

(A copy of this entire message is attached so that you can easily print the schedule of events.)

Hello Outdoor Adventure Club Members,

Whether you're an avid birdwatcher or simply enjoy getting out in nature to spot wildlife and enjoy beautiful scenery, you'll want to join us on our upcoming birding trips.

Chris Sturm, one of our fellow Stone Creek residents and Outdoor Adventure Club members, is an expert birder and avid photographer. Some of you may have seen his photos, bird identification tips and stories on some of the Stone Creek residents Facebook pages. Please join Chris for a series of birding trips this fall, winter and spring. Some will be right here in Stone Creek or at local parks like the Ocala Wetland Recharge Park and other times we'll travel farther afield to several beautiful and interesting wetlands in Gainesville, Emerald Marsh, Lake Apopka, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and more. Chris will help us with bird sighting and identification, and he'll be sharing some very interesting information about the birds we see.

When he leads our trips within Stone Creek he may focus on a different category of birds for each trip: wetland / water birds, field birds, forest dwellers and night birds so there's always something new to see and appreciate on each trip.

Please RSVP to Chris at [rtdandcrs1969@gmail.com](mailto:rtdandcrs1969@gmail.com). Please contact him if you have any questions.

All of Chris's trips will meet in the Elan Spa parking lot near the pickleball courts. Please be sure to bring water, snacks and your binoculars. You are welcome to bring along your bird guidebooks and checklists if you have any.

### **Presentation and Club Social November 21:**

We're also very pleased that Chris will be giving a presentation at the Stonewater Club on November 21 at 3:30pm. All Stone Creek residents are welcome. Chris will share a slideshow of his beautiful photos and tell us about the birds and other wildlife he's photographed. He'll also talk about his nearly lifelong interest in birding including the interesting places he's visited and the people he's met along the way. We'll have a question-and-answer period after his talk. We'll also have a social hour after the presentation so please bring along a small snack or appetizer to share. The Stonewater Club bar will be open to purchase drinks.

**Birding trip descriptions on next few pages➡**

## **2024-2025 Birding Trips**

### **Wed, Nov 6 8:00am Stone Creek Ramble**

Chris may do a mix of ponds and fields. He'll play it by ear based on what he's seeing in the days leading up to this trip.

### **Wed, Nov 13 8:00am La Chua Trail at Payne's Prairie Preserve State Park in Gainesville**

This is a great wildlife spotting destination. This trail is about 3 miles round trip. We'll walk along a paved trail from the parking lot and then walk out onto a long, raised boardwalk through a very pretty wetland full of birds, alligators and giant snails. We should see herons, egrets, storks, limpkins and snail kites. There's a \$4 per vehicle fee to park or bring your annual state park pass. Bring exact change to put in the fee box. Most of the boardwalk is in full sun but there are some shady pavilions with benches too. Port-o-potties on site. Address: 4801 Camp Ranch Road in Gainesville. Sorry, no pets.

<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/paynes-prairie-preserve-state-park/experiences-amenities>

<https://www.visitgainesville.com/explore/attraction/paynes-prairie-la-chua-trail/>

### **Fri, Nov 22 7:00am Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive**

Today we'll be enjoying the beauty of the Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. This lovely conservation area offers excellent wildlife viewing: we expect to see a multitude of birds, lots of alligators, turtles and possibly otters, raccoons and deer too. Lake Apopka is considered one of the top 3 birding areas in Florida with 362 species of birds having been seen on the property. We'll be driving through the conservation area in our cars, making multiple extended stops. We'll be stopping for lunch at the Lake Harris Hideaway after our visit to Lake Apopka. Sorry, no pets. Trip Info sheet attached.

<https://www.sjrwmd.com/lands/recreation/lake-apopka/wildlife-drive/>

More on next page➔

**Wed, Dec 4 8:00am Stone Creek Ramble**

**Wed, Dec 11 7:00am (possibly earlier) Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge**

We'll be visiting the Black Point Wildlife Drive, which runs through an extensive wetland near Cape Canaveral National Seashore and the Space Center. We'll be driving through the wetland, making multiple extended stops.

*"Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge is strategically located on the Atlantic Flyway, a major bird migration corridor, and it is a key resting stop for many migratory bird species.*

- *358 species of birds have been identified on the refuge*
- *140 species of freshwater and saltwater fish are known to use refuge impoundments, estuaries, and freshwater wetlands*
- *15 federally listed threatened and endangered species call the refuge home"*

\$9 one day pass, \$23 annual pass or show your National Park Pass. You can purchase a pass at the website below. This is also great opportunity for participants to combine our birding trip with a couple hours later in the afternoon at the beach (the beach would be on your own).

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/merritt-island>

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/merritt-island/visit-us>

**Wed, Dec 18 7:00am Emeraldal Marsh**

Later in the winter, Emeraldal Marsh is open for drive-through tours but in December the trail is WALK IN ONLY. We'll be walking 2 miles one-way out to a large marsh outlook, making multiple stops along the way. 4 miles round trip walking distance. Mix of shade and full sun. Flat, wide, easy trail. This is a beautiful, extensive wetland teeming with thousands of birds of many different species. Sorry, no pets.

Address: 36645 Emeraldal Island Road, Leesburg FL 34788

<https://www.sjrwmd.com/lands/recreation/emeraldal-marsh/>

**More on next page➔**

**Wed, Jan 8 8:00am Sweetwater Wetlands Park in Gainesville**

This park contains 125 acres of wetlands and ponds which were created to improve the water quality of wetlands in Paynes Prairie. The park is filled with birds and alligators. We'll walk through part of the park, making multiple wildlife spotting stops along the way. We estimate that our mileage might be about 2 miles round trip. There are 3.5 miles of wide, flat, crushed gravel trails and boardwalks throughout the park so some participants might want to stay and explore the rest of the park on their own. Full sun. Sorry, no pets.

Address: 325 SW Williston Road, Gainesville FL 32601

<https://www.gainesvillefl.gov/Parks/Sweetwater-Wetlands-Park>

**Fri, Jan 17 7:00am Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive (see description above)**

**Wed, Jan 22 8:00am Ocala Wetland Recharge Park**

Plus we may add an optional birding stop at the World Equestrian Center or Tusawilla Park near downtown Ocala. Detailed trip info sheet attached. Sorry, no pets.

We'll be walking the 2.5 miles of paved trails and boardwalks at the Ocala Wetland Recharge Park. The walkways wind around a series of ponds that are part of a manmade wetland. This wetland was created to reduce nutrients and other pollutants in the 3 million gallons of treated wastewater that it receives daily. . Although this park is only a few years old it is already attracting a lot of birdlife. Address: 2015 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Ocala 34475

<https://www.ocalaf1.gov/government/city-departments-i-z/water-resources/ocala-wetland-recharge-park>

**Wed, Jan 29 7:00am Gulf Beaches**

More details to come.

**Fri, Feb 28 7:00am Emerald Marsh plus Venetian Gardens in Leesburg**

More details to come.