



January 2024

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In the Field

Happy 2024! Let's resolve to get outdoors often to enjoy the wonder of birds — whether from our backyards or on our guided bird walks! Between January and May alone TAS field guides will lead 16 South Florida birding forays. To venture further afield, RSVP for one of our international trips (scroll down for details) or join our [4-day, 3-night van tour to the Tallahassee area](#) (waitlist) where we'll be on the lookout for birds such as White-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren and Golden-crowned Kinglet. All TAS-led outings are open to nature and bird enthusiasts of every experience level. Join us — we'd love to help you add more sightings to your birding wish list this year!

Sign up for a January Field Trip below. To view our complete Winter/Spring 2024 schedule visit our [website calendar](#). Please note that [REGISTRATION](#) is required for all field trips.

Share your bird sightings on our [Bird Board](#) and [Facebook Bird Board](#).

***Banner Photo, above:** Great Horned Owl by Martin Schiff. Join our [Tall Cypress Natural Area field trip on January 7](#) for a chance to see this species.*

RSVP for a Field Trip

[Lucky Hammock Birding](#). | Saturday, January 6, 7:30-11am

[Tall Cypress Natural Area Birding](#) | Sunday, January 7, 8-11am

[North Florida Birding \(waitlist\)](#) | January 12-15

[Southern Palm Beach Birding](#). | Saturday, January 20, 7:30am-3pm

[Everglades National Park Birding](#) | Saturday, January 27, 7:30am-4pm

RSVP for an International Field Trip



[Ultimate Ecuador: Birding the Amazon and Galapagos Islands](#) | June 12-23, 2024

[Spain - Extremadura, Doñana and Sierra de Gredos](#) | April 28 - May 12, 2025

[Birds and Marsupials of Northern Australia - Darwin, Cairns and Brisbane](#)
August 3 - 16, 2025

Photo: Galápagos Flamingos by Laurie McLaughlin

Featured Events

Tour the Historic Doc Thomas House
Saturday, January 6, 1 & 3pm



You're invited to tour our historic Doc Thomas House headquarters. Enjoy a captivating, 1-hour guided tour of the charming 1932 home led by a Tropical Audubon docent. Hear about ongoing restoration efforts and learn about TAS patron and area pioneer Arden Hayes "Doc" Thomas and Robert Fitch Smith, the architect who designed the Florida vernacular cottage, which is distinguished by native woods and limestone features.

In addition to the indoor talk and tour, your visit will include an outdoor walk to view the home's unique exterior features.

Bonus: Explore our Bird-Friendly pollinator gardens and near-native Steinberg Nature Center grounds.

Tours are FREE and open to the public. Donations are welcome [HERE](#).

Location: 5530 Sunset Drive, Miami, FL 33143; limited onsite parking via the SW 55 Avenue auto gate.

RSVP HERE

Books & Books presents ...

An Evening with Kirsten Hines & Dennis Olle

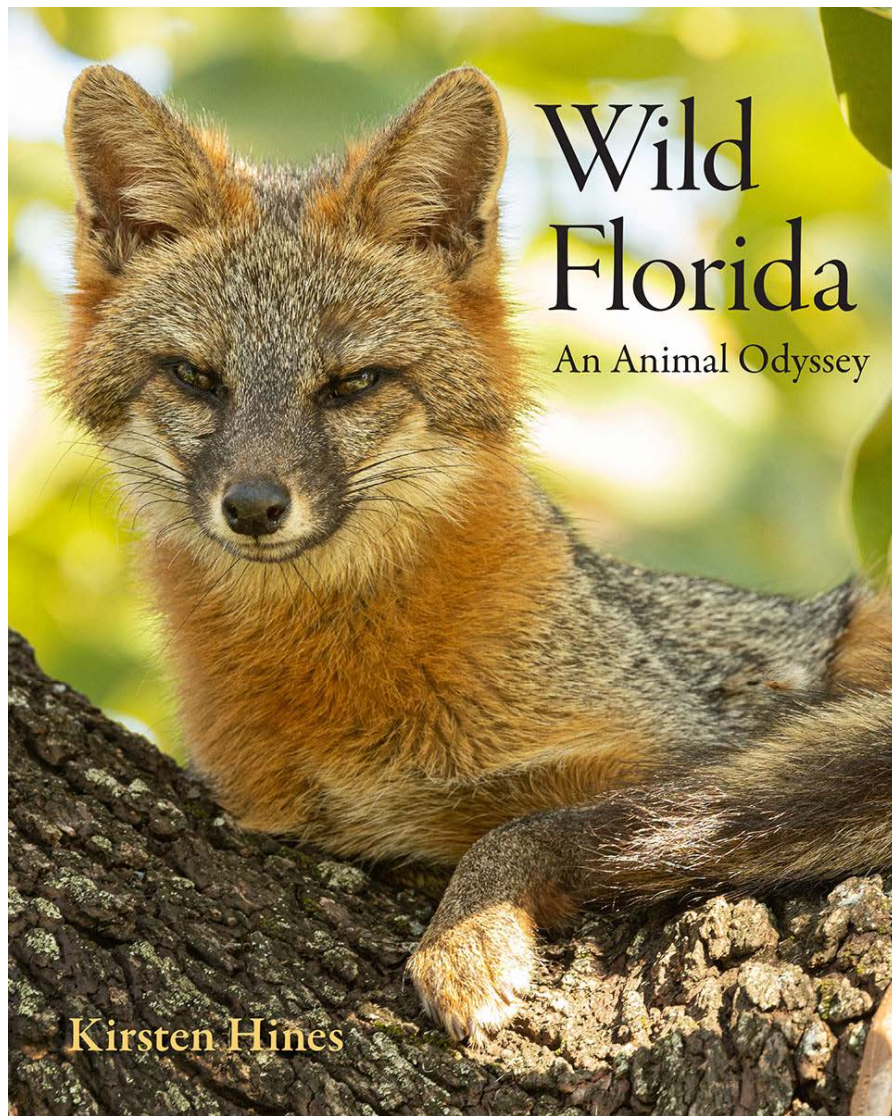
@Doc Thomas House

discussing

Wild Florida: An Animal Odyssey

Thursday, January 11

Doors open at 6:30 PM, Talk begins at 7 PM



Books & Books and TAS are delighted to present an evening with nature photographer and author Kirsten Hines discussing her fascinating book, *Wild Florida: An Animal Odyssey* (University Press of Florida, \$42). She'll vividly recount some of the epic wilderness forays she undertook to capture the compelling photos that fill *Wild Florida's* pages.

Attendees will be welcomed by Tropical Audubon Society President José Francisco Barros and the talk will be introduced and moderated by Dennis Olle, President of the Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association.

Books will be available for purchase and Kirsten will personally sign your copy!



This event is FREE and open to the public. Seating inside the charming 1932 Doc Thomas House is limited so please RSVP if you plan to join us.

Location: Tropical Audubon Society, 5530 Sunset Drive, Miami FL 33143

Parking options: Limited free on-site parking via the property's 55th Avenue auto gate and also along 56th Avenue; metered parking on Sunset Drive; various garage parking options within 1-3 blocks; Metrorail service to South Miami Station.

Pedestrians may access the property via single gates located on Sunset Drive and on S.W. 56th Avenue.

RSVP HERE

Conservation Concert @TAS

Featuring Take Sixx

Saturday, January 27, 7pm



Strike up the band! Join us under the oaks and stars to kick off the much-anticipated 14th annual Conservation Concert series on Saturday, January 27. In what has been an extraordinary show of support, the event's founding band, **Take Sixx**, will again inaugurate the wildly popular Winter concerts. Their volunteerism has set the tempo for other local bands to follow in their footsteps on the storied Doc Thomas House Keystone Stage.

Take Sixx band is composed of original founding members, Dr. Steve Chavoustie (keyboard/harmonica), Dr. Ron Sancetta (vocals), and Harold Norman (drums), along with Dr. Enrique Hernandez (bass guitar), Dr. Manuel Melo Bicchi (lead guitar) and Gaby Yidi (female vocals).

Also on the playbill: Nacho Bizness Food Truck. Wash down your tacos with wonderful wines and bodacious brews at the RNDC Donation Bird Bar.

Picnic tables available on a first-come basis.

Gates open at 7pm; music begins at 7:30pm
\$10 donation p/p, children 12 and under FREE

Proceeds benefit capital improvements to the Steinberg Nature Center grounds and historic buildings.

Don't miss a gig! Circle these 2024 ConCon Season dates:

Saturday, January 27

Saturday, February 24

Saturday, March 23

+ Birdstock, April date TBA

Tickets

Conservation News

Legal Victory & MDC Vote Sinks

Miami Wilds Lease Agreement



TAS friends and conservation partners attend the December 12 MDC BCC meeting to oppose the Miami Wilds theme park proposal and advocate for endangered species and imperiled Pine Rocklands habitat. Photo by Federico Acevedo

The Miami-Dade County commissioners on December 12 voted 9-1 to on December 12 withdraw a proposal that would have amended the lease agreement with *Miami Wilds, LLC*, effectively sinking the controversial themed water park and retail development plan that would have threatened endangered species near Zoo Miami.

Though the commission intends to vote on the matter again in January, it was clear that the writing is on the wall for rejection of this ill-conceived project. A majority of the commissioners voiced their opposition, with one calling the plan a "dead horse," and another calling for an immediate vote to rescind the lease (which was not procedurally possible in the moment). But theme park opponents may not have to wait until the next vote. During the commission meeting, the county attorney and Mayor Daniella Levine Cava confirmed that her administration intends to step in and rescind the lease. [Read the Media Advisory.](#)

The decision follows a [federal court victory](#) for Tropical Audubon Society and partner plaintiffs, which resulted in an order that reinstates land-use restrictions on environmentally sensitive land at Zoo Miami held by the National Park Service.

The theme park and retail development as proposed threatens the endangered Florida bonneted bat, endangered Miami tiger beetle, endangered Bartram's scrub-hairstreak, several endangered plants, proposed endangered Rim Rock crowned snake and globally critically imperiled Pine Rocklands.

The vote came after months of public opposition to the theme park in the Zoo Miami location, which included **a massive rally and letter-writing campaigns** (nearly 10,000 TAS members, friends and ambassadors wrote e-letters to commissioners).

Plants for Birds

Bird-Friendly Gardening Day @TAS
Dig in Saturday, January 20, 9am-Noon



Help steward our Bird-Friendly Demonstration Garden and Steinberg Nature Center grounds! Get hands-on experience creating wildlife habitat under the expert guidance of our resident Master Gardeners. Learn how to establish a Bird-Friendly garden in your own yard, or on your patio or balcony, and get familiar with the principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping.

Volunteers are needed to help remove invasive plants and tidy the grounds (rake leaves, wrangle fallen branches and clear our network of trails).

***Photo:** Native Blue Porterweed attracts pollinators to your yard.*

RSVP for Bird-friendly Gardening Day

Chirping About

Celebrating a record class of 2023 Tropical Audubon Ambassador Graduates



A record 80+ environmental advocates completed our signature Tropical Audubon Ambassador Program! They now number among a cohort of 230 community members who participated in the award-winning three-month environmental education program, which features online classes, field trips, deep dives with local experts and hands-on advocacy campaigns.

Newly minted Ambassadors were awarded certificates at a December 5 celebration in our picnic grove, where they were treated to delicious fare provided by community partner *Deli Lane Cafe & Sunset Tavern*, and an acoustic guitar concert generously performed by Florida folk artist Grant Livingston.

Ambassadors come away from the program with an in-depth knowledge of our region's cornerstone ecosystems: The Everglades, Biscayne Bay, Pine Rocklands and Tropical Hardwood Hammocks.

Coordinated by TAS Education & Advocacy Director Stephanie Clements, Ph.D., the program's end goal is to empower participants to activate their "Tropical Audubon Ambassador" education on behalf of South Florida's wild places and the indigenous wildlife who inhabit them.

Would you like to become a more engaged, educated and effective advocate?

[Click HERE to join our waitlist for the 2024 TAAP season.](#)

Program Underwriters: Everglades Foundation, The Miami Foundation, National Audubon Society & Ocean Reef Conservation Association

Field Trip Underwriters: Deering Estate, Everglades National Park & National Parks Conservation Association

Closing Ceremony Community Partner: Deli Lane Cafe & Sunset Tavern

Musical Guest: Grant Livingston

MDC Christmas Bird Count results —

Leica Store Miami sponsors Post-Count Party!



Thirty-five volunteer birdwatchers participated in the 54th Miami (Dade County) Christmas Bird Count last month. The highly impactful community science event is part of the Christmas Bird Count, an annual census of birds in the Western Hemisphere founded in 1900 and administered by National Audubon Society. The data collected enables Audubon researchers, conservation biologists and wildlife agencies to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America.

The Miami component took place on Saturday, December 16. Counters later assembled at our historic Doc Thomas House headquarters to report their findings and enjoy a [Leica Store Miami](#)-sponsored Pasta & Pizza Party.

The group counted 13,187 birds of 128 species despite heavy rain and gusty winds throughout the day. Compared with 2022, there were 1,832 less birds counted, but only two fewer species. Of the 128 species, 122 are on the official Florida state bird list and are considered “countable,” while the remaining six are not and are therefore not considered “countable.”



Notably, **Blackpoll Warbler** was the only new species reported during the count. It was documented by Fritz “Boch” Hoeflein and Sarah Schwartz in the Opa-Locka section of the count circle. Four other species considered unusual for the count were reported this year: For the second consecutive year, but only the second year in count history, a **Least Flycatcher** was reported. This year’s bird was found by Jessica Castillo at Hialeah Park. Three teams reported 217 **Black Scoters**, though all but ten were seen by Jesse Trimble while sea-watching at the South Pointe Park pier. This sea duck had been reported on only seven previous counts. **Yellow Warblers**, also reported on only seven previous counts, were seen by two teams this year. One was found by Andrea Diamond, Jeanne Kaufmann and Liz Gushee at Pelican Harbor on the 79th Street Causeway. The other was seen by Brian Rapoza, Joe Barros and Federico Acevedo at Miami Beach Botanical Garden. A **Louisiana Waterthrush**, reported on only eleven previous counts, was found by Fritz “Boch” Hoeflein and Sarah Schwartz, again in Opa-Locka.

Common Eider and **Eastern Screech-Owl** were the only species not seen on the day of the count, but reported during count week. No new high counts were recorded for any

species this year, but new low counts were recorded for several species. These low counts included two **Snowy Egrets**, eight **Little Blue Herons**, five **Tricolored Herons**, three **Spotted Sandpipers** and four **Belted Kingfishers**.

[Click Here for Brian Rapoza's full Miami CBC report.](#)

TAS is extremely grateful to all of the volunteers who made our 2023 count possible, and to **Leica Store Miami**, which so generously sponsored the CBC Miami festivities!

***Photos:** (Clockwise from upper left) Spotted Sandpiper; TAS President José Francisco Barros in foreground and TAS Field Trip Coordinator Brian Rapoza; Yellow Warbler; Black-and-white Warbler. Photos taken during the Miami Christmas Bird Count 2023 by Federico Acevedo.*

Eagle Scouts transform TAS Plant Nursery





Troop 31 EAGLE SCOUTS, their parents and leaders rescued our once-overgrown native plant nursery structure on December 2! Hailing from Holy Rosary in Cutler Bay, and led by Eagle Scout candidate Ryan Pittman, the extraordinary crew tackled the Herculean task by removing and clearing many years-worth of weeds that taken over the metal frame structure. Thanks to their tremendous efforts we can again cultivate and nurture native plants slated for our Annual Native Plant Sale on the first Saturday of June.

Ryan said he was “incredibly grateful” for the opportunity to make a difference, and “had a lot of fun doing it.”

TAS is grateful for the troop’s contributions, and applauds their ethos of community service, and their parents and leaders for facilitating the project. Special shout-outs to the following participants: Scouts Nicolas Leeder, Ben Nonog, Ryan Pittman, Chris Skokan, Joshua York and Weston Zamora; leaders Helen Glidden, Laura Pittman, George Skokan and Sandra Treco; and parents Steve Pittman and Donna Gray.

TAS Intern helps Restore our Pine Rocklands Demonstration Forest



Congratulations to TAS intern David Ibrahim (*pictured above, second from left*) for earning a B.S. in Ecosystem Science and Policy from University of Miami in December. As part of his studies, David interned at TAS for the fall semester in our Pine Rocklands demonstration forest located on our 2.2-acre Steinberg Nature Center grounds. He dedicated 130+ hours to eco-restoration work in the pineland under the tutelage of TAS Events/Grounds Director Amy Creekmur. Much of his time was spent establishing a trail through the area, and removing invasive species, including Air Potato vine, Rosary Pea, Oyster plants and Paper mulberry plants, allowing the native Slash Pines and other pineland-specific plants to thrive.

Boasting more than a dozen mature South Florida slash pines and numerous saplings, the stand is one of our area's few remaining remnants of the rapidly disappearing and critically globally endangered Pine Rocklands that once spanned Miami-Dade County.

Save the Date

Save the Date!

BIRD DAY 2024

Saturday, February 17, 2024, 12-4pm

BIRD DAY 2024

PRESENTED BY
Leica STORE MIAMI

HUMMINGBIRD SPONSOR
NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

**DISCOVER
CRAFT
EXPLORE**

TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Saturday | February 17 | 12-4 | 5530 Sunset Drive, Miami, FL

Calling budding birders and junior naturalists! Miami youth and their parents are invited to attend our free annual BIRD DAY festival featuring an engaging afternoon of games, prizes, exploration and educational activities on our 2.2-acre Steinberg Nature Center grounds. BIRD DAY is the perfect venue for school ecology clubs, scout troops and young children seeking an outdoor adventure. “Meet” rehabilitated wild birds rescued by the Pelican Harbor Seabird Station. Take part in Owl Pellet dissection. Craft Piping Plover “chicks.” Hone your binocular skills.

The mid-winter event also celebrates the annual migration of nearly 350 bird species that stop in South Florida to refuel and recharge on their return flight from non-breeding grounds in the Caribbean, South America and Mexico on their way to nesting habitats in North America.

BIRD DAY participants can also join TAS Field Trip Coordinator Brian Rapoza for a primer on the 2024 Great Backyard Bird Count, a community science initiative that enables birdwatchers of all ages to count birds and help create a real-time snapshot of where birds are located. Learn how your family can participate in the February 16-19 event!

Tropical Audubon Society: 5530 Sunset Dr., Miami, FL, 33143

RSVP

The Birds Thank





The Birds Thank ... Republic National Distributing Company, whose kindnesses throughout 2023 made it possible to again stage a full slate of live events on our Steinberg Nature Center grounds. Most recently RNDC provided Bird Bar libations for November's "**Members Gratitude Concert**" — generously stocking the Bird Bar with its delightful wines (*pictured*) for an extremely appreciative crowd.

RNDC amps up the vino vibe on January 27 for the opening night of the 14th annual **Winter Conservation Concert** season (followed by February 24 and March 23 concert dates).

With RNDC's ongoing support, our April 10 Spring edition of "**Walk in the Woods with Wine & Whisk**" will feature New World wines from its distinguished portfolio. (**Champagne Taittinger, Masi, Mesa Guinco, Michele Chiarlo** and **Santa Margherita** starred at the November 8, 2023 edition.)

Learn more about this foremost U.S. distributor of premium wine and spirits by visiting www.rndc-usa.com

Support Birds

Become a Member

www.tropicalaudubon.org



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