



Florida Scrub Jay

MARION AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

January 2021

Marion Audubon Society is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

Tax deductible donations and will bequests welcome.

Use what talents you possess: the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best. —Henry van Dyke

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello Members,

I am so excited to lead Marion Audubon over the next couple years. We have assembled a fantastic board who is eager to work together to welcome new people, and provide rewarding opportunities for both new and seasoned birders. Over the last year, our club has grown into a more diverse group. We have a new website which is updated daily with birds as they are being seen and top locations to visit. This year we're adding walks to new and interesting places and more educational programs on a variety of topics. I've personally felt the excitement increasing for the birders in our group, and thanks to some spectacular finds in 2021, other parts of the state are beginning to notice us too. We're so happy you're with us for these exciting events ahead!

Upcoming programs:

Jan 11- Identifying Birds Made Easy\recording on YouTube

Feb 15- The Biggest Year in Marion County by Tom Hince

March 22- Introductory Birding

A Challenge for February

You can participate in the Global Backyard Bird Count from February 18-21 by watching birds for at least 15 minutes and adding your bird sightings to eBird. Watch birds at your favorite park, at work during your lunch break, or in your own backyard. Use Merlin Bird ID to help identify birds and the eBird app to submit your list. Visit our YouTube channel for the replay of our January class on how to use Merlin to identify birds you see or hear.

Our recent Bird Banding visit was a huge hit. Not only did we learn so much about the purpose and process of banding, but a number of us were given the opportunity to release some of the banded birds. Such a cool experience! We will be offering another opportunity for members to return in the fall. Look for our schedule on the Meetup app so you don't miss these fun events.

Young Birders

This spring we will be taking students (age 13-21) for a special visit to the bird banding station in Gainesville. We also have opportunities for students to earn credit for volunteer service hours when working with us. Contact us if you know high school or college students who might be interested.

Michele Reyes

President

Marion Audubon Society

APPLAUSE!

Marion Audubon Society participates in annual bird count The Marion Audubon Society participated in the National Audubon Society's 122nd annual Christmas Bird Count on Jan. 3, with 12 teams (37 birders) covering southwest Marion County. The team counted 102 bird species and a total of 5,621 birds, according to a report from society secretary Barbara Schwartz. The data will be sent to National Audubon Society and eventually used to 'track migration and population of our country's birds,' the report says. 'This is the value of citizen science!' the report says. 'Ornithologists (scientists who study birds) cannot be everywhere. We are indeed the boots on the ground!'

A Louisiana waterthrush Tom Hince



The Upland Sandpiper and
Variegated Flycatcher.

Photos by Michele Reyes

2021's Top 5 birders in Marion County (# of species)

1. Tom Hince 251
2. Scott Robinson 214
3. Michele Reyes 193
4. Kent Weakley 186
5. Douglas Richard 185

Congratulations to our Big Year Birders!

On Christmas Day with a Western Kingbird (#251), Tom Hince set a new Big Year record for Marion County. This beat the previous record by 40 birds and will probably stand for many years! We enjoyed cheering him on while also chasing the birds that Tom discovered. Kent Weakley just started birding in March, and still managed to end up in 4th place for the year! Impressive accomplishment! Josie Muncy, despite being out of the game for 4 months, still ended the year with 197 species Congratulations, Josie!

I recommend folks start a Florida Big Year. Check out "Wings over Florida", make this a fun year to see how many species of Birds and/or Butterflies you get. I had a Big Year of a total of 203 species seen in 2021, with 197 species seen in Florida. You can get a certificate for quantity of Birds or Butterflies species seen as well as Big Year. Go to www.floridabirdingtrail.com to learn how to get certificates. These certificates start as low as 25 species, so you don't have to be a pro to get a certificate. Mike Paczolt and I are doing a Big Year for 2022 year.

Josie Muncy
352-425-9116

We have been having many of our programs virtually this year via Zoom and we have posted these programs to our YouTube page. You can view these by going to this link:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKNZujntGgHdIGMaw3PRLGQ>

If you haven't yet renewed you may renew on our website:

<https://marionaudubon.org/membership>



Three of our new board members (pictured from left: Kent, Michele, Liz)

Rare Bird Recap

2021 was a particularly exciting year for birding in Marion County. Nine records were set for birds never seen in our county before. One birder, Tom Hince, found six of them! They were the Upland Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Yellow-bellied flycatcher, Greater Scaup, and Clay-colored Sparrow. A Black-chinned Hummingbird was found at a feeder last winter by Douglas Richard. Michael Warren, a photographer who just picked up birding in the spring of 2021 and ended up in 14th place for the year, found a Black-billed Cuckoo at Silver Springs State Park. And finally, our biggest surprise, Jim Sheppard discovered a Variegated Flycatcher, which has only been seen in 3 times in Florida and 5 times in North America, so news of this find rippled across the US and Canada! It was found in a residential area, so this is a great reminder that rare birds can turn up anywhere. Keep looking up!

Stories From Our Members

I was an avid hiker of the local parks in Pinellas county and always loved owls. I attended a birding festival and was bitten by the birding bug. A friend of mine has a hubby that has raptors under a license and I became interested in owls. He was recently interviewed about his journey.

Catherine Tilman

Hi all - my name is Liz Stakenborg and I am excited to be serving as Conservation Chair for Marion Audubon! I have lived in this area since 1990 when my family moved to Ocala from Kilbride, Ontario. I attended law school at the University of Florida and practiced law in Ocala until 2018 when I retired. I have lived on Lake Weir since 2002. Of course, birding at Lake Weir is my favorite place to bird! There is a huge variety in a very small area. The photos attached were basically in my back yard. I hope to get to meet and know all of you during our walks and get together!

I guess you could say it was my mom who started me out watching birds from the time I could hold binoculars! We lived in Miami and spent many a weekend in the Everglades. Twenty-four years ago, my husband & I moved to Ocala, where we worked very hard to turn our yard into its own special place. Over the course of time, it's definitely changed from elaborate (flowers/manicured) to the past few years where we've had to downsize (let nature have at it). At this point, we were taking care of my parents, who were in their 90's. No matter what life throws my way, I find peace walking in my own yard seeing what shows up daily. I just never mastered all the names of the smaller guys, but thankfully, have my Birds of North America guide to get me pretty close.

Here's some of our visitors throughout the years. They've all been special to me. Enjoy!

Sharon Ritacco (see photos below)

Being the avid birder that I am it is easy to take for granted the birds I am seeking out. But 2021 taught me the lesson that one must always be prepared to see the unexpected anytime and anyplace. On September 13th, 2021 while birding in a backyard in a very populated residential area a few blocks from Tusawilla Park I saw a bird fly out onto an exposed branch far up in a tree. It suddenly flew up in the air and snatched a bug and flew back. Knowing that to be a flycatcher move I quickly focused my binoculars onto that bird. To my amazement I had no clue as to species I was looking at. The more I looked at it the more my heart began to race. Not trying to take my eyes from the bird I made my way to my car trunk and pulled out two bird field guides. Surprisingly it was not in the first book. Looking into the second book I found it. It was a Variegated Flycatcher.

But it had no migration maps. This bird was from South America and does not migrate. It did not belong here. I was stunned. As the scope of this sighting began to sink in so did the panic. I had no camera with me. No one would believe me without proof. I called my birding friend Michele Reyes and asked her to come over with her camera. I was able to view the bird for at least 30 minutes until it flew away just before Michele arrived. We searched and waited for an hour and then suddenly the bird flew back to the same branch and Michele was able to get some great pictures of it. The bird sat there for only a few minutes and then flew off. This was a once in a lifetime

Last winter I had an immature male rufous hummingbird (that breeds west of the Rockies) in my Dunnellon yard from November, 2020 through the last day of February, 2021. When Fred Bassett, a hummingbird bander, was in the area in January, he trapped and banded it.

This fall, I was notified by Mr. Bassett that he recaptured my rufous, all grown up, in Calloway (Panama City) on its migration route. He told me that there was a 10% chance it could return to my area, so neighbors and I made sure to keep the sugar water feeders hung and fresh.

I kept my eye out for the returning bird, which never appeared. BUT.....another rufous has been visiting my flowers, and it appears to be another immature rufous. It prefers the firespike and porterweed flowers, so it has been visiting the feeders in my neighbor's and my yards less frequently than the flowers. We are monitoring this because to capture it for banding, Fred needs to hang the feeder inside a huge cage.

You can check out Fred Bassett on the internet; he has videos of his technique for banding the birds. He reminded me that feeders should be kept out all year because there are several species of migrants that may show up in the Southeast during the winter months.

Carol Yarnell

EDITOR'S COMMENT

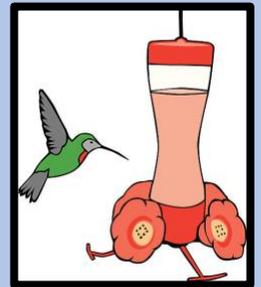
Because of the size limitations of this newsletter any articles submitted should be 300 words or less. Any materials longer than 300 words may be submitted to the Audubon Society's Facebook page or to the web page. Photos are welcome but please include where the photo was taken and identify people or birds in the photo. No heavily edited images please. Be sure to include your name and contact information. Rare bird alerts are solicited but please, if possible, include a photo of the bird, where seen and when. The editor reserves the right to edit submissions for length, spelling, grammar or legal reasons. E-mail text or photos to Cheryl Varona at pitacav@aol.com.

BIRD NERD

Do you have a question about birds or birding? E-mail me the question and I will try find an answer. I can ask some experts, dig around in my reference books or explore the web to find the answer. Send your query to pitacav@aol.com

LEAVE A HUMMINGBIRD FEEDER UP!

The hummingbirds that spent the summer in your yard are very likely in Central or South America, or an island in the Caribbean by now. However, there are lots of hummingbirds migrating through on their way south. Leave up at least one feeder for the stragglers. We have a Ruby-throated Hummingbird here who stops by for a sip of nectar several times a day



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE By Cheryl Varona

It has been a great year for Membership! This is my last report and it covers through 12/31/2021.

We had a total of 124 Members for the year 2021 and 56 Members for 2022. I have emailed renewal requests twice and mailed a final reminder including a link to the website with each. If you have not yet renewed you can renew here: <https://marionaudubon.org/membership>

ADDITIONAL MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

There have been an additional 20 renewals and 1 new member since the end of December.

Update provided by our new Membership Chair April Russell

Wildlife photographers

You already know there are many beautiful birds and other interesting creatures right here in Marion County, but many of our friends and neighbors have not yet noticed. There's now a new group where you can share any wildlife photos you've taken in Marion County. This group is intended to provide a window for residents to see the beauty in their own backyards and inspire them to go outside and see it for themselves. Join the page to add photos or just enjoy seeing what others share. Find it on Facebook- "Marion County Birds & Wildlife" and share with your friends. Adding one to two photos per post seems to work best. Feel free to post as often as you'd like.

MEMBER PHOTOS



Photo left a Barred Owl taken at
Fort King and below a red-shouldered
Hawk at the Ocala Wetlands

Phots by Leroy Simon





Photos taken by Liz
Stakenborg in her back yard

See story above

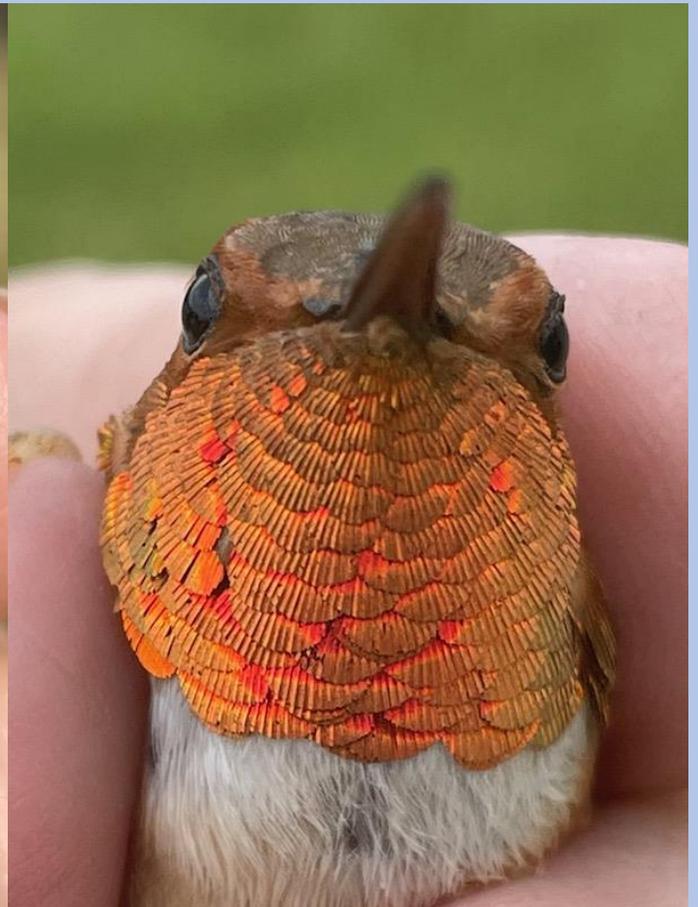




Photos by Sharon Ritacco

See story above





Photos sent by
Carol Yarnell and
taken by Fred
Bassett

Above Left:
Immature rufous
hummingbird In
Dunnellon

Above Right:
Same bird a year
later in Calloway
(Panama City)

See story above

If you have any photos to submit for this newsletter, send them to pitacav@aol.com.
Include where the shot was taken. No Photo Shop pictures, please.

