



THE SCRUB JAY

A PUBLICATION BY MARION
AUDUBON SOCIETY

President's Message

Welcome members!

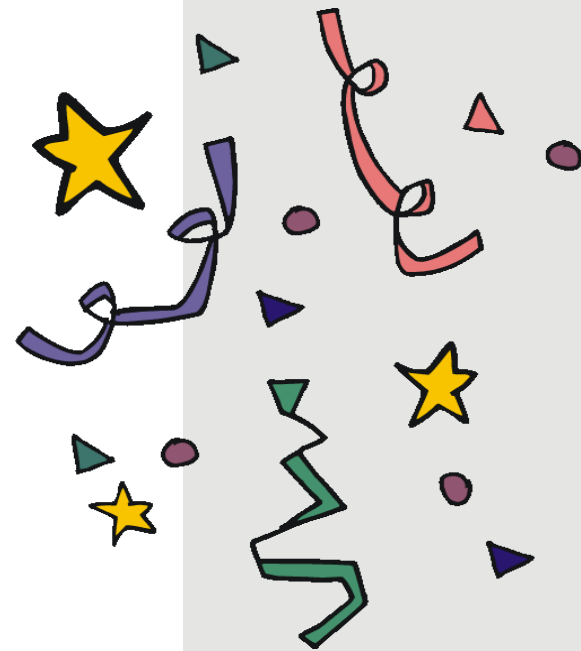
I am so excited to lead Marion Audubon over the next couple of years. We have assembled a fantastic board who is eager to work together to welcome new people and provide rewarding opportunities for both new and seasoned birders. Over the last year, our club has grown into a more diverse group. We have 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!

Michele Reyes
President

A Challenge for February

You can participate in the Great 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.



2021's Top 5 birders for Marion County



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

Upcoming Programs

Jan 11- Identifying Birds Made Easy

Feb 15- Everything eBird:

Finding & Reporting birds, Creating your life list

March 22- Introductory Birding

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.

Our CBC numbers are in and there is much to celebrate!

The Marion Audubon Society participated in the National Audubon Society's 122nd annual Christmas Bird Count. Thirty seven people divided into 12 teams and counted 5,621 birds from 102 different species within our 15 mile diameter circle! Here are some of the highlights: 10 species of warblers including a very late Louisiana Waterthrush, Grasshopper sparrow, Baltimore Oriole, Summer Tanager, Glossy Ibis, Merlin, a Short-tailed Hawk, a Rufous Hummingbird and last but certainly not least, a Great Horned Owl!

The data we collected has been submitted to the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology where it is used to track migration and population of our country's birds. This is the value of Citizen Science! Ornithologists (scientists who study birds) cannot be everywhere. We are indeed the boots on the ground! We'd like to thank all our volunteers, some of whom even came from neighboring clubs including The Village Birders, Brownwood Birders, and Citrus Audubon. A special thanks to Barbara Schwartz for coordinating this exciting event and Larry Sutton for compiling our numbers!

(Louisiana waterthrush -Tom Hince)

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

eBird



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 did a big year for the state of Florida. Despite being out of the game for 4 months, she still ended the year with 197 species. Congratulations, Josie!

(Upland Sandpiper - Michele Reyes)



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.

Josie Muncy

Miss a program?

No worries, you can watch the replay anytime from our

YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKNZujntGgHdIGMaw3P>

[RLGQ](#)



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

<https://marionaudubon.org/membership>

New board for 2022 & 2023

President: Michele Reyes Vice President: Kent Weakley
Secretary: Barbara Schwartz Treasurer: Martin Schwartz
Education Chair: Scott Robinson
Conservation Chair: Liz Stakenborg
Membership Chair: April Russell
Young Birders Club Chair: Jinez Osborne



(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!

(Variegated Flycatcher)



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

We had a total of 124 members for 2021 and have 76 members so far for 2022.
Join or easily renew online thru our website:
: <https://marionaudubon.org/membership>



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 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

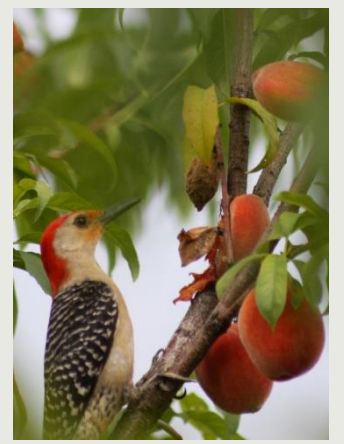


I guess you could say it was my mom who started me out watching birds from the time I could hold binoculars! We lived in Miami and spent many a weekend in the Everglades. Twenty-four years ago, my husband & I moved to Ocala, where we worked very hard to turn our yard into its own special place. Over 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



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 sighting. This bird has only been seen in all North America 8 times. It was as 1st time sighting for Marion County.

Only one other person managed a sighting of it later that day. It was never seen again. So, the lesson here is that no matter where or when you are birding one never knows what you might find. So have a camera ready and take good notes of what you are seeing. Always expect the unexpected. This one is now in the record books.

Jim Sheppard

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.

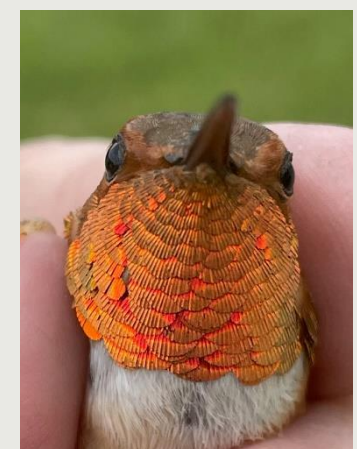
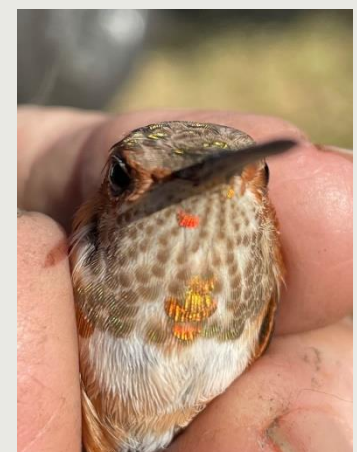
This fall, I was notified by Mr. Bassett that he recaptured my rufous, all grown up, in Calloway (Panama City) on its migration route. He told me that there was a 10% chance it could return to my area, so neighbors and I made sure to keep the sugar water feeders hung and fresh.

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

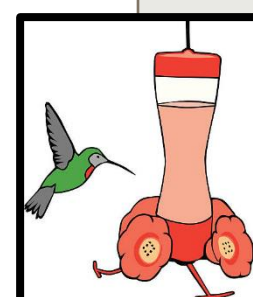
(Photos sent by Carol Yarnell and taken by Fred Bassett)



Top: Immature rufous hummingbird In Dunnellon
Middle: Same bird a year later in Calloway (Panama City)

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.



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.



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

Photos by Leroy Simon

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

All members are welcome to send articles to be included in the newsletter (300 words max.) Photos are welcome. Please include location and identify people or birds in the photo. No heavily edited images please. Our editor reserves the right to edit submissions for length, spelling, grammar, or legal reasons. Please email articles or photos to marionaudubon@outlook.com.

Need help identifying a bird? Try out the free Merlin Bird ID app for your phone. (Our YouTube channel has a tutorial). Still stumped? Post it to the "What's this bird?" page on Facebook and you're sure to get a quick response! If it's rare for our area, shoot us a message to let us know what you've found! How do you know if it's rare? (It will come up with an orange box when you report the sighting in eBird.)

WHAT'S THIS BIRD?

