



Audubon | FLORIDA

Assembly

2026

***Protecting What Connects Us —
Water, Wildlife, and Community***

TradeWinds Resort, St. Pete Beach

Oct. 15-17



Schedule of Events | Audubon Assembly, Oct. 15-17, 2026

Thursday		
2:30 - 7:30 p.m.	Registration/Event Check-in	Grand Palm Colonnade
2:30 - 5:30 p.m.	Corkscrew Nature Store	Grand Palm Colonnade
3 - 5 p.m.	Chapter Presidents' Roundtable	Tarpon Key
4 p.m.	Hotel Check-in	Lobby
5:30 - 5:45 p.m.	eBird for Beginners Quick Tutorial	Tarpon Key
6 - 7 p.m.	Cocktail Reception (Beer/Wine/Soft Drinks Provided)	South Beach Lawn
Friday		
6:45 a.m. - 7 p.m.	Registration/Event Check-in	Grand Palm Colonnade
7:15 - 11:30 a.m.	CLI Meetup, Field Trip (Students/Mentors)	Tarpon/Sawyer/Long Key
7:15 - 8 a.m.	Field Trip Meet Up (Field Trips 8 - 11:30 a.m.)	Grand Palm Colonnade
7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.	Corkscrew Nature Store	Grand Palm Colonnade
Noon - 1:30 p.m.	Welcome Luncheon	Tarpon/Sawyer/Long Key
2 - 3:15 p.m.	CLI Session (Students Only)	Blue Heron
2 - 3:15 p.m.	Learning Sessions:	
	Beyond the Tag: The Science Behind Tracking Birds	Jasmine/Glades
	Playing for Keeps: Land Conservation in a Fast-Growing Florida	Sabal/Sawgrass
3:15 - 3:45 p.m.	Networking Coffee Break	Grand Palm Colonnade
3:45 - 5 p.m.	Learning Sessions Repeat:	
	Beyond the Tag: The Science Behind Tracking Birds	Jasmine/Glades
	Playing for Keeps: Land Conservation in a Fast-Growing Florida	Sabal/Sawgrass
6 - 7 p.m.	Book Signing with Mac Stone	Garden Courtyard
6 - 7 p.m.	Cocktail Reception (Credit/Debit Bar)	Garden Courtyard
7 - 9:30 p.m.	Awards Banquet Dinner and Keynote Presentation with Mac Stone	Tarpon/Sawyer/Long Key
9:30 p.m.	Book Signing with Mac Stone (if books remain)	Tarpon/Sawyer/Long Key
Saturday		
7:30 - 11:30 a.m.	Corkscrew Nature Store	Grand Palm Colonnade
7:30 - 8:30 a.m.	Networking Breakfast	Tarpon/Sawyer/Long Key
8:45 - 10:15 a.m.	Plenary: Celebrating Paul Gray and Audubon's Legacy	Tarpon/Sawyer/Long Key
10:15 - 10:45 a.m.	Break to Check-out of Hotel (by 11 a.m.), Coffee	Grand Palm Colonnade
10:45 a.m. - noon	Chapter Celebration and Awards	Tarpon/Sawyer/Long Key
1 p.m.	Annual Meeting of the Florida Audubon Society*	Blue Heron

* Pursuant to the Articles of Incorporation and bylaws, notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the Florida Audubon Society will be held on Saturday, Oct. 17.

Event Parking

Audubon Assembly attendees may enjoy a discounted rate for parking at the TradeWinds Resort. Look for signs in the parking lot with a QR code you scan with your phone.

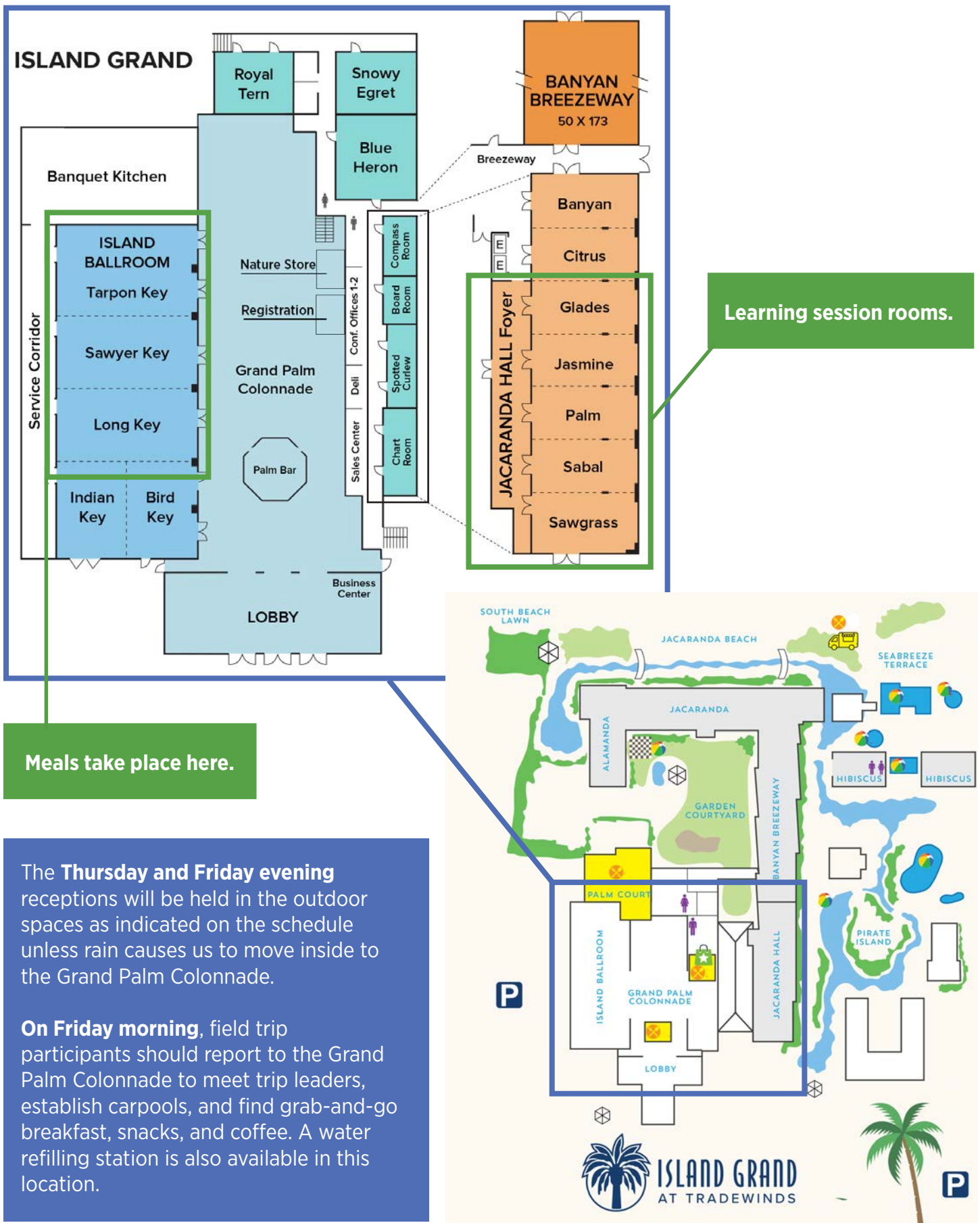
The discount code for overnight guests is BIRDNIGHT; for day-use visitors the code is BIRDDAY.

Visit the registration table or the hotel front desk with questions.



Cover: Black Skimmers.
Photo: Jean Hall.

TradeWinds Resort Layout



The **Thursday and Friday evening** receptions will be held in the outdoor spaces as indicated on the schedule unless rain causes us to move inside to the Grand Palm Colonnade.

On Friday morning, field trip participants should report to the Grand Palm Colonnade to meet trip leaders, establish carpools, and find grab-and-go breakfast, snacks, and coffee. A water refilling station is also available in this location.

Field Trips | Friday, October 16

Fort De Soto Park: Shorebirds and Coastal

Fort De Soto Park is a renowned birding destination featuring beaches, mudflats, mangroves, and coastal hammock habitat that support an incredible diversity of resident and migratory birds. This trip will focus on some of the park's best shorebird habitat, with opportunities to see shorebirds, terns, gulls, wading birds, and other coastal species.

Accessibility notes: This field trip will involve driving between multiple sections of the park and getting in and out of vehicles several times throughout the morning. Participants should expect to walk primarily on sand and grass, including crossing shallow water that may range from ankle- to knee-deep depending on conditions. This trip is best suited for participants comfortable walking on uneven surfaces, loose sand, and even wading in water. Restrooms are available throughout the park.

Note that the park charges a \$6 parking fee per car, which is the responsibility of the participant.

Fort De Soto Park: Migrants and Coastal

This trip will focus on areas known for attracting migratory songbirds, along with opportunities to observe shorebirds, wading birds, raptors, and other coastal species.

Accessibility notes: This field trip will involve driving between multiple sections of the park

and getting in and out of vehicles several times throughout the morning. Walking will take place primarily on hard-packed sand, sidewalks, and grassy areas, with generally level terrain throughout. While some walking on sand is required, this trip is designed to be a more accessible option than the shorebird-focused trip. Restrooms are available throughout the park.

Note that the park charges a \$6 parking fee per car, which is the responsibility of the participant.

Crescent Lake

Crescent Lake Park is an urban park centered around a freshwater lake that provides excellent opportunities to observe both resident and migratory birds in the heart of St. Petersburg. The lake and surrounding trees regularly attract waterfowl, wading birds, raptors, songbirds, and seasonal migrants, with opportunities to spot species such as Wood Ducks, Belted Kingfishers, migratory warblers, and more.

Accessibility notes: The park features primarily paved, level walking paths with benches and shaded areas throughout much of the route. This trip follows a loop around the lake and is one of the most accessible birding options offered, making it well suited for participants seeking firm walking surfaces and minimal elevation changes.



Left: Purple Gallinule at Roosevelt Wetlands. Photo: Donna Sperber. **Center:** Birders at Crescent Lake. Photo: Beth Forys. **Right:** Limpkin at Crescent Lake. Photo: John Ficken.

Field Trips | Friday, October 16 (cont'd)

Boyd Hill

Boyd Hill Nature Preserve is a diverse natural area in south St. Petersburg featuring pine flatwoods, freshwater lakes, hardwood hammocks, and marsh habitat connected by shaded trails and boardwalks. The preserve is known for its variety of resident and migratory birds, including woodpeckers, warblers, hawks, owls, wading birds, and seasonal songbird migrants during fall migration.

Accessibility notes: The preserve includes a mix of paved, boardwalk, and packed dirt trails with some uneven terrain and longer walking distances depending on the route. Some trails offer benches along the way. Restrooms and water fountains are available near the visitor center, and several areas of the preserve are wheelchair accessible.

Roosevelt Wetlands

Roosevelt Wetlands is a unique freshwater wetland and stormwater restoration area that offers excellent birding and expansive marsh views. The site is known for attracting a wide variety of waterfowl, wading birds, raptors, and seasonal migratory rarities that can include rails, bitterns, shorebirds, and unusual wintering ducks.

Accessibility notes: The site includes packed dirt and gravel trails with little shade and no restroom facilities. Walking distances can reach approximately 2 miles depending on the route taken. Parking is limited to a small unpaved lot with additional roadside parking nearby. Participants should plan for sun exposure and uneven terrain.

Felts Preserve

Felts Audubon Preserve, owned and managed by Manatee County Audubon Society, focuses on habitat restoration, native landscaping, and environmental education, offering field trip participants a chance to explore a mix of restored wetlands and upland habitats, including the preserve's microforest.

The preserve's bird blind offers a great opportunity to watch migrants rest at their native plant garden and water features. The preserve is an active example of land stewardship in practice, with ongoing restoration projects, native plantings, and outreach efforts that support biodiversity and long-term conservation.

Accessibility notes: The preserve includes natural surface trails that may be uneven or soft in places, with limited shade and minimal infrastructure. Participants should expect a slow-paced walk with interpretive stops and should bring water, as no drinking fountain is available onsite. A porta-potty is available for use. Parking will be available in a grass lot near the preserve entrance.

Do You eBird?

While birders use eBird to keep personal life-lists, connect with others, and discover new places to find specific birds, scientists and researchers rely on the aggregated data to track population trends, study migration timing, and design conservation strategies. If you aren't already using the tool, this quick session will get you set up to contribute your sightings to help protect birds and the places they need.

Assembly field trip leaders will keep track of each group's sightings on eBird.

New to the platform? No problem! Join a quick eBird tutorial Thursday 5:30-5:45 right before the cocktail reception in Tarpon Key.



Welcome Luncheon

Friday, Noon to 1:30 p.m.

Join friends and make new acquaintances from around the state as we convene at lunch to kick off this year's Audubon Assembly.

Audubon Florida Executive Director Julie Wraithmell will welcome participants, followed by an exciting year in review, awards presentations, and more!



Purple Martin
Photo: Scott Pearson/Audubon Photography Awards

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A photograph of a Florida Scrub-Jay perched on a dark, textured branch. The bird has bright blue plumage on its back and tail, and a lighter blue-grey head and neck.

PROUD SUPPORTERS OF

AUDUBON FLORIDA

Congratulations to
Audubon Florida
for another year of
protecting Florida's
birds, restoring native
habitats, and inspiring
conservation across
our state.

Florida Scrub-Jay.
Photo: Nathan Arnold/Audubon Photography Awards

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Welcome Conservation Leadership Initiative 2026 Cohort

Students get involved with their local chapters throughout the academic year.



Audubon Florida's Conservation Leadership Initiative (CLI) is an immersive program that connects undergraduate students with experienced Audubon chapter leaders for a unique, intergenerational learning experience.

Each fall, 25 students from across Florida are selected to join the program through the academic year, where they explore real-world conservation topics like habitat restoration, community science, environmental advocacy, and nonprofit leadership.

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Through CLI, students gain valuable exposure to environmental careers and develop skills in leadership and collaboration. At the same time, Audubon chapter leaders benefit from co-mentoring relationships that help them better engage with and support the next generation of conservation professionals. CLI strengthens both the skills of individual participants and the statewide network of Audubon leaders working for birds and communities.

“CLI has helped me with connections and real-world experience, such as research skills that have put me ahead of the game for future job opportunities.”

Abigail Lintner
Florida Gulf Coast University
CLI 2025 cohort

Learning Sessions | Friday, October 16

Learning sessions are held from 2 to 3:15 p.m. and repeated from 3:45 to 5 p.m.

Beyond the Tag: The Science Behind Tracking Migratory Birds

Location: Jasmine/Glades Rooms

This engaging session will explain the science behind bird tracking research and how scientists design studies to answer conservation questions. We'll explore how populations move across a landscape using drone technology, what tracking individuals can tell us about habitat restoration efforts, and how the tiniest transmitters can help scientists track individuals.

You will also learn why Motus stations have become such valuable tools, what they can (and can't) tell us, and why simply tagging more birds isn't always the answer. Birds are key indicators of the health of our planet, and their extensive ranges and migratory journeys reveal connections across distant geographies and communities.

Session lead: Kim Pause Tucker, PhD, Audubon Florida Senior Director of Strategic Operations

Panelists: Bryant Dossman, PhD (Audubon Everglades Research Station), Jason Fischer, PhD (Disney Conservation Programs), Shawn Clem, PhD (Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary).

Playing for Keeps: Land Conservation in a Fast-Growing Florida

Location: Sabal/Sawgrass Rooms

Growth in Florida is a high-stakes game that is played for keeps. Florida's landscapes support wildlife, water resources, agriculture, recreation, and Floridians' quality of life. As Florida continues to grow, protecting natural lands requires foresight, strategy, and investment.

This session will provide a practical overview of Florida's conservation framework, including state programs such as Florida Forever and the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, regional priorities identified by water management districts, and local government conservation initiatives. Panelists will discuss how conservation land acquisition works, how priorities are identified, and how advocates can support stronger conservation outcomes at the state, regional, and local levels.

Session lead: Beth Alvi, Audubon Florida Senior Director of Policy.

Panelists: Chris Farrell (Audubon Northeast Florida policy associate), Ellen Morrison (Southwest Florida WMD), Tabitha Biehl (Polk County Parks and Natural Resources Division), and Sue Mullins (Florida Land Conservation Specialist).



Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets.
Photo: Diana Fasanella/Audubon Photography Awards

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There is a single green vertical margin line on the left side, creating a narrow left margin. The rest of the page is filled with white space between the horizontal lines.

A photograph of a wooden boardwalk winding through a swampy forest. Spanish moss hangs from the trees, and the path leads into the distance. The image is used as a background for a presentation slide.

Protecting *what* connects us

Balancing economy and ecology
for a thriving Florida

LIVE WILDLY
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Black Skimmer

Photo: Melissa Tsui Richard/Audubon Photography Awards

Corkscrew Nature Store

With comfy T-shirts, refillable water bottles, books, jewelry, and so much more, the Corkscrew Nature Store at Assembly is your one-stop shop for nature merch, located in the Grand Palm Colonnade.

Get your copy of *Cypress: The Last Old-Growth Swamps* by Mac Stone before the banquet.

Store Hours:

Thursday: 2:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Saturday: 7:30 to 11:30 a.m.



Awards Banquet Dinner | Friday, 7 to 8 p.m.

Audubon Florida Executive Director Julie Wraithmell will emcee the awards banquet, which includes anecdotes from our field trips, a review of our learning sessions, VIP shoutouts, conservation awards. She will introduce our keynote speaker, National Geographic Explorer and photographer Mac Stone.



Painted Bunting.
Photo: Thomas Torget/Audubon Photography Awards

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Keynote Presentation

Friday, Oct. 16 | 8 to 9:30 p.m.

Join us for our awards banquet with a credit/debit bar, dinner, and a keynote presentation with Mac Stone, National Geographic Explorer and photographer.

Into Southeastern Swamps: Stories from the Field

Mac Stone is an inspiring conservation photographer and storyteller with deep roots in the cypress swamps of Florida and the mangrove fringe of the Florida Everglades.

His book, *Cypress: The Last Old-Growth Swamps*, was released in September.



Photo: Peter Houlihan

Copies will be available for purchase at the Nature Store table and at the book signing on Friday evening before the banquet, as well as after the presentation (if copies remain).

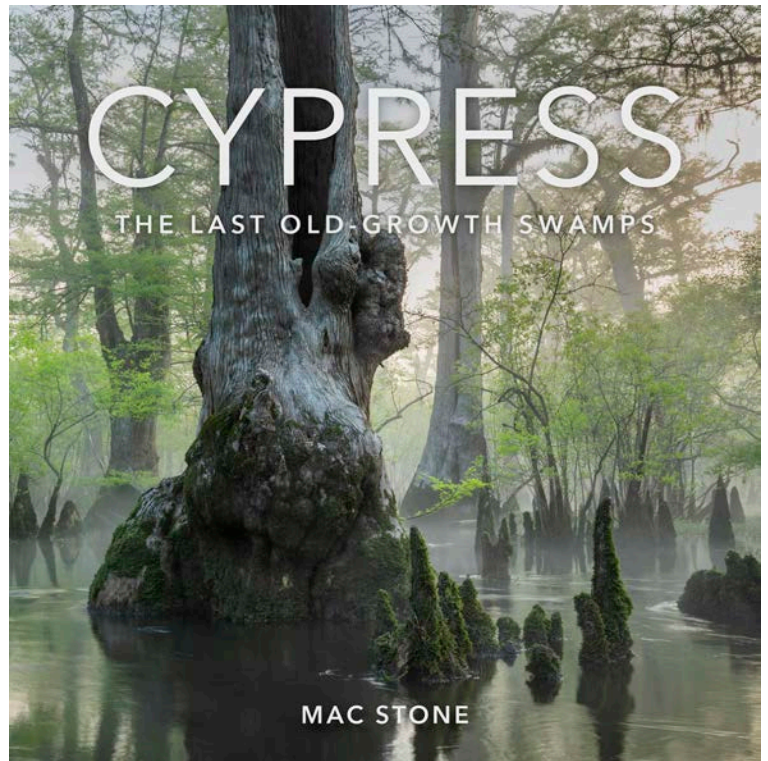
Love Mac Stone's Work?

On view at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary from October 27 through March 31, 2027, *Cypress: The Last Old-Growth Swamps*, will feature more than 50 of Mac's prints mounted along the sanctuary's iconic boardwalk. The exhibit transforms a traditional gallery experience into an immersive walk through one of America's last great old-growth cypress swamps.

The work explores the rare wetland forests that remain after centuries of logging and development, revealing their scale, complexity, and quiet power.

Through images of towering cypress trees, flooded forests, wildlife, reflections, textures, and hidden ecological relationships, visitors are invited to see these swamps not as dark or empty places, but as living cathedrals — ancient, fragile, and full of life.

Get tickets to visit the Sanctuary:
audubon.org/corkscrew/visit.



2026 Audubon Florida Conservation Award Winners

Guy Bradley Award

Paul Gray

Audubon Florida
(retired)

Everglades Champion

Chauncey Goss

South Florida Water
Management District

Volunteer of the Year

Eve Waterman

Coastal Bird Steward

Law Enforcement Award

**Collier County
Sheriff's Office**

Agriculture and Mounted Patrol



Teddy Roosevelt Award

**State Senator
Jeff Brandes and
U.S. Representative
Al Lawson, Jr.**

**Distinguished
Philanthropist**

**Collier Community
Foundation**

**Audubon Florida
Board Service
Recognition**

Amy Koch

St. Johns Regional Audubon

**Audubon Florida
Board Service
Recognition**

Lauren Sher

NextEra Energy



We want to hear from you!

After the event concludes, please complete our evaluation so we can continue to offer the best Assembly experience every year.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/J7PWJGV>

Saturday Morning | Tarpon/Sawyer/Long Key

Networking Breakfast | 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

Bird enthusiasts are certainly early risers. That's why we will meet at 7:30 a.m. Saturday morning for a buffet breakfast and networking to share ideas about issues facing chapters and conservation stakeholders.

Plenary Session: Celebrating Paul Gray and Audubon's Legacy in Florida | 8:45 - 10:15 a.m.

Paul Gray, PhD is nothing short of an Audubon legend. His career has embodied the hallmarks of Audubon culture. During this plenary, we will visit some of these cultural cornerstones of the way Audubon approaches conservation, using Dr. Gray's career as a case study as well as an opportunity to celebrate him.

This plenary is a look back at what Dr. Gray has accomplished during his time at Audubon and

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Florida's 2026 Assembly.**

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Photo: Sydney Walsh/Audubon



how he accomplished it. Dr. Gray brought strong science to some of Florida's most difficult water and wildlife issues, but his success was also built on relationships. He worked with ranchers, agency staff, scientists, landowners, and conservation partners — often people coming at an issue from very different perspectives — and built the trust and credibility needed to move difficult issues forward.

The panel will use several of the major issues Dr. Gray has worked on — Lake Okeechobee, private lands and dispersed water management, Snail Kites, and the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow — to tell that story. They are examples of where Audubon's science, persistence, and partnerships led the way to major conservation wins. Good science gave Audubon a seat at the table. Dr. Gray's relationships and reputation for pragmatism and fairness helped keep us there. And the combination is what allowed us to get things done.

Session leads: Julie Wraithmell, Audubon Florida Executive Director; McKee Gray, Director of Everglades Policy.

Panelists: Chauncey Goss, Chair (South Florida WMD), Andrew Schumann (White Oak), and Noah Handley, P.E. (Lykes Bros. Inc.).

Saturday Morning (cont'd)



Show us your swag! | 10:15 - 10:30 a.m.

On Saturday morning, bird nerds are encouraged to wear or display their coveted clothing, accessories, pins, or other wearable items featuring — you guessed it — birds. After the plenary session ends, we will all get together for another fun photo like we did last year (above).



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Chapter Celebration and Awards | 10:45 a.m. - noon

Celebrate the accomplishments of our incredible Florida chapter network! Experience the heart and soul of the Audubon network and learn how our grassroots community creates meaningful local impact through community education, advocacy, and on-the-ground conservation work. Together, our chapters are leaders for conservation across the state, contributing to Audubon's Flight Plan goals and helping ensure Florida remains a place where birds and people can thrive. Along the way, discover creative approaches, partnerships, and ideas from chapters across Florida that can inspire new possibilities for your own community.



**RiverGlades is proud
to invest in our
future by supporting
Audubon Florida.**



Black Skimmers.
Photo: Barbara Bowen/Audubon Photography Awards

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New to the Audubon Family?

With 44 Audubon chapters around the Sunshine State, you're bound to find a flock to join in your neck of the woods.

Visit audubon.org/audubon-near-you
for locations

Want Legislative Budget Updates?

Sign up for
The Advocate Newsletter

Stay up-to-date on policy issues to learn when you can use your voice for birds!

Visit audubon.org/florida/advocate
to sign up

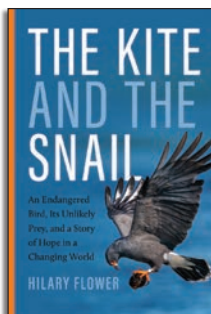


Common Yellowthroat.
Photo: Ryan Shean/Audubon Photography Awards

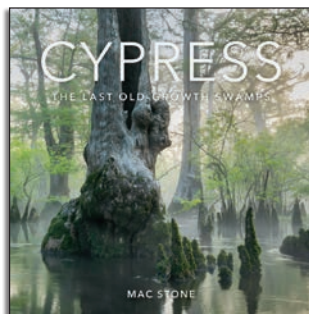
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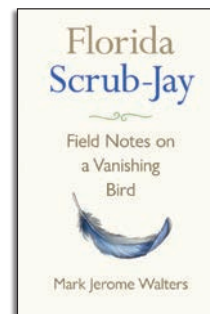
The unexpected comeback of the endangered Everglade snail kite
PAPERBACK \$28.00



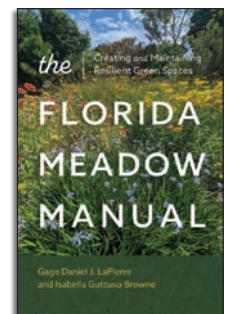
Awe-inspiring photographs of the ancient wetlands of the South
HARDCOVER \$50.00



A visual journey through the largest subtropical wilderness in the US
HARDCOVER \$50.00



A loving portrayal of a special bird and efforts to save it from extinction
HARDCOVER \$24.95



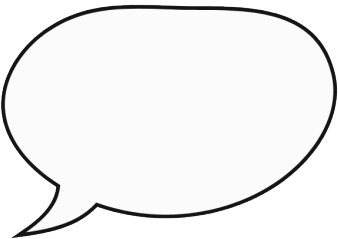
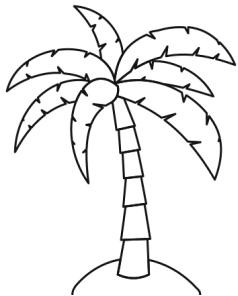
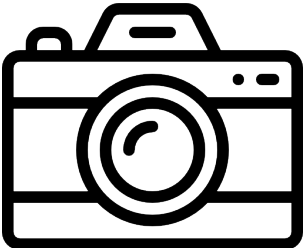
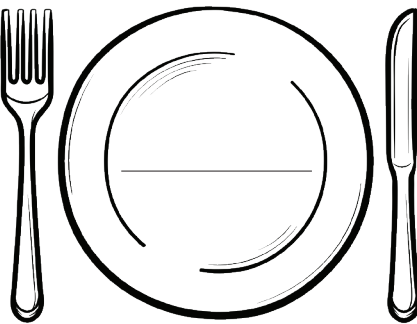
How to transform lawns and open spaces into bio-diverse meadows
PAPERBACK \$34.95

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Scavenger Hunt!

Complete at least nine of the 12 squares below over the course of Assembly. Show it to a staff member at the registration table on Saturday morning to be entered to win a prize!

Draw or Write Something Amazing You Saw on a Field Trip	Learning Session Title: _____ One Takeaway: _____ _____ _____	Signature of Someone You Meet for the First Time 
What did you buy at the Corkscrew Store? (check all that apply) ☐ Mac Stone "Cypress" ☐ T-shirt or Jewelry ☐ Magnet or Sticker ☐ Holiday Gift for a Friend ☐ Something Else	 Keyword from Friday Lunch Presentation	Plenary Quiz Time: How many years did Dr. Paul Gray serve as Audubon's Everglades Science Coordinator?
Signature of an Audubon Florida Staff Member 	Learning Session Title: _____ One Takeaway: _____ _____ _____	Thursday Night Reception (color in or ☐ check here) 
Attend Mac Stone Keynote (color in or ☐ check here) 	Keyword from Friday Dinner Presentation 	A Gift for You: Our 2026 Assembly Sticker! 

Field Trip Sightings List

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Cleaner Water = Healthier Manatees!

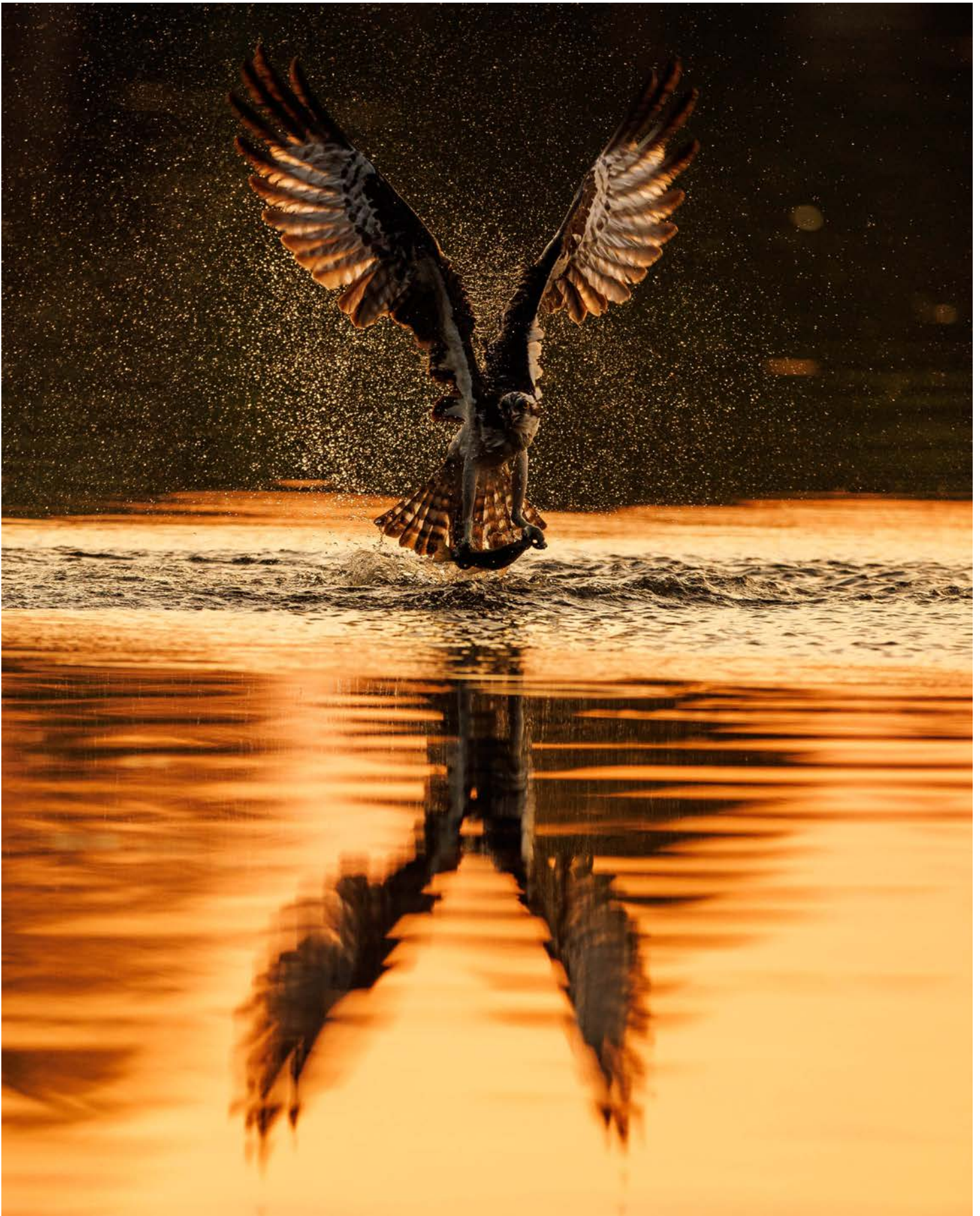


What's the connection between our Polk County power plant and our Manatee Viewing Center in Apollo Beach?

A manatee eats 100 pounds of seagrass every day.
But nutrients in city wastewater can put this food source at risk.
Tampa Electric's Polk power station works with nearby cities to filter and treat wastewater before using it to cool the power station.
It's an innovative and award-winning solution that greatly improves water quality in the bay.
Enjoy your meal, manatees!

More information:





Osprey.
Photo: Douglas DeFelice/Audubon Photography Awards

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Climate First Bank

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