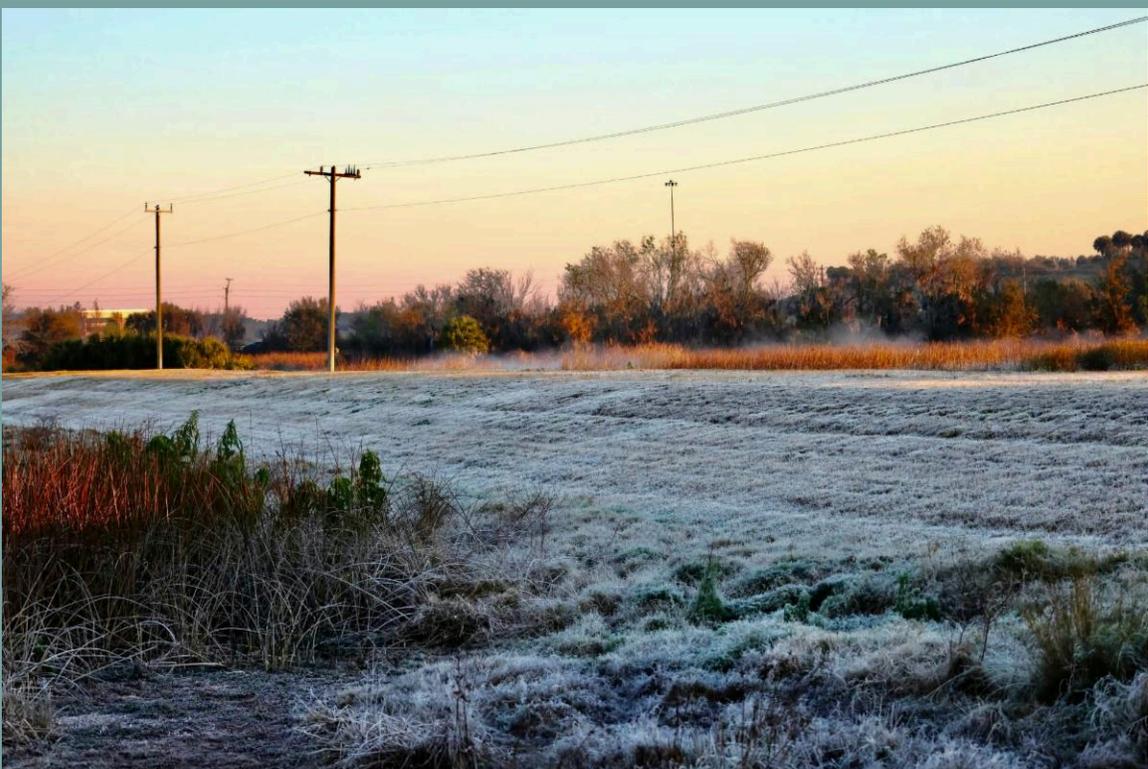




THE BROWN PELICAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SARASOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 2026



View from Raymond Road boardwalk on Jan. 29, 2026 (*Gary Oleary*)

Dear Members,

Many of you have noticed the changing landscape at Celery Fields. The drought has brought some of the lowest water levels we have ever seen at the boardwalks. While the views are certainly different, there are still plenty of species present -- just perhaps different from the usual suspects by location. I know the water levels have concerned many of you, but this is nature. Changing landscapes are a reality, and birds are extremely adaptable. They will find new spots, many within the boundaries of Celery Fields. It's a good opportunity to branch out and explore new areas you

haven't before. Stop by the Nature Center, and we can show you some new paths you may not have taken.

February is perhaps the busiest month at Sarasota Audubon. We have multiple walks and educational opportunities each week. The biggest event of the year falls on Feb. 21st, our Fly Wild! Festival (formerly Sarasota Audubon Day). We have more than 20 booths composed of our nonprofit partners and native plant experts. There will be 10 presenters providing education on a wide variety of topics ranging from planting for birds, the history of Celery Fields, vermiculture (think worms), bird rescue and much more! We will have preview tours of the Quads, bird walks, tours of the microforest, trolley rides throughout the Celery Fields, a scavenger hunt for children and food trucks when you get hungry! Attendees will also have an opportunity to vote for the winning photos in the photo contest, and the winners of the bird-a-thon will be announced at the festival. Please come out and join us and spread the word. It's sure to be a fantastic time for everyone. Make sure you like us on Facebook to get the latest information on this great event. If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to info@sarasotaudubon.org or [CLICK HERE](#).

Happy Birding!

Sara Reisinger

Sarasota Audubon President

On behalf of the Board of Directors

MONTHLY MEETING INFORMATION
Monday, Feb. 9, 7 p.m. Zoom

A Most Remarkable Creature, The Caracara with Jonathan Meiberg

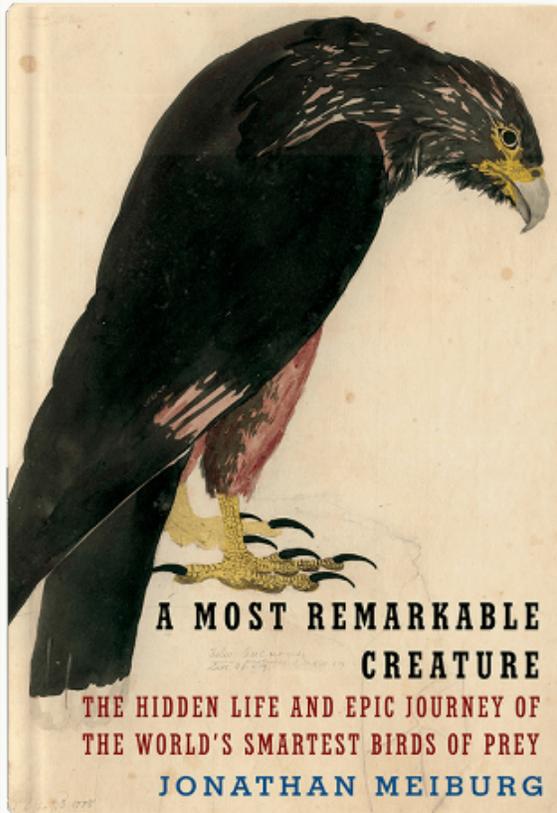


Above: Jonathan Meiberg, Author, Caracara Expert

Jonathan Meiberg, Caracara expert, will discuss his book "A Most Remarkable Creature: The Hidden Life and Epic Journey of the World's Smartest Birds of Prey."

These rare and unusual birds called **Striated caracara**, *Daptrius australis*, still exist, and the book reveals the wild and fascinating story of their history, origins and possible futures in a series of travels throughout South America, from the fog-bound coasts of Tierra del Fuego to the tropical forests of Guyana. The book is engaging as well as educational. Don't miss the presentation -- register below.

Jonathan is also a rock musician and writer, best known as the lead singer and songwriter for the group Shearwater in Austin, Texas.



Register for Zoom Feb. 9, A Most Remarkable Creature



Sarasota Audubon Presents

Fly Wild

A Day of Birds, Nature & Exploration

February 21, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

We are getting excited for a fabulous festival in a few weeks! Join us to connect with birds and nature in new and exciting ways.

Presentation Schedule

9:10-9:25	Story Time
9:30-9:55	Vermiculture Demo
10:00-10:25	Shorebird Nesting
10:30-10:55	History of the Celery Fields
11:00-11:25	Slide show wading birds
11:30-11:55	Purple Martin Nest
12:00-12:15	Story Time
12:00-12:25	FL Native Plants Nursery
12:30-1:00	Birdathon Award
1:00-1:25	Save Our Seabirds
1:30-2:00	Photo Contest Award

All volunteers get a Fly Wild! t-shirt

We still need lots of volunteers, everything from manning a booth to assisting folks at trolley stops with directions. Complete list and signup at the button below.

[Volunteer for Fly Wild!](#)



SARASOTA
AUDUBON SOCIETY

Bird for a
cause

Fly Wild

Bird-a-thon

Spend a day birding anywhere in Sarasota County, anytime during the week of February 13, 2026— all while raising funds to support conservation, education, and exploration at Fly Wild.



Register here



Teams of 2



[Bird-a-thon Information](#)

New Classes from Sarasota Audubon! For Beginners to Advanced Birders



Laughing Gulls (Lou Newman)

Just Added! [Birds of the Celery Fields with Forrest Rowland:](#)

\$10 Members, \$20 non. Sunday, Feb. 8, at the Nature Center, 3:30-5:00 p.m. Don't miss this, it is **COMING UP SOON!**

Just Added! [Nature Journaling with Jenny Cherry:](#)

[Beginning Nature Journaling:](#) \$20 Saturday, Mar. 28

[Advanced Nature Journaling:](#) \$40 Saturday, April 11,
both at the Nature Center, 11a.m.-5p.m.

Just Added! [Butterflies with Naomi Deutsch:](#)

\$10 Members, \$20 non, Saturday, March 21, 9-10:30 a.m.

You will learn about the butterflies at the Nature Center and the host plants in our native gardens.

Just Added! [Shorebird ID with Forrest Rowland:](#) \$20 Members, \$40

non. Saturday, March 21, at the Siesta Key Beach, 8-10 a.m. He will include photography tips as well.

Just Added! [Evolution of Birds with Forrest Rowland:](#) \$20 Members,

\$40 non. Saturday, March 28, at the Nature Center, 3:30-5 p.m. Learn about the early ancestors of birds, how geology -- both prehistoric and contemporary -- has affected bird evolution.

[Birding 101](#) and **[Birding 201](#)** are super popular -- and the Birding 101 class is FREE! There is no reason to say "I'm not sure" anymore. Join a class and take off on a new experience!

All Class Registrations

Quad Tours at Fly Wild! Feb. 21



We will have two trolleys rotating among the Celery Field sites. Be sure to hop on and plan to get off at the Quad Parcels, where Jeanne Dubi and folks from the Big Waters Land Trust will be available to answer your questions and give you a short tour.

[Donate to the Quads Re-Wilding](#)

Notes from the Nature Center

February hours:
Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - Noon
Saturday - Sunday, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Welcome to the heart of busy season at Sarasota Audubon Society! Migrating birds are stopping by to eat and rest. Curious tourists are coming to check out what Sarasota has to offer. And Florida residents are enjoying nature outside their front doors before heat and humidity descend again this summer. The Nature Center is busy inside and out all day long, with classes, presentations, activities and so much more. Please make time to come see us soon!



Gift Shop Update: With all of the visitors coming in and out of the Nature Center at this time of year, we have to restock the Gift Shop frequently. We replenished our stock of Crested Caracara and Roseate Spoonbill ball caps. And if you're looking for a fuzzy friend to bring home as a souvenir, check out our plush toy selection. Hurry before the Painted Buntings are sold out!

Fly Wild! Festival: If you haven't blocked off your calendar yet for Saturday, Feb. 21, then what are you waiting for? A full day of fun, games, birds, walks, shopping and food. See you at the Celery Fields from 9 a.m. to 2 in the afternoon. No need to pack a lunch because we've got food trucks! Want to volunteer to help out or sign up for the Bird-a-Thon? [Click Here](#)

Bird Trivia: Show off your birding knowledge to people who will appreciate it. Bird Trivia will be held at the Nature Center on Tuesday, Feb. 10, at 2 p.m. Members only, please! No registration necessary. Light snacks will be served.

Members Meet & Greet: Our next Meet & Greet is scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 11, at 2 p.m. Our presenter will be **Susan Schoettle-Gumm, PLLC**, who was the mastermind behind our strategy to save the Raymond Road farm from development. Don't miss it! Members only.

Enjoy this beautiful season, and I'll see you at the Fly Wild! Festival.

Kim Sullivan, Building Manager



[Read Full Notes](#)

Preventing Bird Strikes at the Nature Center



Leslie Austin and Margi Haas installed dots on the doors of the Sarasota Audubon Nature Center

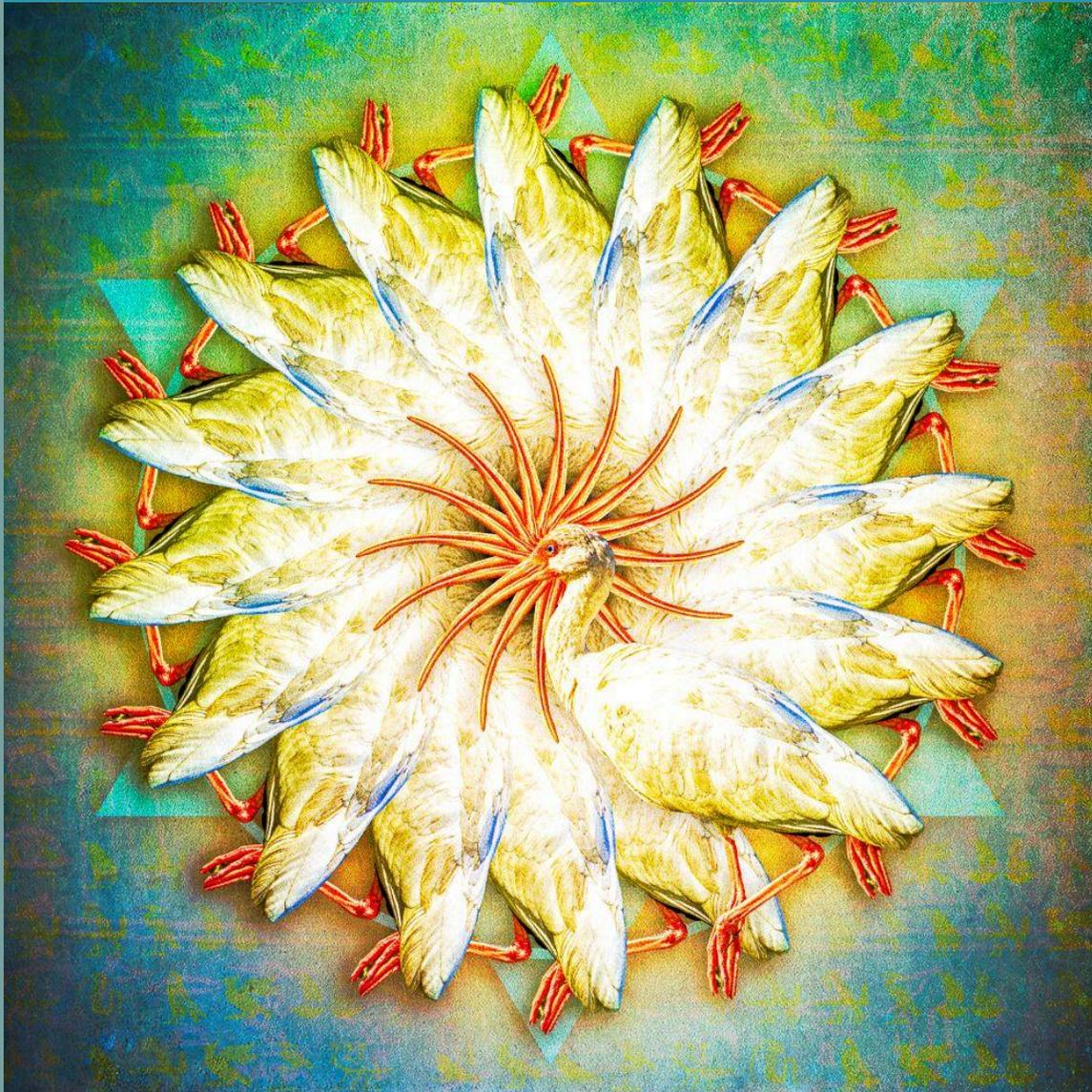
Sarasota Audubon is installing *Feather Friendly* brand special dot-markers on the Nature Center glass doors and windows to help prevent bird strikes. Another brand we learned about was *CollidEscape*. Birds don't see glass as we humans do. Instead, they see the reflections of sky and trees on glass as part of their habitat. If they unknowingly hit the windows, 70% of the time they seriously injure themselves even if they fly off. As the photo shows, once we applied the dots to the first two doors, the dots broke up that reflection on those windows for flying birds. (The door in the middle had no dots yet.)

Important for us all to know: Bird-protection markers which must be put on the outside of glass are about 95% effective in preventing bird strikes. As

conservation groups are reporting, glass windows of all residential and office buildings should be treated with special bird-strike protections or special glass designed to prevent bird collisions. Residential homes contribute most to overall bird strikes due to their abundance.

[Read what the National Park Service is doing here.](#)

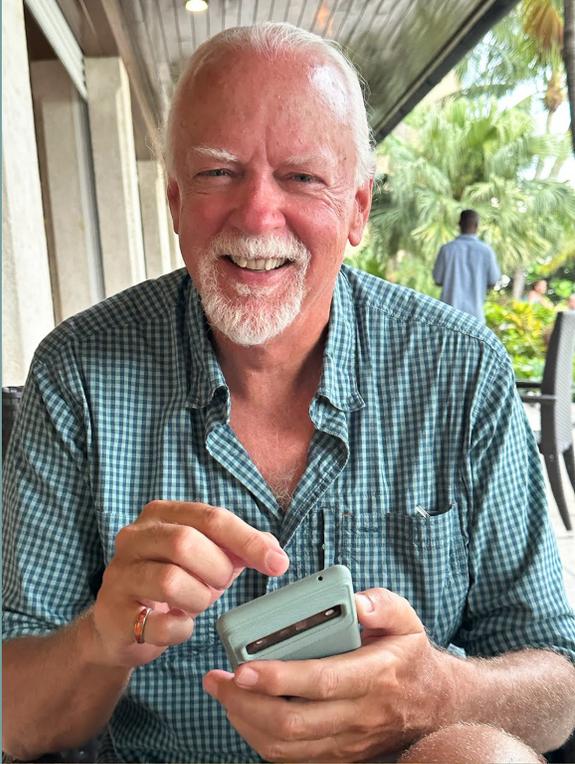
Art Update: Nature Photography of Stephen B. White



Above: Ibis Mandala (*Stephen B. White*)

Stephen B. White
Florida Master Naturalist,
Photographer

We are pleased to announce Steve White as our photo exhibitor for the month of February. He is an award-winning photographer and digital artist dedicated to the rediscovering the enchantment of nature. Steve has been experimenting with using photographs in new and unique ways, particularly as mandalas, with spectacular and fascinating results. As a Florida Master Naturalist, Steve is as comfortable in the



Florida swamp as in the studio, bringing a profound understanding of flora and fauna to his creative process. His perspective is shaped by his extensive study of nature-based religions and animism, which see nature not as a resource but as a living, intelligent system. If you didn't get the chance to see some of his photographs at our Holiday Luncheon in December, now is the time to do so.

Below: Bunting Mandala (Stephen B. White)



Membership Reminder

If you have received a notice from Member Planet and already renewed, thank you!

To check if you have renewed, click the button below.

[Renew or Join](#)



Carefree Learner Boat Tour

Join us as we explore the wonders of the Venice Bird Rookery and create lasting memories.

MARCH 24

APRIL 6

Glide into the shallows to see herons, pelicans, roseate spoonbills, ibis, egrets and more.

"It is a raucous site in the spring when mating is peaking."

[Carefree Learner Tickets](#)

Volunteer Opportunities
Join us during this busy time!



Purple Martin Volunteers



It's Almost Purple Martin Time! Perched upon their stately birdhouses outside the entrance to The Nature Center for seven months of the year and greeting the hundreds of visitors yearly, the Purple Martins have become the Ambassadors of The Sarasota Audubon Society.

Purple Martins are neo-tropical migrants, which means they travel to and from North America and the tropics of South America. They have a long tradition of bird management going back hundreds of years beginning with coastal Atlantic Native Americans.

Today they are blue-listed, meaning they are at risk but not officially endangered, and this is why we manage them. They are the most semi-domesticated wild birds in the world. While Purple Martins don't want to sit on our finger, they do allow us to bring down their birdhouses, look inside, change out their nests and count their eggs and young.

Managing Purple Martins is educational, interesting and fun. Why not join us? We are looking for volunteers to work with us **one hour a week** from February to mid July.

It's a great opportunity to learn about the breeding cycle of Purple Martins and how to support these beautiful purple gems of nature. To help, please contact us. Click a name to email:

[Terry Anne Suchma](#) or [Sue Guarasci](#)

Bluebird Monitors



Bluebird monitors are also needed. This is a great way to learn about the breeding and nesting habits of these popular birds of happiness!

Work with the Bluebird Team once a week (or every other week, they are flexible!) to collect data. The weekly task takes about half an hour. You could also assist with cleaning nest boxes at the end of season.

This opportunity begins Feb. 1st. To help [Click Here to email Evelyn](#), who is pictured above.

Nature Center Docents Needed



Docents are the face of Sarasota Audubon Society, greeting the general public as they come to visit our Nature Center, gardens, boardwalks, etc. We meet and greet visitors and answer their questions (as best we are able). Docents also process the cash and credit card sales of merchandise in the gift shop.

[Questions? Email Sue](#)

[Volunteer to Docent](#)

Bird Naturalists Needed

Bird Naturalists only need two hours for a shift, 8:30 to 10:30 a.m., Palmer Blvd. or Raymond Road. Choose your preferred site and day of the week.

Greet visitors, point out birds, flora and fauna and impart the history of the Celery Fields. Training provided! Watch wildlife and meet folks -- what could be more rewarding?



Questions? Email Helen

Volunteer Bird Naturalist

To check out any or all of the Volunteer Opportunities at Sarasota Audubon, click button below.

All Volunteer Opportunities

Christmas Bird Count: Sarasota Report by Aaron Virgin



The 75th annual Sarasota Christmas Bird Count was held on Dec. 27, 2025.

The count produced a respectable **160 species** on what was a damp and dreary morning that became a bit warm in the afternoon. Despite tallying 9 fewer species than last year, this total will likely result in one of the highest of the 70+ counts held statewide. Our arch rival Alachua (Gainesville) had 179, which is extraordinary for an inland count in Florida, and our neighbor to the north (Bradenton) tallied 151 species the week prior to our count.

We had an impressive total of **158 participants** on the count, up from the 127 of last year and 140 in 2023. Our **total of individual birds, about 40,300**, is much more (7,800) than the 32,500 individuals counted a year ago, and 37,700 tallied in 2023. We can all get behind such a positive uptick!

So why the overall uptick in the numbers of birds seen? For starters, we had more birders and therefore our effort was stronger. As noted in previous emails, we had people reaching out from the Sarasota Audubon newsletter, Audubon's CBC website, and by word-of-mouth from other birders. We are very excited to have **The Landings join us in sector 11 this year**, and we look forward to seeing their residents become more involved in not only the CBC but with SAS in general.

Ok, but why is the overall number down from the last two years? Here are some of the species not seen this year: Northern Bobwhite (seen on 60 out of 75 SRQ CBCs), Wilson's Plover (49), Horned Grebe (49), Caspian Tern (56), Chipping Sparrow (52), and Eastern Towhee (37). Also, the recently reliable King Rail (23) and Barn Owl (21) at Celery Fields were not seen or heard this year.

Ducks have been challenging this fall/winter in Sarasota, and the CBC was no exception with Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, and Redhead all missing, though in fairness the latter three can be challenging for our CBC and have only been noted on fewer than 30 occasions.

In addition, we missed out on a few of regularly seen (in recent years) passerines, such as Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Summer Tanager, Baltimore Oriole, and several species of flycatcher.

[Report: Sarasota CBC](#)

[Statistics: Sarasota CBC](#)

Wingspan Gaming at the Nature Center



We've got plenty of games, plenty of players who are eager to teach newcomers and plenty of candy to help keep you going.

Current Schedule for Wednesdays:

- **Wednesday, Feb. 4**

- **Wednesday, Feb. 18**

All games start at 12:30 p.m. in the Sarasota Audubon Nature Center at the Celery Fields: 999 Center Road, Sarasota. If you'd like to join the fun, please [email Lynn](#) so we know how many tables to set up!

Wingspan Evening Sessions -- Oceana Edition: For you night owls or holders of day jobs, Stacy Perry will be hosting Wingspan games on Thursday evenings at 6 p.m. Experienced players only at these sessions, please.

Evening Schedule for Thursdays (experienced players):

- **Thursday, Feb. 5**
- **Thursday, Feb. 12**
- **Thursday, Feb. 19**
- **Thursday, Feb. 26**

All games start at 6 p.m. in the Sarasota Audubon Nature Center at the Celery Fields: 999 Center Road, Sarasota.

If you'd like to participate, please [email Stacy](#) before the next evening game to let us know you're going to be there.

Don't Miss Monthly Guided Walks!



Did you know that Sarasota Audubon volunteer guides provide guided walks at area parks? Some occur every month, others are

for specific groups such as Young Birders. Don't miss out on the benefits of birding with an expert.

Check out opportunities on our online [Events Calendar](#). The calendar is continually updated and offers the latest on tour guide changes.

Sarasota Audubon Events Calendar

The Last Word Is Graphic Bird Feeder



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999 Center Road
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941-312-6533

Contact Editor



Activity Schedule



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