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and



Santa Fe Audubon Society - Florida

# Santa Fe Audubon Society

Melrose, FL

**APRIL 2021**  
**NEWSLETTER**

## "OFF THE MAIN TRAIL"

*Suggested places for creating your own field trip.*

### BURNT ISLAND

**Lochloosa Wildlife  
Conservation Area**  
Hawthorne, FL

Access is along U.S. 301 or  
County Road 325. For details  
and to get driving directions  
from your location, see the  
Google Maps link on this page.

This conservation area  
protects the water quality and  
species diversity in an environmentally sensitive watershed.  
Preservation of the shoreline helps maintain hydrologic  
connections within the Orange Creek Basin. The St. Johns  
River Water Management District is undertaking an ecological  
restoration effort to  
improve ecosystem and  
hydrologic functions on  
portions of Lochloosa  
property.



In 1987, the state designated the nearby Orange Lake an  
Outstanding Florida Water. The Cross Creek community  
adds historic character with the site of author Marjorie Kinnan  
Rawlings' home close by.

One of the special highlights of  
this property is the stunning views  
of the lake shore that can be seen  
from the fishing pier at the end of  
Burnt Island Road. Many of the  
roads on Lochloosa WCA are open  
to vehicles during hunting season  
but may require 4x4 capabilities  
to travel them. All roads and trails  
are open to hiking, biking and  
horseback riding year-round.



<https://www.sjrwmd.com/lands/recreation/lochloosa/>

## THE NATIVE PLANT CONNECTION

### INDIAN BLANKET or FIREWHEEL

*(Gaillardia pulchella)*

A brightly colored herbaceous wildflower that blooms  
inspring, summer and into fall in North Florida, and year-  
round in Central and South Florida. It occurs naturally in dry  
savannahs, coastal dunes  
and other dry, open areas.  
The blooms attract a variety  
of pollinators.

This is an annual wildflower  
that typically grows 12 to  
18 inches tall, with a leafy  
base and hairy, branched  
stems. The stunning, daisy-  
like flower heads bloom from  
May to August and feature  
rays in shades of red with  
yellow tips and contrasting  
darker center disks.



Easily grown in this area with the right conditions (very  
sandy, mostly dry), will form a complete blanket of flowers  
(hence the name) with just a minimum of watering and a tiny  
bit of fertilizer. Best results if seeds are planted in the fall.  
One of the most beautiful displays of native wildflowers you  
can grow (IMHO).

You can order seeds from <http://www.floridawildflowers.com>

<https://flawildflowers.org/attracting-birds/>

<https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds>



# Kestrel Corner

by Bill Chitty

All of the boxes in the Kestrel Box Project were checked recently finding better situations than had been feared beginning the 2021 nesting season.



Two boxes had American Kestrels in the box, including one box that has never had anything nest in it before. After the bird left the first box, we counted five eggs. In the other box, the sitting kestrel never left the nest and was visibly upset, so we did not try to move her to see eggs.



Three additional boxes had kestrel eggs, including a box that has never had any nest in it.

One box had several fresh-looking American Kestrel feathers and nesting material pushed into bowl shape.

Two other boxes had some white wash and pellets but no other sign of current use.

Two boxes (24 & 25), which had successful kestrel nesting in the past, showed no sign of current use. During the last two months, there has been human disturbance, heavy equipment traffic, etc. in the immediate area, BUT the human activity is no longer present. Last year, kestrels didn't show up at #25 until May, so there is reason for hope for nesting activity next month.

It appears that we might have another really good nesting season in our boxes. Keep your fingers crossed.



## FLORIDA WILDLIFE EXTENSION Wildlife Happenings

Click on the link below to check out the "Wildlife Happenings" in our area.

[https://wec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife\\_info/happenings/](https://wec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/happenings/)

# BIRD OF THE MONTH

**BOBOLINK** (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)  
band code "BOBO"



male Bobolink

A small New World blackbird and the only member of the genus *Dolichonyx*. An old name for this species is the "Rice Bird", from its tendency to feed on cultivated grains. Adults are 16–18 cm (6.3–7.1 in) long with short finch-like bills and weigh about 1 oz.

One of the world's most impressive songbird migrants, traveling some 12,500 miles (20,000 kilometers) to and from southern South America every year. Throughout its lifetime, it may travel the equivalent of 4 or 5 times around the circumference of the earth.



female Bobolink

A migrating Bobolink can orient itself with the earth's magnetic field, thanks to iron oxide in bristles of its nasal cavity and in tissues around the olfactory bulb and nerve. Bobolinks also use the starry night sky to guide their travels.

Bobolinks stop by \*Sweetwater Wetlands Park mid April through mid May feasting on the plentiful Southern Wild Rice (*Zizaniopsis miliacea*).

For more information about Bobolinks click on the link:

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Bobolink/id>

## \*Sweetwater Wetlands Park

325 SW Williston Rd, Gainesville, FL

<https://www.sweetwaterwetlands.org>

## Fun Facts:

A group of Bobolink's are collectively known as a "chain".