



From the President

As the days grow shorter and cooler, we are reminded that fall is one of the most exciting times of the year for birding. Migration is now in full swing, and every outing holds the promise of new arrivals and surprise encounters.

Whether it's a warbler passing through on its long journey south or the return of familiar winter residents, this season always offers something special.

Marion Audubon Society has several birding outings planned in the coming months, and I encourage each of you to join us. These walks are a wonderful opportunity to sharpen your birding skills, enjoy the camaraderie of fellow members, and experience the thrill of migration together.

Whether you are a seasoned birder or just starting out, there's no better way to connect with nature and our community.

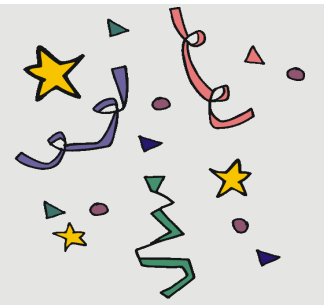
I am grateful for the energy and enthusiasm each of you brings to our club. Together, we make a difference by fostering appreciation and conservation of the birds that enrich our lives.

Let's get outside, explore our favorite hotspots, and celebrate the wonder of fall migration.

I look forward to seeing you in the field!

**Thank you,
Kent Weakley**

President, Marion Audubon Society
marionaudubonpres@yahoo.com



In review so far for 2025
Marion County
Top eBirders:

Scott
Robinson
206
Tom Hince
198
Steve & Darcy
Shaddix
184
Brett Bickel
179
Tami Reece
174
Elizabeth
Stakenborg
166
Michael Baker
165
Michael
Warren
148
D. Smith
146
David Rakes
143
John Haas
135
Greg
Drawbaugh
134
Alice Horst
129
Michele
Reyes,
Preston
Ballard,
Douglas
Richard
128

Upcoming Events and Programs

Our Events Schedule is often updated, you can find us on Facebook for news, Instagram for photos and on Meetup for events.

Please RSVP through the Meetup app which will also keep you informed of all events. If you're not on Meetup, you will miss out on some special last-minute opportunities for members!

Join us as we walk around the parks looking and listening for birds. We will identify what we find and teach you how to identify birds on your own.

We include specialty walks, these are designated (Δ), and are for paid members.

They offer an opportunity to explore new birding hotspots in and near Marion County for new and experienced birders and photographers.

Additional events will be added, so be sure to keep an eye on the Meetup page to see walk details and sign up. Driving instructions are essential for some locations and will be posted for the event.

Marion Audubon also offers educational events/speaker series are online using Zoom.

These are also posted on Meetup and this is where you will find the Zoom link to attend the events. These events are open to the public and are free to attend unless otherwise posted.

Dates and events subject to change.

You can click [HERE](#) for any of the quick dates listed below to register or check the Meetup app for updates before the event, especially when the weather is questionable.

SEPTEMBER

20



730am-Walk
Orange Lake

29



800am-Walk
Hogeye Preserve

OCTOBER

11



800am-Walk
Ocala Recharge Park

25



800am-Walk
Ocklawaha Prairie

NOVEMBER

08



800am-Walk
Hague Dairy UF

22



800am-Walk
Silver Springs

DECEMBER

20



125th annual
National Audubon Christmas Bird Count

A Research and Conservation Partnership for Kestrels in the City of Ocala

By Simon Fitzwilliam (simon.fitzwilliam@myfwc.com)
and Karl E. Miller (karl.miller@myfwc.com and karl.miller.bird@gmail.com)

The Southeastern American Kestrel is a declining subspecies of kestrel listed in the State of Florida as Threatened.

A small cavity nesting falcon, the Southeastern American Kestrel historically occupied longleaf pine savannas and grasslands once widespread across the southeastern states.

It has since adapted to changing landscapes and is now often found near pastures and fields and other areas where people live.

The availability of cavities for nesting is critical for Southeastern American Kestrels, and they will readily use nest boxes when placed in suitable foraging habitat.

Since the 1990s, dozens of nest boxes have been installed by the University of Florida and the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) across Marion County as part of a long-term kestrel nest box monitoring program. Recently, volunteers with Marion Audubon, in partnership with the FWC and the Ocala Recreation and Parks Department, also installed a small number of nest boxes on parks within the City of Ocala to promote awareness of kestrel conservation and foster a sense of stewardship for this engaging falcon.

Marion Audubon volunteers maintain and monitor these nest boxes every year.

Researchers with the FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute have been studying movement patterns of the Southeastern American Kestrels in northcentral Florida for several years. In 2025, we expanded our project to include a few of the nesting pairs monitored by Marion Audubon in the City of Ocala.

Little is known about movement patterns, home range size, or habitat use of our breeding kestrels in Florida. For example, Southeastern American Kestrels are thought to be non-migratory, but their winter movements have never been studied to confirm this. We deploy lightweight GPS tracking units on breeding adults to assess their movements and habitat use.

This information will help inform permitting guidelines for the species and help target habitat management efforts on public and private lands.



Kestrel, female, photos courtesy of Karl E. Miller



Associated News

New Trail Added to Silver Springs

Ross Allen Island Boardwalk has re-opened! This easy access trail is tree lined and follows the river for scenic encounters, Marion Audubon has a walk planned for Saturday November 22. Come along with us and discover the birding opportunities. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Florida Budget Summary FY 2025-26

Floridapolicy.org recently published a brief on appropriations, you can follow up here with an expanded re-cap. In regard to the Florida Forever program-The 2025–26 budget allocates \$270.5 million to the Florida Forever program.^[37] With an 82 percent increase over previous year funding, this is the highest appropriation to the program in 16 years. Still, this amount falls far too short of what the Senate proposed, which was an amount that would have partially addressed prior funding gaps. Read more [HERE](#)

Purple Martins of Orange Lake

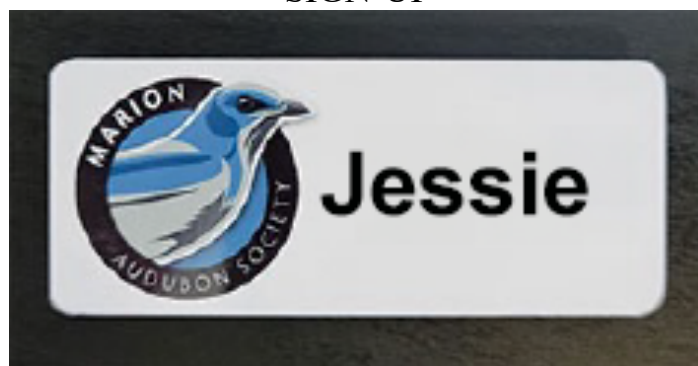
Marion Audubon Florida

Recently in 2025, Marion Audubon donated and installed a second rack for the purple Martins located at the Orange Lake Overlook trail, when the initial rack quickly filled. We love providing a nesting structure at a beautiful park which gives the public the opportunity to see these fabulous birds up close. Learn more about Purple Martins and their nesting habits [HERE](#). Learn more about attracting and providing the best nesting experience for a colony [HERE](#) Our MarionAudubon.org website has beautifully illustrated educational information regarding Purple Martins. Find the guide [HERE](#). Join us for a dedication of the new addition to the Purple Martin House, we plan to lead a walk at OLO Saturday 9/20. More information [HERE](#)

Renew your membership for 2025?
Join or easily renew online thru our website:
: <https://marionaudubon.org/membership>



MARION AUDUBON
MEMBERSHIP CLUB
SIGN-UP



Want an official MAS name tag?
We will be placing an order soon.
Cost is \$6.00

Email marionaudubonmemberships@outlook.com
To be added to the list.

Photos from some recent Marion County Birds and Wildlife



Burrowing Owl near OTOW
Photo by Thomas Gaines



Scrub Jay in Ocala
Photo by Alex Vazquez

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
marionaudubonnews@outlook.com

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.

WHAT'S THIS BIRD

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!

Click here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/whatsthisbird>

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.)

