



[www.santafeaudubon.org](http://www.santafeaudubon.org) and



Santa Fe Audubon Society - Florida

# Santa Fe Audubon Society

Melrose, FL

## FEBRUARY 2022

### NEWSLETTER



The Great Backyard  
**Bird Count**





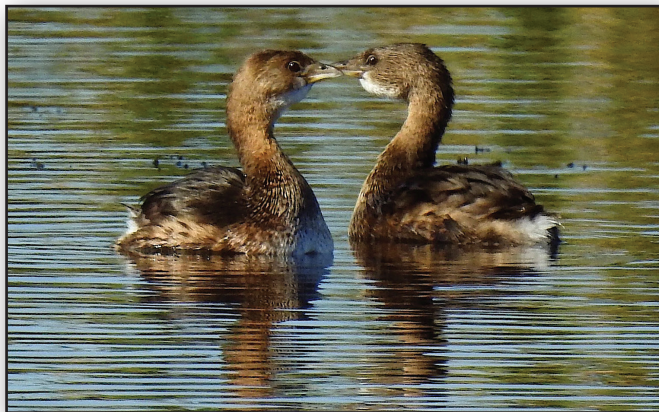


February 18 to 21

A new website was designed to make understanding and recording your 4-day count easier than ever. Santa Fe Audubon encourages everyone to participate. The minimum time requirement is only fifteen minutes, and you can do it in your own backyard or any other favorite birdwatching spot.

For further details and rules for participation, see the website:  
<https://www.birdcount.org>

♥ Happy Valentine's Day ♥



### 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/)

## THE NATIVE PLANT CONNECTION



Photos courtesy of  
Michael Drummond

Photo courtesy of Bill Chitty

**YELLOW JESSAMINE** (*Gelsemium sempervirens*)  
 Also called Carolina Jessamine, as warmer weather creeps in, so do the cheerful flowers of Carolina jessamine, also called yellow jessamine. This native vine blooms in late winter to early spring and is a lovely vine to train up fences, pergolas, and trellises.

#### CHARACTERISTICS:

In the wild, Carolina jessamine is typically found in open woodlands and along roadsides. Once temperatures rise, the treetops and hedgerows start twinkling with two-inch-long, yellow flowers. The trumpet-shaped flowers also put out a sweet fragrance, making the vine that much more attractive for pollinators and gardeners alike.

This native evergreen vine stays fairly bushy and compact when it's grown in full sun. In shadier spots, it will climb up trees and shrubs as it tries to get closer to the sunlight, with the vines reaching up to 20 feet. The long and narrow leaves appear opposite each other along the wiry bronze stems.

In home gardens, it's a great vine to use on arbors, trellises, and pergolas. It covers these structures quickly but is fairly easy to keep in bounds. It can also be planted as a ground cover and works well along steep banks.

#### CAUTION:

Gardeners should know that the sap can be a skin irritant for some individuals and all parts of the plant contain strychnine-related toxins and are poisonous. Recent research suggests that the plant's nectar may also be toxic to honeybees if gathered in large amounts.

source: <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/carolina-jessamine.html>

To learn more about native plants in our area:

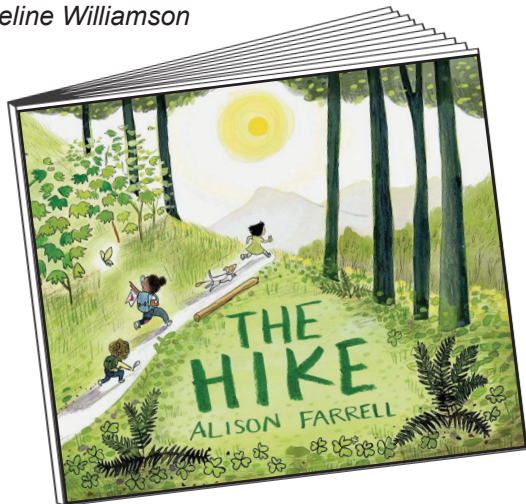
<https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds>

Florida Native Plant Society for info and plant lists and sources.

<https://www.fnps.org>

## RECOMMENDED READING

by Jacqueline Williamson



*The Hike* celebrates how fun and rewarding it is to explore nature in your own backyard!

This book is a must-have for budding scientists, best friends, and all adventurers in preschool and kindergarten.

## GOOD NEWS

### SKATEBOARDING FOR CONSERVATION

by Jacqueline Williamson

Photo by Patrick Connolly  
Orlando Sentinel



Justin Bright, a St. Petersburg native is skateboarding more than 1,100 miles from Pensacola to Key West. He is hoping to raise awareness of the need for conservation and land preservation in Florida while raising money for Conservation Florida — more than \$2,500 so far. This nonprofit land conservancy seeks to protect natural and agricultural lands, especially the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

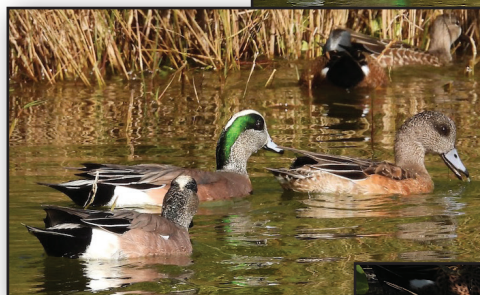
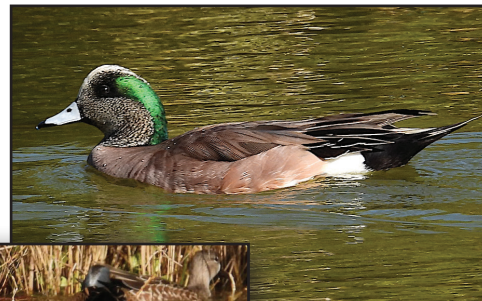
<https://www.orlandosentinel.com/travel/central-florida-explorer/os-et-florida-man-skate-boards-state-conservation-20220128-7vykk23xwnbgvf27k3yyx6nofq-story.html>

## BIRD OF THE MONTH

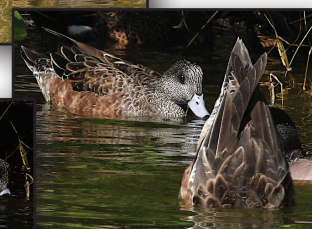
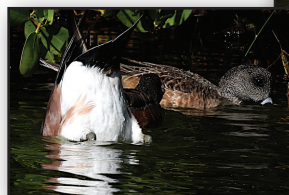
### AMERICAN WIGEON (*Mareca americana*)

band code "AMWI"

male



female  
on the right



American Wigeon's dabbling

Quiet lakes and wetlands come alive with the breezy whistle of the American Wigeon, a dabbling duck with pizzazz. Breeding males have a green eye patch and a conspicuous white crown, earning them the nickname "baldpate." Females are brushed in warm browns with a gray-brown head and a smudge around the eye. Noisy groups congregate during fall and winter, plucking plants with their short gooselike bill from wetlands and fields or nibbling plants from the water's surface. Despite being common their populations are declining.

In Florida's winter months, American Wigeons can be found in freshwater wetlands, lakes, slow-moving rivers, impoundments, flooded fields, estuaries, bays, and marshes.

#### COOL FACTS:

American Wigeons eat a higher proportion of plant matter than any other dabbling duck thanks to their short gooselike bill. The shortness of the bill helps exert more force at the tip so they can pluck vegetation from fields and lawns with ease.

The oldest American Wigeon reported was at least 21 years and 4 months old.

A "dabbling duck" is a type of shallow water duck that feeds primarily along the surface of the water or by tipping headfirst into the water to graze on aquatic plants, vegetation, larvae, and insects.

For more information about American Wigeons visit:

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American\\_Wigeon/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Wigeon/overview)

#### Fun Fact:

A group of ducks has many collective nouns, including a "brace", "flush", "paddling", "raft", and "team".