



Fall 2022

Hosted by



Hillsborough
County Florida

Suncoast

Youth Conservation Center



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- Summer Camp
- Volunteering

For information about our programs
contact us at:

813-922-7980 or

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fyccn!

Florida Youth Conservation
Centers Network

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, turtles and wildflowers. Most trips are on foot, but some are by boat, kayak/canoe, 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 Short-tailed Hawks, Anhingas, Reddish Egrets, Least Terns, Florida Scrub-Jays, Black Skimmers, Southeastern American Kestrels, and hummingbirds. Seminars about shorebird identification and an intimate discussion about behaviors of Anhingas will be fascinating. Seminars about our other Florida animals include alligators, sharks, manatees, Florida butterflies, fiddler crabs. 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 scientists, experts in their field. On Friday night, Stephen Shunk will discuss his knowledge of woodpeckers of North America, based on the expertise that led him to write the *Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America*. If you bring your copy, he will be glad to sign it, or you can purchase one! On Saturday night, ecologist and MacArthur Fellow Carl Safina, Ph.D., will discuss animal behavior and thought processes. 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. Carl will also sign his books and you will have an opportunity to purchase them at the Keynote event.

NATURE EXPO

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 from 9 am to 5 pm at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's 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 21, 2022 | Doors Open 6:00 pm

Stephen Shunk, Woodpecker Expert

Woodpeckers: Florida's Keystone Carpenters!

Join Oregon naturalist and author of the Peterson's *Guide to Woodpeckers of North America*, Steve Shunk, for an exciting journey into the lives and times of Florida's amazing woodpeckers. Steve will share the secrets of woodpecker anatomy, demystify woodpecker feeding, courtship, and nesting behaviors, including the reasons why woodpeckers pound on our houses and what we can do about it. Steve will also reveal the keystone ecological roles played by our local woodpeckers. Full event admission includes a reception with hors d'oeuvres and a beer and wine cash bar.



SATURDAY October 22, 2022 | Doors Open 6:00 pm

Carl Safina, Ecologist and Safina Center Founder

Beyond Wild: Thought, Emotion, and Culture in Birds and Other Animals

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

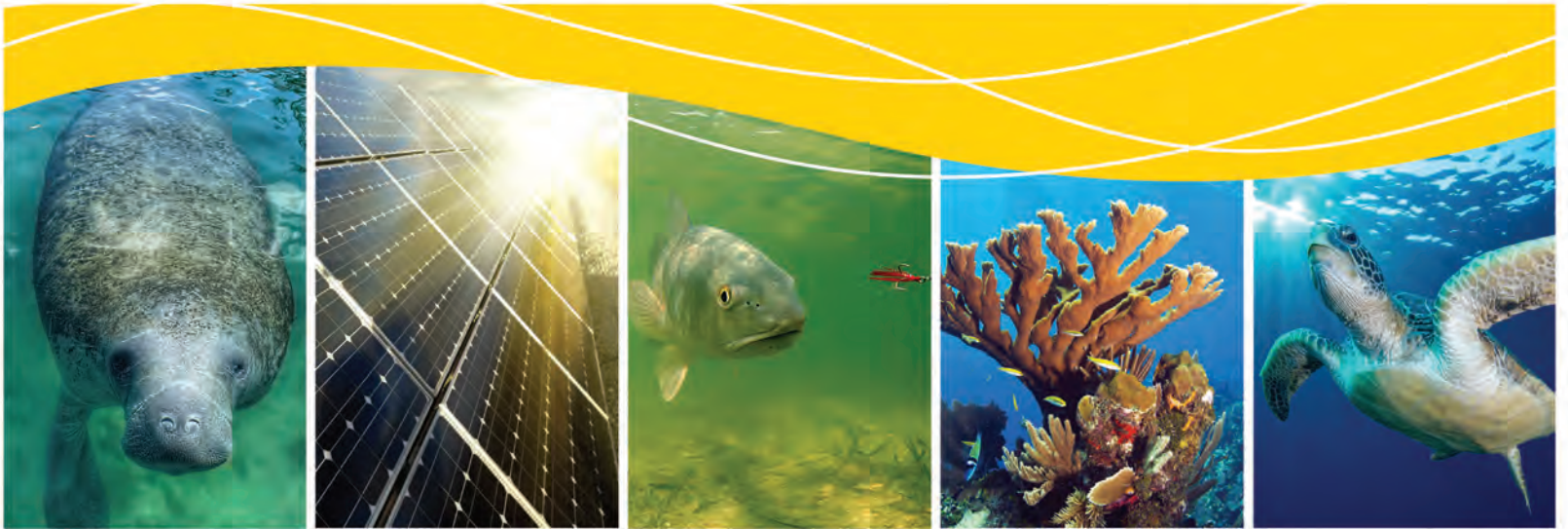
FRIDAY	9 am	The Fascinating Fiddler Crab, Faye Johnston
	10 am	Mermaids and Manatees, Dr. James “Buddy” Powell
	11 am	Florida’s Black Bears, Joyce Kleen
	12 pm	Teaching Field Ornithology, Dr. Mark McRae
	1 pm	Getting to Know Shorebirds, Adam Kent
	2 pm	Short-tailed Hawks, Gina Kent
	3 pm	Anhingas, Dr. Jerry Jackson
	4 pm	Least Terns, Jeff Liechty
	5 pm	Reddish Egrets in Florida: Beautiful and Fierce, Mark Rachal
	SATURDAY	9 am
10 am		Florida’s Alligators, Kent Vliet
11 am		Florida Scrub-Jay Conservation: What do we do next?, Raoul Boughton
12 pm		Florida Butterflies, Marc Minno
1 pm		Manatee Rescue Program, Brandon Bassett
2 pm		Citizen Science Projects - A Personal Perspective, Charlie Fisher
3 pm		The Black Skimmer, Dr. Beth Forsys
4 pm	Southeastern American Kestrels, Zachery Holmes	
5 pm	Landscaping for Hummingbirds, Stephen Backes	

Welcome to the 2021 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 a new, all-day Florida Specialties bus trip. The seminars range from from birds to butterflies, highlight some southeastern specialties such as American Kestrels 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, Co-Chair, 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



Seminars

FRIDAY

The Fascinating Fiddler Crab

Faye Johnston

9:00 am

Fascinating fiddler crabs play an important role in our intertidal habitats as environmental health indicators and are simply FUN to observe. Their seemingly simple claws have multiple amazing functions, including the reason they got their name. Amazing, you ask? Can you switch from being a lefty to a righty? Take a moment to stop by, listen and learn and you too might just become a fan of the fiddler crabs!

Mermaids and Manatees

Dr. James "Buddy" Powell

10:00 am

A Crystal River native, Dr. James "Buddy" Powell's experience with manatees began here as a teenager. Since then, he has spent more than four decades in the field, working toward the conservation of marine mammals. He is thrilled to share some of his field experiences with us tonight, along with a brief history of manatee research and conservation in Florida and beyond.

Florida's Black Bears

Joyce Kleen

11:00 am

In Florida, black bears are really quite black. They mate in the early summer and females give birth to half-pound cubs in February. Learn how they raise their one or two cubs, what they eat, where they live, and about their life histories and behaviors. Their reclusive manner generally makes them nearly invisible to us, their human neighbors, but sometimes conflicts arise. Learn how to co-exist with them here in this state.

Teaching Field Ornithology

Dr. Mark McRae

12:00 pm

The Field Ornithology course at the University of Tampa has introduced dozens of young adults to the wonders of birds and their habitats in central Florida. The teaching of complex biological concepts in an outdoor setting has its unique challenges, but many more educational rewards. Join Dr. McRae as he shares how the course came into being, trials and errors made along the way, and lessons he has learned trying to connect Gen Z to a deeper knowledge and love of nature.

Getting to Know Shorebirds

Adam Kent

1:00 pm

Approximately 50 species of shorebirds occur regularly in North America but only a handful are found in any one place and time. In this presentation we'll explore differences and similarities among various shorebird groups and discuss shorebird behaviors and identification. If you are a lover of plovers, smitten with sandpipers, or if you sometimes struggle with shorebird identification, this program is for you.

Short-tailed Hawks

Gina Kent

2:00 pm

Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) has studied the rare and inconspicuous Short-tailed Hawk since 2000. ARCI scientists have used remote GPS telemetry to monitor the year-round movements, habitat use, home range sizes, and survival of Short-tailed Hawks tagged as adults. The U.S. population of this raptor is exceedingly small – perhaps no more than 250 pairs – and restricted almost entirely to Florida. Yearly, systematic road surveys in the Everglades and Florida Keys have illuminated the trends of these local migratory raptors over time. Find out more about this secretive, rare, Florida raptor with Gina Kent.



Open Tuesday - Sunday
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St. Petersburg, FL 33705
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St. Petersburg
Parks & Recreation

Seminars FRIDAY

Anhingas

Dr. Jerry Jackson

3:00 pm

A year of intensive study of Anhingas by a professional ornithologist has revealed amazing details about their lives and behaviors. Dr. Jackson shares what he has learned about this unique fish-eating waterbird of the southeast U.S.

Least Terns

Jeff Liechty

4:00 pm

The smallest terns in the world are fiesty, but threatened throughout much of their range due to loss of beach nesting habitat. Least Terns are trying to adapt to modern Florida by nesting on rooftops, construction sites, and dredge spoil islands. From his years of working to protect Least Terns, Jeff Liechty shares his knowledge about their conservation, biology, behavior and ecology.

Reddish Egrets in Florida: Beautiful and Fierce

Mark Rachal

5:00 pm

The Reddish Egret is the rarest heron in North America. In Florida, we have less than 400 pairs. Learn why these birds are so rare here, where they occur, how to differentiate them from the other herons, about their unique feeding behavior, their courtship rituals, and other fascinating facts. Mark Rachal considers Reddish Egrets to be extremely fierce and beautiful. He will share why he thinks that.



Seminars

SATURDAY

Insights Into the Engineering of Apex Predators: How Biomechanics Helps Us Understand & Care for Sharks

Dr. Dan Huber

9:00 am

Sharks possess an incredible array of morphological, physiological, and behavioral attributes that have kept them at the top of oceanic food webs for hundreds of millions of years. Dr. Dan Huber studies the biomechanics of shark feeding and locomotion to understand how the mechanical function of a shark's body contributes to this ecological and evolutionary success over time. For topics ranging from the effect of bite force on feeding ecology to the effect of vertebral biomechanics on the health of captive sharks, Dr. Huber uses the tools of mechanical engineering to better understand sharks, which rank among the most successful predators in the history of life on earth.

Florida's Alligators

Kent Vliet

10:00 am

Dr. Vliet will discuss the alligator's place in the ecology of Florida wetlands. He will touch on the past history of alligators, their near extinction, the recovery of the species, and the future of this crocodylian in Florida.

Florida Scrub-Jay Conservation: What do we do next?

Raoul Boughton

11:00 pm

Mosaic and its phosphate-mining predecessors set aside land to permanently conserve Florida Scrub-Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) habitat for the future and are funding research at the conserved site. Birds were moved from where their habitats were mined to augment and genetically rescue a declining population. The Habitat Management Plan includes the Mosaic North and South Wellfield and Manatee County's Duette Preserve and the South Florida Water Management District's Coker Tract. Native scrub and scrubby flatwoods sites needed prescribed fire management for scrub-jays. The US Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plan considers that these sites host a distinct genetic population known as the M4 population. For the last 20 years, Mosaic has conserved these sites, managed habitat, researched translocation practices, and monitored the long-term population. A lot has been learned. The project increased the original 14 impacted groups to 44 groups with 119 adults. Hear about Florida Scrub-Jay conservation, Mosaic's commitment to the species, and next steps so the M4 population can be the first recovered population of Florida Scrub-Jays.



TREB TAMPA BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM

PROTECT YOUR PLAYGROUND

Join a growing community of boaters, fishers, and outdoor enthusiasts dedicated to the protection of Tampa Bay



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Tampa Bay Estuary

Proceeds from plate sales directly fund Tampa Bay restoration projects through Bay Mini-Grants

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Seminars

SATURDAY

Florida Butterflies

Marc Minno

12:00 pm

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.

Manatee Rescue Program

Brandon Bassett

1:00 pm

Rescuing manatees can be a complicated affair involving many different agencies and organizations. However, in many ways it involves and is reliant upon residents and visitors to Florida. Learn how and why manatees are rescued in Florida and how you can help.

Citizen Science Projects - A Personal Perspective

Charlie Fisher

2:00 pm

Citizen science projects are continuing to contribute to ornithology and conservation movements generally. Amateurs have many opportunities to participate and contribute themselves. What are these projects, and how do they work from a participant's perspective? Charlie has been involved in many through the years and gives his thoughts on four in particular: the Christmas Bird Count, the North American Breeding Bird Survey, eBird, and the Florida Breeding Bird Atlas 2. For each, Charlie will cover the history of the project, the structure and scientific protocol, his experiences as a field participant, and will address the scientific output of each and how the data has been used. Charlie is a CPA and not a professional scientist, so this talk will address the experience of an interested non-scientist in these scientific endeavors.

Should I stay or should I go? Big decisions for a colonial seabird, the Black Skimmer

Dr. Beth Forsys

3:00 pm

Black Skimmers are colonial seabirds that nest on open beaches throughout much of the US. This interactive talk will allow you to choose a banded Black Skimmer from the Tampa Bay area and make predictions about whether they stay in our region to breed and overwinter or go elsewhere. You will then hear what we know about your bird and others from the >10,000 band resights we have in our database. Black Skimmers are long-lived birds with complicated life histories that we are just beginning to understand.

The Benefit of Rural Florida: The Story and Status of Southeastern American Kestrels

Zachery Holmes

4:00 pm

The Southeastern American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius paulus*) is a state threatened subspecies of American kestrel that stays in Florida year-round, including through the breeding season. This subspecies is historically indicative of longleaf pine savannah and open upland habitats - however, land use change has forced them to adapt to suitable anthropogenic environments including open pastures and rangelands, golf courses, and parks. As a secondary cavity nesting species, indicative of declining habitats this subspecies continues to be of conservation concern through out the state. Zachery will be discussing the current known status of Southeastern American Kestrels in the state of Florida and ways you can help their status.

Landscaping for Hummingbirds

Stephen Backes

5:00 pm

Steve Backes, renowned for his success in providing habitat for hummingbirds as measured by their occurrence in his yard, will cover strategies for attracting hummingbirds to a suburban yard using plants and feeders. It will include understanding the hummingbird's territorial needs and behaviors. And, Steve will discuss how to create multiple territories that will increase the number of residents and visitors.



PALEO PRESERVE



NATURE EXPO



Vendors & Exhibitors



INTERNATIONAL DARK-SKY ASSOCIATION

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HEARTWOOD PRESERVE



Southwest Florida
Water Management District



Field Trips

THURSDAY

Pre-Festival Bus Trip Seeking Florida's Special Birds

Dave Goodwin, Jim Eager

7:30 am – 4:30 pm
Thu-TB | \$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 2022 Florida Birding and Wildlife 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.

Coffeepot Bayou Bird Island, Pinellas County - Boat Trip

*Aubrey Malone, Mark Rachal, Jeff Liechty,
David Simpson*

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!

Plan your next visit with us at
Hillsboroughcounty.org/Conservation



Coming Up: Hillsborough County Hiking Spree!
November 1st 2022 - March 31st 2023
Learn More at Hillsboroughcounty.org/HikingSpree

Field Trips

FRIDAY

Lower Green Swamp, Hillsborough County

Charlie Fisher, Steve Raymond, Rebecca Winch, Mark McRae

7:30 – 11:30 am
Fri-LGS | \$25

Lower Green Swamp Preserve was once a working cattle ranch, now 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

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, Zach Holmes, 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, Bill Kaempfer

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 – Wagon Ride

Dr. Mary Keith, Mary Barnwell, Brandt Henningsen

8:30 am – Noon
Fri-CBW | \$30

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. On arrival in the parking area look east to see a night roost for wading birds. A few may still be just leaving. You'll ride a wagon up "Mount Cockroach" for a view of the tidal and freshwater wetlands and search for gallinules, Limpkins and egrets, scan the treeline for the eagles' nest, and ride through grasslands that harbor everything from nighthawks to sparrows and Common Yellowthroats. 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.

Florida Aquarium, Hillsborough County

Tristan Ware

9:00 – 11:30 am
Fri-FA | \$25

Birds and More at The Florida Aquarium

Join an experienced staff member on a bird-watching trek through The Florida Aquarium's Wetlands Habitat. Birds soar overhead in the Aquarium's iconic 80-foot-tall glass dome, turtles bask in the sun and freshwater fish dart through the water as you wander the Wetlands trail. Enjoy the lush mangrove trees that have grown at the Aquarium since its opening in 1995. Lock eyes with an alligator, run alongside the playful river otters, and marvel at the beautiful plumage of the Roseate Spoonbills and White Ibises. Explore freshwater, brackish water and saltwater environments and gain a new appreciation for the animals that live in Florida and beyond! This trip also gives you entry into the rest of the Aquarium habitats, which you may visit on your own.

Fiddler Fun in the Sun - A Field Trip Experience, Hillsborough County

Fay Johnston, Julie Alberts, Alexx Bishop

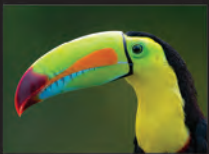
9:30 – 11:00 am
Fri-FC | \$20

Come and experience – hands-on, in the marsh – what it is like to study fascinating fiddler crabs. We will be looking at gender ratios and estimating how many fiddler crabs live here on site. Even when not visible on the marsh surface, one can learn from the signs they leave behind as to what was happening in their intertidal world: feeding, excavating, and more. Fiddler crabs are sensitive to pollution, and we think you will be amazed to see just how healthy our habitats are, so take advantage of this fun opportunity to be a field biologist. Your shoes may be wet and muddy – welcome to the great outdoors!

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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 Manager Rebecca Winch and expert birders Charlie Fisher and Mark McRae 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.

Fort De Soto County Park, Pinellas County

David Simpson, David Goodwin, Jim Eager

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!

Circle B Bar Reserve, Polk County

Bob Snow

8:00 am – Noon

Sat-CBB | \$25

Circle B Bar Reserve is one of the very best birding spots in the area. A series of shallow wetlands intersected by raised levees for walking supports Purple Gallinules, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Sora, bitterns and more. The resident pair of Bald Eagles patrols the area, and previous trips have enjoyed both Peregrine Falcons and Merlins. Of course the gators peer at you from the water, and marsh rabbits go swimming past too. Wintering White Pelicans still leave room in the deeper lakes for ducks.

Birding and Banding in Hammock Park, Dunedin

Steve Aversa, Cuneyst Yilmaz, Jim McGinity

8:00 am – Noon

Sat-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.



Field Trips

SATURDAY

Gibbons Preserve

Dan Savercool, Nathan LaFata

8:30 - 11:00 am

Sat-GP1 | \$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.

Rock Ponds North

Mic McCarty, Brandt Henningsen, Jacqueline Bilello,

Dr. Mary Keith

8:30 am - Noon

Sat-RP | \$25

For this special-access field trip, we will drive around tidal and freshwater ponds created for a Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) project on former agricultural lands to improve the quality of the water entering Tampa Bay. Islands were constructed to provide roosting and nesting bird habitat and Black-necked Stilts and Gull-billed Terns have nested there. Many shorebirds, sandpipers, plovers, and more use the islands, gulls and terns feed in the ponds, gallinules and ducks venture in and out of the reeds and grasses along the edges, and American White Pelicans spend the winter months visiting the ponds. Hawks and Ospreys patrol the grasslands and the ponds. SWFWMD staff will explain the hydrology of the restoration. The road is dirt and sand, somewhat bumpy, but easily passable. You will meet the leaders at the Circle K then drive about a mile south to the entrance. Everyone must enter the locked gate at the same time so please arrive a little early. There are no facilities on site, so use the restroom at Circle K. We will carpool in 7 vehicles, with up to 4 persons per vehicle. Bring water, snacks.

Newman Branch Kayak and Upland Trail Hike – Boat Trip

Stan Kroh, Thomas Res

9:00 - 11:30 am

Sat-NB | \$30

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 and Idah Schultz Preserve, Bugs and Butterflies

John Lampkin, Rob Epstein, Dr. Marc Minno

1:00 - 3:30 pm

Sat-SP | \$25

The 134-acre 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.

Friends of Tampa Bay Aquatic Preserves



Citizen support group dedicated to environmental preservation, restoration and educational efforts within our Tampa Bay Aquatic Preserves. Please visit us at:

www.tampabayaquaticpreserves.org

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."



Terra Ceia Uplands, Frog Creek Birding, Manatee County

Christin Meilink

8:00 – 10:30 am

Sun-TCU | \$25

Terra Ceia Preserve State Park is one of the largest restoration projects ever initiated along Tampa Bay. Once ditched farm land, it is now a living example of the biological diversity that estuaries can support and a birder/naturalist's paradise. Over 100 species of birds and other abundant wildlife from turtles and gators to bobcats and deer; the list keeps growing as this restoration site matures. This walk will skirt Frog Creek in a lovely old oak hammock, circle through pinewoods, then out to an area under restoration with replanted pines, past freshwater wetlands, and down to the mangroves on a back loop of Frog Creek again. With that diversity of habitat, anything is possible! Eastern Pewees, Cedar Waxwings, myriad passerines spend the winter, Peregrine Falcons and American White Pelicans circle overhead, and all the local residents enjoy the riches of such a diverse habitat.

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

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. Unless you choose to walk on the beach, the inland paths of the island are paved or brick, so the walking is easy.

Exploring Mosaic Reclamation Habitats – Van Trip

Raoul Boughton

8:00 am – 1:30 pm
Sun-FCM | \$30

The Mosaic Phosphate Mine Reclamation sites are well-known as excellent bird habitats and our field trip leader, Mosaic ornithology staff Raoul Boughton, is looking forward to showing them to our field trippers. Participants will meet at the Four Corners Mine entrance (the only restrooms of the morning). From there the trip will van to ponds searching for early fall migrant White Pelicans, ducks and shorebirds, and look for eagles, hawks, and raptors overhead. One stop will be at a wellfield know to have healthy, and usually very friendly, families of Florida Scrub-Jays. And one stop will be to an observation tower overlooking the Mosaic 500-acre wetland, for herons, egrets, and wetland birds. All locations are within half an hour of the starting point, so van rides between sites are not long. Time: Meet at the Four Corners Mine gate, 12000 Old Highway 37, Mulberry, FL 33860, at 8:00 am. End by 1:30 pm. It's about a 45 min drive from Apollo Beach and the Expo.

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. Canoes or 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.

Boyd Hill Nature Preserve - Gopher Tortoise Hike

George Heinrich, Dr. Jeff Goessling

9:00 – 11:30 am
Sun-BH | \$25

Boyd Hill Nature Preserve in south St. Petersburg is home to the largest remaining population of gopher tortoises in the southern Pinellas Peninsula. Learn about the natural history and conservation of gopher tortoises, as well as ongoing research and habitat management efforts at the preserve. Participants will be able to assist researchers with capture and processing of tortoises. This work is conducted under an FWC scientific collecting permit. We will also view the only known population of Nuttall's rayless goldenrod (in flower) in peninsular Florida. Walking is on flat paths but can be rough and weedy going into the scrub to see tortoise burrows, so long pants are recommended. A diversity of wetland and upland habitats support at least 218 bird species and make the preserve a popular site with birders.



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Our activities focus on Hillsborough, Hernando, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Manatee Counties with the potential to explore protection initiatives beyond these boundaries.

Visit www.tampabayconservancy.org to learn more about us and ways to support our work.



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,
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