesting facts about sawfish, updates on current research projects, explanations of management tools such as the Endangered Species Act, descriptions of ways you can be involved in the recovery of sawfish, and other information about the unique and endangered smalltooth sawfish.



# NATURE EXPO



# Vendors & Exhibitors



REALISTIC  
BIRD CARVINGS



# Field Trips

## THURSDAY

### Pre-Festival Bus Trip Seeking Florida's Special Birds

*Dave Goodwin, Jim Eager*

**7:30 am – 4:30 pm**  
**Thu-BT | \$100**

Board the bus for an all-day cross-Florida adventure as we search for some of Florida's most unique and iconic species. Expert birders Dave Goodwin and Jim Eager will take you into the cattle country of Central Florida as we hunt for a number of exciting birds. We will hopefully find Purple Gallinules, Crested Caracaras, Snail Kites, Bald Eagles, Sandhill Cranes, Limpkins, Red-headed and Red-cockaded woodpeckers, and Bachman's Sparrows. They will share stories about this wonderful habitat of ranches and woods and the birds that live there. Please join us for a fun day as we kick off the Florida Birding & Nature Festival.

This trip is by bus-only. All registrants must meet at the Festival site at 7:00 am to begin boarding. Be sure to bring insect repellent, water, snacks, and a hat, and to wear walking shoes. This tour includes a box lunch.

### "Etched Feathers: A History of the Printed Bird" at the Tampa Bay History Center

*John Costin*

**2:00 – 3:00 pm**  
**Thu-HC | \$25**

John Costin will share his special exhibit at the Tampa Bay History Center, titled "Etched Feathers: A History of the Printed Bird". The exhibit includes historic prints as well as John Costin's own etchings and an explanation about how this form of artwork is created. We meet in the History Center's lobby, and John will escort us through the exhibit that includes his collection of historical prints and his work as a prominent bird artist today. He will share his personal stories and the relevance of the exhibited bird art works and how these etchings added to the scientific knowledge about the birds of the world in their time.



### Coffeepot Bayou Bird Island, Pinellas County - Boat Trip

*Jeff Liechty, Savannah Gandee*

**5:30 – 7:00 pm**  
**Thu-CB | \$60**

Join this sunset cruise to an amazing bird roost and nesting colony island nestled in St. Petersburg. The small mangrove island in Coffeepot Bayou provides habitat for a large and varied population of colonial waterbirds, including Anhingas, cormorants, Brown Pelicans, Great Blue, Little Blue, and Tricolored herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Great, Snowy, Reddish, and Cattle egrets, White Ibis, and Roseate Spoonbills. Although it is not nesting season, you will have ample opportunity to watch the behaviors of these birds while learning about their life histories and conservation status. Tampa Bay Watch's catamaran Discovery will leave from the St. Pete Pier and travel a short distance across Tampa Bay to Coffeepot Bayou. The boat leaves at 5:30 so please check in by 5:00; we will start to board by 5:15.



# Thank you for adventuring with us!



Hillsborough County Conservation and Environmental Lands is always honored to share our spaces with others in order to inspire champions for the environment.

We hope to see every one of you in our parks and preserves very soon!

Scan the QR code to plan your next visit with us:



**Coming Up: Hillsborough County Hiking Spree!**

November 1st 2023 - March 31st 2024

Learn More at [hcflgov.net/hikingspree](https://hcflgov.net/hikingspree)

# Field Trips

## FRIDAY

### Lower Green Swamp, Hillsborough County

*Steve Raymond, Rebecca Winch*

**7:30 – 11:30 am**

**Fri-LGS | \$25**

The Lower Green Swamp Preserve, once a working cattle ranch, is being restored to native habitat by Hillsborough County's environmental lands staff. You will visit only a tiny portion of the 12,800 acres of this preserve, but they are glorious! From the parking area the trail crosses a grassland where Eastern Towhees whistle and bobwhites scurry in the early hours, Loggerhead Shrikes snag grasshoppers, and eagles perch on the power poles. Eastern Bluebirds and Red-headed Woodpeckers share the open wooded and pine areas with vireos and Common Yellowthroats. After crossing Itchepackesassa Creek you'll enter an open pine flatwoods where Sandhill Cranes, turkeys, and Bachman's Sparrows rule the roost. At the far end there is a large wetland with Purple Gallinules, Anhingas and Wood Ducks. The trail loops back and follows the creek along an oak hammock dripping with Spanish moss to return to the bridge and then the parking area. Barred Owls and Wood Ducks are sometimes seen along the creek, and of course any migrating warbler will enjoy the insect life it offers. County staff overseeing the restoration will lead the tour to explain and showcase the restoration.

### Outback Key and Lower Terra Ceia Bay with Tampa Bay Watch – Boat Trip

*Eric Plage, Holley Short*

**8:00 – 11:30 am**

**Fri-OK | \$60**

This boat trip will go out to a barrier island on the Gulf that is a prime birding spot. You will ride out, then walk parts of the island scanning for shore birds, including Marbled Godwits, Willets, Long-billed Curlews, and plenty of peeps, plus waders and possibly Reddish Egrets. You will then boat into Terra Ceia to the islands of Pinellas National Wildlife Refuge, including Jackass Key, a roost site for Magnificent Frigatebirds! Your leader is a shorebird expert so you'll get plenty of tips on how to distinguish one from another. Be sure to bring sunscreen, water, snacks, hat, and anything you will want on the boat or island walk. Wear shoes that can get wet so that you can walk on Outback Key.

### Cross Bar / Al Bar Ranch, Spring Hill, Pasco County

*David Adams, Christine Rowland*

**8:00 am – Noon**

**Fri-CB | \$25**

The 12,500-acre Cross Bar/Al Bar Ranch is managed as a wellfield by Pinellas County Utilities. With wetlands, oak hammock, pine flatwoods, and open pastures, it offers prime birding but is not normally open to the public. Accompanied by the site managers, you will carpool out to check the wetlands for waders and the pastures for Burrowing Owls. Florida Scrub-Jays, Barred Owls and even coyotes are possible sightings. Preferably drive a vehicle with AWD that can handle rough roads. Bring snacks and beverages, as there is nothing available at the site.

### Honeymoon Island State Park, Pinellas County

*Dan Larremore, Travis Blunden*

**8:30 am – Noon**

**Fri-HI | \$25**

Honeymoon Island State Park is well known for the migrants it attracts and the many shorebirds that use its beaches. Your leader is the Environmental Specialist for the park, and shorebirds are his specialty, so this should be a great walk! Besides all the plovers and sandpipers, godwits and Willets, Reddish Egrets and oystercatchers along the shorelines, Merlins patrol the edges looking for an unwary breakfast, Great Horned Owls nest in the pine forest on the island, and the Osprey Trail is well named. This trip will focus on shorebirds, how to distinguish them in their winter drab and by their shapes and postures. The back lagoon will probably have the waders who prefer quieter waters. Take a picnic lunch for a post-walk lunch on the beach or at picnic tables near the Osprey Trail at the north end of the park road.





# Field Trips

## FRIDAY

### Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve

*Mary Barnwell*

**8:30 am – Noon**  
**Fri-CBW | \$25**

The Cockroach Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project represents one of the largest, most complex coastal ecosystem restoration projects ever developed for Tampa Bay. Named for the abundant horseshoe crabs ("roaches") in the nearby waters, after 20 years the Preserve is a model of habitat diversity. Wading birds will be leaving a nearby night roost. A moderate hike up "Mount Cockroach" offers a view of the tidal and freshwater wetlands and gallinules, Limpkins and egrets. Neotropical migrants abound in the savannah-like landscape. Both White and Glossy ibis frequent the freshwater ponds and wetlands, as do Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks. The area is close to the bay so gulls and terns will sail overhead. Gull-billed Terns nest nearby and often continue in the area year-round. Spoonbills use the tidal lagoon, and passerines forage in the old oaks. The freshwater pond to the south is well-known for the wintering ducks to be found there.



### Newman Branch Kayak & Upland Trail Hike – Canoe Trip

*Stan Kroh, Jason Chilson*

**9:00 – 11:30 am**  
**Fri-NB | \$60**

Leaving from the Youth Conservation Center, you will paddle Newman Branch, through mangrove tunnels into Seneca Sound, a small embayment that is part of Hillsborough and Tampa bays. You will learn about the species of mangroves and their adaptations for a salty environment and also visit the restored wetlands and uplands of the Newman Branch Restoration project. Possible sightings of birds include night-herons, Little Blue and Tricolored herons, and Reddish Egrets.

### Fred & Idah Schultz Preserve, Bugs & Butterflies

*John Lampkin, Rob Epstein, Dr. Marc Minno*

**2:00 – 4:30 pm**  
**Fri-SP | \$25**

The 134-acre Fred and Idah Schultz Preserve, dredged from Hillsborough Bay to create developable land in the 1970s, has been restored over the last 25 years to mangrove forest, coastal and freshwater marsh, coastal dunes, and uplands. The diverse habitats make it THE place for a wide variety of butterflies and other pollinators, including the northern-most colony of Julia Butterflies. Plenty of birds are possible too! Enjoy the nice walk through the varied habitats, but as the walking paths are rough in places, this trip is possibly not suitable for some. There is some shade available but most is sunny, and there are no facilities, so wear a hat and bring water and a snack.

# Field Trips

## SATURDAY

### Blackwater Creek Preserve, Hillsborough County

*Rebecca Winch, Charlie Fisher, Dr. Mark McRae*

**7:30 – 11:30 am**

**Sat-BC | \$25**

This 2,200 acre preserve includes some of the finest remaining examples of long-leaf pine-dominated mesic pine flatwoods and blackwater streams, interspersed with hardwood hammocks, cypress domes, freshwater marshes, and wet prairies. Join Preserve Land Management Staff and expert birders to find Wood Storks, Sandhill Cranes, hawks and herons, sparrows and woodpeckers, and fall migrants. Blackwater Creek's former cattle pastures and tree farms were acquired between 1997-2003, and are now preserved to allow hiking and wildlife viewing. The site is scientifically managed to preserve these environmentally sensitive lands. Parts of the trail may be flooded due to the rainy weather in August and September. The water on the trail could get to 8 inches deep in some places so there will definitely be some soggy feet. Please wear shoes and trousers that allow walking through water.

### Fort De Soto County Park, Pinellas County

*David Simpson, David Goodwin, Jim Eager,*

*Travis Blunden*

**7:30 am – 1:00 pm**

**Sat-FD | \$25**

**Extreme Birding**

Fort De Soto County Park is a premier birding destination in Florida. More than 250 species of birds have been recorded in the park over the years. Fall migration brings neo-tropical migratory species to the park as well as occasional wanderers from the Caribbean and the western United States. The island's shorebird diversity is one of the best on the Florida west coast. This trip is intended for advanced birders, and will be offered on both Saturday and Sunday. You will meet at the flagpole, then drive or walk to the hotspots of the day. Short easy walking at all times. If you care to bring your spotting scope, it will be handy for studying the shorebirds along the beach. If there's a passerine fallout you'll be in the wooded areas finding warblers, thrushes and buntings. There's never a bad day birding at Ft D!

### Richard T. Paul Alafia Bank Bird Sanctuary – Boat Trip

*Jeff Liechty, Mark Rachal, Chris Cooley*

**8:00 – 11:00 am**

**Sat-AB | \$60**

Join Audubon Florida's Sanctuary Managers for a boat trip from the Port of Tampa to the Alafia Bank Bird Sanctuary in Hillsborough Bay. This island sanctuary hosts the largest Roseate Spoonbill nesting colony on the west coast of Florida, as well as being a valuable nesting site for Brown Pelicans, herons and egrets, and White and Glossy ibis. The Alafia Bank has been ranked by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as Florida's most important waterbird nesting colony and is an FWC-designated "Critical Wildlife Area". While October is not the nesting season, we can expect to see a wide variety of waterbirds, including American Oystercatchers, terns, and shorebirds. Mark Rachal and Jeff Liechty, Audubon Sanctuary Manager and Biologist, will describe restoration, protection, and management of this internationally recognized "Important Bird Area". On the way, we'll look for dolphins. Bring your binoculars as we stay on the boat for this field trip. The boat leaves the dock at 8 a.m., so please plan to board by at least 7:45 am.

### Gibbons Preserve

*Dan Savercool, Nathan LaFata*

**8:00 – 11:00 am**

**Sat-GP | \$25**

The Myron and Helen Gibbons Preserve is a 60-acre forest that has not been logged. The Gibbons family donated the preserve to the Tampa Bay Conservancy, a regional land trust. The 1.5-mile trail crosses Bell Creek and winds through oak and mixed hardwood and cypress wetlands before reaching the shoreline of the Alafia River and looping back to the parking area. Suncoast Native Plant Society members identified over 120 plant species here in 2005. Providing natural shoreline on the Alafia River, this refuge for wildlife protects water quality. Although this trip is mainly an old growth forest riverine habitat walk, you may spot warblers, vireos, woodpeckers, and more in the hammocks, and waders may be along the river's edge. The trail is narrow, and there are roots. While most is flat, there are some steep spots near the river banks, and spots may be wet, depending on recent rains, so shoes for wading across wet areas are recommended.

# Field Trips

## SATURDAY

### Duette Preserve: Natural History, Restoration, and Management – Wagon Trip

*Aedan Stockdale, Mike Elswick, Dr. Mary Keith*

8:00 – 11:30 am

Sat-DP | \$30

Come and take a ride back in time across an austere landscape where grasses, wildflowers, and palmetto still dominate; where longleaf pine stands are being restored, Bachman's Sparrows and scrub-jays are thriving. Our wagon comfortably seats 20. Joining us will be the manager of our Education and Volunteer Division, Aedan Stockdale and manager of the Resource Management team Mike Elswick. We'll discuss the history of the site, the plants and wildlife found there, and the restoration and management efforts past and ongoing.

### Upper Tampa Bay Park Habitat – Kayak Trip

*Ashley Martin, Carol Cassels*

10:30 am – 1:00 pm

Sat-UB | \$60

Experience a celestial event – the changing of the tides – and the habitats at Upper Tampa Bay Conservation Park during this three and a half-hour kayak adventure! Kayak out Double Branch Creek to Old Tampa Bay with the ebb tide, explore the open bay during the slack, and return to the launch site with the incoming tide. Pass mangrove forests, oysterbars, sand and mudflats, and seagrass beds. Look for American Oystercatchers, herons and egrets, Ospreys, and shorebirds and perhaps manatees and dolphins. Our leaders are County Park Managers and bird experts.



Our mission is to promote conservation, awareness, and appreciation of the National Wildlife Refuges and assist the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with their programs for those refuges. We accomplish this through outreach, education, advocacy, and volunteering to protect the nesting and resting sea and shorebirds and other wildlife on the refuges as well as protecting the habitat they need to thrive.

Friends of Tampa Bay National Wildlife Refuges,  
Inc.

PO Box 40782

St. Petersburg, FL 33743-0782

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Make a difference in your own backyard!

# Field Trips

## SUNDAY

### Fort De Soto County Park, Pinellas County

*David Simpson, David Goodwin, Jim Eager*

7:30 am – 1:00 pm

Sun-FD | \$25

#### Extreme Birding

Fort De Soto County Park is a premier birding destination in Florida. More than 250 species of birds have been recorded in the park over the years. Fall migration brings neo-tropical migratory species to the park as well as occasional wanderers from the Caribbean and the western United States. The island's shorebird diversity is one of the best on the Florida west coast. This trip is intended for advanced birders, and will be offered on both Saturday and Sunday. You will meet at the flagpole, then drive or walk to the hotspots of the day. Short, easy walking at all times. If you care to bring your spotting scope, it will be handy for studying the shorebirds along the beach. If there's a passerine fallout you'll be in the wooded areas finding warblers, thrushes and buntings. There's never a bad day birding at Ft D!

### Photography Field Workshop, Circle B Bar Reserve

*Reinier Munguia*

8:00 – 10:00 am

Sun-PW | \$25

Reinier Munguia has led photography field workshops for 20 years, all over the world. Participants will learn photographic techniques and develop skills to create better images. This workshop will be at the Circle B Bar Reserve, among the best regional birding spots. Shallow wetlands intersected by raised levees for walking support habitat for Purple Gallinules, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Sora, American Bitterns, and more. Bald Eagles patrol the area, and previous trips have found both Peregrine Falcons and Merlins. Wildlife includes alligators and marsh rabbits. Wintering White Pelicans still leave room in the deeper lakes for ducks. Reinier says, "Wildlife photography is not about taking pictures, but to create images that portray nature at its best."

### Celery Fields, Sarasota County

*Jeanne Dubi*

8:00 – 11:00 am

Sun-CF | \$25

This 400-acre stormwater retention area in eastern Sarasota County is one of the Gulf Coast's best birding hot spots. The former agricultural fields have been restored to a meandering stream with wetlands and grasslands nestled among the curves. A hill with walking and equestrian trails overlooks the area, and two boardwalks allow access to the stream and marsh. With 220 species recorded at the site, the swamp and open water environment is a haven for limpkins, biterns, rails and herons. The Least Bitterns do not know that they are 'shy and retiring' here, Peregrine Falcons sail overhead, and variety of fall sparrows spend the winter. Depending on water level, shorebirds, waders and ducks may be abundant. Sarasota Audubon provides volunteer Bird Naturalists at each of the two boardwalks to help visitors identify birds and plants. The Nature Center with native plant gardens is also available for visitors to enjoy. Walks are on even paths or short boardwalks, but there is little shade and only a few benches. On your way in scan the ponds on either side of Coburn/Apex Rd for waterbirds as well.



# Field Trips

## SUNDAY

### Birding & Banding in Hammock Park, Dunedin

*Jim McGinity, Steve Aversa*

**8:00 am – Noon**  
**Sun-BB | \$25**

Come learn about bird banding, observe how ornithologists use it to learn about and conserve migratory birds, and enjoy our fall migratory birds while birding this 100-acre city park. The hammock's hardwoods and sabal palms attract numerous resident and migratory species. The Fern Trail in particular is known for having banner days in fall migration. You will observe the banding station action, seeing some of the local migrants up close while researchers measure, weigh and band them. Some participants will get a chance to release banded birds! You will also walk sections of the park and boardwalk to see what else is lurking in the bushes, along the stream, or zipping through the trees overhead. Warblers, vireos and thrushes are all good bets in the bushes, Golden-winged, Bay-breasted, Kentucky, Blackburnian, Canada and Cerulean warblers have been seen here, along with Baltimore Oriole, Black-billed Cuckoo, Veery, Wood Thrush and Scarlet Tanager. Herons, egrets, and night-herons wade the tidal stream. Osprey and Barred Owl occur year round, and winter brings ducks, rails, sandpipers and a multitude of sparrows. Raptors scan for the unwary over the open fields. The walk is easy, flat, not more than 2 miles.

### Egmont Key National Wildlife Refuge/State Park – Boat Trip

*Barb Howard, Joyce Kleen, Dave Howard*

**8:00 am – Noon**  
**Sun-EK | \$60**

Join the Fish and Wildlife Service staff and Friends of the Tampa Bay National Wildlife Refuge for a special boat cruise to Egmont Key National Wildlife Refuge/State Park in Pinellas County. Established in 1974 to protect migratory birds, the island is situated at the mouth of Tampa Bay and is also the site of historic Fort Dade. Three hundred soldiers served at the fort from 1898-1923 and the restored guardhouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The lighthouse, built in 1858, is still used for navigation. A key migratory bird fall-out site in fall migration, in most years, the island hosts a large seabird and pelican colony during the spring nesting season. We expect to see warblers, other songbirds, raptors, gulls, terns, and other seabirds. You can walk on the beach, and the inland paths on the island are paved or brick, so the walking is easy.

### Frog Creek Paddling Trip, Terra Ceia Preserve – Paddling Trip

*Randy Runnels*

**8:30 am – Noon**  
**Sun-TCP | \$60**

Tampa Bay has relatively few natural, unobstructed tidal creeks left, and Frog Creek is one of the least developed and most species-rich. In a leisurely-paced paddling trip of a little over 2 miles, participants will experience a dramatic change in biota over a gradient from freshwater, with overhanging oaks, leather ferns, and sawgrass-lined shores to saltwater, through a significant mangrove forest and around oyster bars. This is an excellent foraging area for a variety of coastal bird species. Participants will need to paddle for a little over 2 miles, but it is at a leisurely pace and downstream. Kayaks will be provided, and you are welcome to bring your own if you prefer (but no discount is offered). Sunscreen, bug spray, and bottled water will be supplied.





**Pat Kemp**

County Commissioner  
District 6, Countywide

June 15, 2023

It is a pleasure to welcome attendees to the Florida Birding and Nature Festival to share experiences seeking birds and wildlife in the six-county West Central Florida region!

Our area offers spectacular habitats and special birds and wildlife living here. Leaders have thoughtfully committed resources for decades to protect them. From Theodore Roosevelt designating Passage Key as a Federal Bird Reservation in 1905, to today's conservation lands acquisitions by Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Polk, Sarasota, and Pinellas counties, to National Wildlife Refuge lands, State Parks, City parks, and local conservation organizations, this means that thousands of acres in this part of Florida are currently managed as native lands.

It's with pride that I particularly point out the work of Hillsborough County's Conservation Parks and Conservation Lands, totaling over 70,000 acres in this county alone – in what is one of the largest county-initiated program for conservation lands in the Southeast U.S.

On your Field Trips to our County Preserve lands you will learn about the management needs of conservation lands and what our staff does to make sure that these sites provide natural Florida landscapes and protect our native birds and wildlife. It's not necessarily easy, but it is important, and we employ dedicated conservation scientists and staff to make sure we get it right. This dedication is typical of the managers across the region, and that benefits our habitats, our wildlife, and provide our visitors and residents with opportunities to experience the REAL FLORIDA, right here.

Enjoy your Festival! And come again, NEXT YEAR!

Pat Kemp  
Board of County Commissioners  
District 6, Countywide

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*Share your Festival experience  
on our media channels!*

We encourage you to post photos and videos from field trips and seminars to our Facebook page (Florida Birding and Nature Festival) or tag us on Instagram @floridabirdingandnaturefestival or #floridabirdingandnaturefestival

## We're Growing the Population of Florida Scrub Jays

Our efforts to protect native wildlife species have helped the endangered Florida Scrub Jay population not only survive, but grow. As part of the Mosaic mining process, we designated 850 acres of habitat, and then worked with local environmental experts to relocate Scrub Jays. Now the Scrub Jay population, which had only a five percent survival chance 15 years ago, is once again growing and thriving.



To learn more visit  
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## Spoonbill Level



## Curlew Level



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