



Sun City Center Audubon Club

December 2025

President's Corner

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO EVERYONE!!!!

We have a great speaker for our December meeting, Jeff Liechty, Sanctuary Manager Audubon Florida, Florida Coastal Island Sanctuaries will be speaking about Regional Wading Bird Surveys.

Our meeting this month will be in Community Hall on South Pebble Beach.

We have a terrific December field trip to Florida Botanical Gardens. We will be leaving in the afternoon so that we can enjoy their holiday light display. We have hired a bus, please see the separate announcement for details, and sign up on our field trip page at WWW.SCCAUDUBONCLUB.COM. We still have seats available. We will go to dinner (OYO) after.

ELECTIONS! We are holding elections for our 2026 executive board at this meeting.

Candidates are	President	Pam Viner
	V.P.	?
	Secretary	Elizabeth Giles
	Treasurer	George Viner

Anyone interested in being our VP let me know. We are always looking for members to serve on our board. We hold the board meeting immediately after our general meeting on the first Saturday of the month.

MEMBERSHIP DUES \$15.00 (check made out to SCC Audubon Club or cash)

Dues are due and payable through February 7, 2026. If dues are not received by that date, we will have to remove names so that we can give an accurate report on membership to the CA in March. Forms will be available at the meeting and on the website. Please fill out a separate sheet for each member.

Hope to see you all in the **Community Hall** on Saturday, December 6

Coffee: 9:15 am
Meeting: 10:00am
Speaker: Jeff Liechty
Florida Coastal Island Sanctuaries

We are still planning a three-day trip; the committee is currently looking at a couple of sites to visit. Thank you for your patience.

Regards,
Pam Viner, President



Florida Botanical Gardens

2025-26 Programs

December 6, 2025

Community Hall

Regional Wading Bird Surveys

Jeff Liechty, Sanctuary Manager

Florida Coastal Island Sanctuaries

January 3, 2026

Community Hall

Native and Exotic Wildlife

Justin Matthews

Matthew's Wildlife Rescue

February 7, 2026

Manatees

Stan Kroh, Manager

Land and Water Programs, TECO

March 7, 2026

TO BE DETERMINED

April 4, 2026

Alligators

Kent A, Vliet, Ph.D.

Coordinator of Laboratories,

Department of Biology

University of Florida

<https://www.sccaudubonclub.com/fieldtrips>

Don't miss this trip to the beautiful Florida Botanical Gardens in Largo on December 15th! The Gardens are a 100-acre Park, managed by the Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources Department, that inspires and educates visitors by showcasing flora, fauna and natural resources in motivational surroundings that promote environmentally friendly techniques.

We'll leave Community Hall at 3:30 PM in order to get to the gardens at about 4:30 PM for a guided docent tour. Enjoy the sunset and see the gardens sparkle with over a million LED lights in a multitude of colors and lighted displays. We will have dinner (OYO) between 7:00 and 7:30 PM at Forchetta Italian Eatery a short distance away.

We will be engaging a bus for this trip and already have over 30 people signed up. There is room for more! You can sign up on our website, <https://www.sccaudubonclub.com/fieldtrips>, or at the December meeting on 12/6. Cost is \$45 per person.

Those that have signed up can either pay at the meeting or send a check to George Viner, 314 Stoneham Dr., Sun City Center, FL 33573. **Please write check to SCC Audubon Club.** We will be providing a check to the bus company and the botanic gardens, so please pay promptly.

Thanks, and see you soon!

Sabine Prather, Field Trip Coordinator



“FRESH WATER SPRINGS RESTORATION”

SCC Audubon Club Nov 1, 2025 Meeting

Presentation by Tom Reis, President & Co-Founder of the
Ecosphere Restoration Institute of Largo, Florida

by John Perian, Publicity Chairman

Photos by Tom Reis & Institute Website



Florida is not only blessed with relatively cool, mild winters, it is also home to more than 1,000 bubbling, freshwater springs. This water is not salty, saturated with minerals like sulfur, or brackish. It's pure and replenished solely by rainwater, that percolates down through the ground to recharge the Floridan Aquifer. The water then rises back to the surface under pressure, to emerge as a spring.

At its November 1st meeting this year, the SCC Audubon Club hosted Tom Reis, the President and Co-founder of the Ecosphere Restoration Institute. His lecture and digital presentation were called “Springs Restoration,” and focused on a handful of smaller, freshwater springs in the immediate city limits of Tampa.

The amount of water that emanates from these springs depends on the aquifer pressure and factors, such as the amount of rainfall it receives. The pressure coming out of the Springs can be less than one million gallons a day, to more than 65 million gallons per day. The water doesn't have to be pumped from the ground.

It has a constant temperature of 72 degrees in Central Florida. The Springs are cooler the further north one goes and warmer the further south.

While most of these underground springs are located north of Orlando, with many of them in the Panhandle area, there are a handful of indispensable, smaller, freshwater springs in Tampa. Most of them empty into the Hillsborough River and eventually flow into Tampa Bay.

Reis established Ecosphere in 2007, to help educate the public about the benefits of reclaiming Florida's existing wetlands and freshwater Springs. He has been doing this over the years, with innovative partnerships with public and private individuals and groups. All of his staff are volunteers.

Some of those organizations include the City of Tampa, TECO, Aqua Tech Eco Consultants, Aquaticus Plants, the Florida Environmental Protection Agency, the University of South Florida, and other conservation agencies.

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“Our job is to restore Tampa Bay as close as possible to a natural state,” he said, “We aren’t studying anything. We’re try to fix it.”

Since the late 19th century and early to mid-20th century, Reis said that many of Tampa’s springs were converted into swimming pools and man-made ponds. Years ago, a company used to pipe fresh water to nearby residents and bottle it for sale,

When the water quality deteriorated, most of the springs were neglected, abandoned or allowed to drain into the Hillsborough River. Until Reis and his volunteers, and conservation partners became involved in cleaning up the overgrowth of trees, shrubs and invasive plants, like the Brazilian Pepperbush, you could easily step into “Spring Boil,” and get yourself soaked, before you realized what happened.



Some of the Springs in Tampa, that Reis and the City of Tampa helped clean up and start to restore include Ulele Springs, at water Works Park along the Tampa Riverwalk off of Highland Avenue; Lowry Park Springs, east of the Tampa Zoo; Purity Springs, northeast of the Zoo; Eureka Springs, in the 31 acre botanical garden and conservation park between Highway 301 and I-75; Sulfur Springs, northeast of the Zoo; and Palma Ceia Springs Boil, north of MacDill Air Force Base in Fred Ball Park.



***Tom Reis, Ecosphere Restoration Institute
(November speaker) and George Viner, Club
Treasurer***

“There is one common denominator.” He said, “All of these projects are on public land. So, we’re using public dollars to restore springs and other wetlands, that are situated on public property”

Reis told the group that only about 22 percent of Tampa Bay’s coastline is healthy. That means that those natural areas do not have concrete or treated lumber breakwaters, seawalls, docks, bridges, piers or dikes.

“Everything else is privately owned. To restore that kind of Bay frontage, you run into a lot of inherent preconceptions and concerns.”

A private homeowner, whose property abuts the shoreline might say, “Why are you fixing this guy’s property and not mine?”

Reis said he would tell that owner, “Well, this is a really critical spot to restore to a more natural state, and yours is not. Furthermore, it becomes problematic when you use public money to restore privately owned land.”

He added that it’s extremely important that, if a freshwater spring or a wetland site sits along the shoreline or empties into a river or bay, and it gets restored, that it stays that way.

If he can overcome those hurdles, he said that he can start restoring the sites, wherever it’s needed, whether it’s on public or private land.

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Reis said he regularly applies for and usually gets grant money and donations, to implement wetlands reclamation projects that include Tampa Bay.

One of the biggest problems and dangers to Florida's freshwater springs is uncontrolled development. A lot of our Springs have stopped flowing altogether, because too much of the water has been pumped out for use by agricultural interests and public water consumption.

He explained another problem. Even in pristine places like Rainbow Springs, in Dunnellon, Florida within Marion County, north of Ocala, there's been a lot of nitrogen and phosphorus leaching into the ground water and streams, that feed the Springs.

Reis said the levels of those chemicals are not critically high, but they are elevated. Other pollutants that find their way into places like Rainbow Springs, include fertilizer from farms, ranches and people's lawns.

Furthermore, a great deal of the accelerated growth of algae in the state is caused by those pollutants.

The other problem in Florida, that adversely affects water quality is most Springs, is the removal or alteration of wetland and forested areas, grassland and Plants like Mangroves, along coastal areas of Florida

Natural flora is then usually replaced by concrete and asphalt parking lots, streets, office buildings, stores and homes. There are less areas for rainwater to percolate through the ground to the underground reservoirs.

Unfortunately, there isn't an unlimited supply of underground fresh water in Florida. Water levels in the State continue to drop every year.

There are more than 3.6 million residents in the Tampa region alone. Twenty-three point three million in the entire state, who live here year-round. Everyone must have water to drink to survive. Human beings can only live from three to seven days without drinking water. In that brief time frame, one's internal organs begin to shut down. And death soon follows.

Reis said Tampa does have a Desalinization Plant. "However, it's very expensive to operate. Meanwhile Tampa Bay Water is working with the agriculture industry, to find a solution to the problem of dwindling water resources."

According to experts, Florida has the cheapest drinking water in all of North America. One of the more painful ways to help conserve it, is to increase the cost of that resource, Reis added.

People tend to conserve their consumption of fresh water, if it's expensive. So, the best way to help conserve it is to raise the price of providing it to consumers."

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Reis graduated from the University of South Florida with a degree in Biology and Geology. Although he's retired from his previous fulltime job, he volunteers his time, labor and expertise to Ecosphere. He has helped restore more than 2,400 acres of freshwater springs and other natural wetlands systems in Southwest Florida.

He is a nationally known and recognized Ecologist. In 2013, he won the prestigious National Wetlands Award in Conservation and Restoration, from the Environmental Law Institute in Washington, D.C. His office is in Largo, FL.



Reminder for Volunteers

If you are helping with setting up, please be at the hall by 8:30am.

If you are helping at a table, (sign in, donations, dues) please arrive by 8:50am.

Looking forward to seeing all of you in December.

Sun City Center Audubon Club Officers & Committee Chairs 2025-26

www.sccaudubonclub.com

<i>President</i>	<i>Pam Viner</i>
<i>Vice President</i>	
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Elisabeth Giles</i>
<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>George Viner</i>
<i>At Large</i>	<i>Linda Floyd</i>
	<i>Patsie Ginley</i>
<i>Field Trips</i>	<i>Sabine Prather</i>
<i>Master Birder</i>	<i>Ray Webb</i>
<i>Refreshments</i>	<i>Pat Dean</i>
<i>Historian</i>	<i>Clara Clancy</i>
<i>Membership</i>	<i>Joanie Swartz</i>
<i>Conservation</i>	<i>Melanie Higgins</i>
<i>Newsletter</i>	<i>Denise Rosen</i>
<i>Publicity</i>	<i>John Perian</i>
<i>Merchandise</i>	<i>Laura Butler</i>
<i>Name Tags</i>	<i>JoAnn Wilkinson</i>
<i>Previous President</i>	<i>Alan & Nancy Renfrow</i>

December 6, 2025 Meeting Community Hall

Hope to see you all in the **Community Hall** on
Coffee: 9:15 am
Meeting: 10:00am
Speaker: Jeff Liechty, Sanctuary Manager
Regional Wading Bird Surveys

The manager of the Audubon Society's Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries (FCIS) will be the guest speaker at the Sun City Center Audubon Club's December 6th meeting at the South Campus Community Hall at 1910 South Pebble Beach Boulevard. Jeff Liechty, Sanctuary Manager, will give a presentation that will focus on the Annual Wading Bird Surveys conducted in the Tampa Bay Region. He will begin his talk after club business, at about 10:15 am.

Birding enthusiasts with the club and the Eagle Audubon Society have participated with Liechty and his organization in these yearly surveys for the last few years. Wading birds have been identified and included in the surveys in Kings Point, Middle Lake and North Lake in Sun City Center.

The nucleus of his lecture will elaborate on the wading bird surveys conducted in the region. He will also talk about the methodology, results and the vital importance of citizen-scientist offered data. Liechty works to protect the myriad of nesting islands in and around the Bay. The Sanctuaries Program aims to reduce the harm caused by fishing line entanglement of the Brown Pelican, by banding the rehabilitated birds, working with local shore bird rehabbers, raising funds and educating the public.

He co-authored a paper in the Journal of Avian Conservation and Ecology titled "Survival of Fallen and Returned Rooftop Nesting Least Tern Chicks." He monitors bird nesting islands here and responds to incidents of disturbances to the birds' nesting sites. He was appointed Manager of the Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries earlier this year.



Prior to Liechty's presentation and the brief business announcements, there will be a prelude to the morning's agenda with coffee, tea and pastries for club members and their guests from 9:15am until 10am. Please bring your own mugs and cups.

by John Perian, Publicity Chairman

**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY!**

December Celebrations

Rhonda Blair

Susan Cintron

Virginia L. Ewing

Bob Gardner

Betty Giles

Meg Graff

Melanie Higgins

Faith Houdek

Sally Linton

Judi Matelski

Linda Menier

Susan Perusse

Barbara Pfeil

Lois Risser

Joan Russell

Harriet Seckel

Janell Snape

Paul Wilkinson