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Florida Birding and Nature Festival set for October

TAMPA – The four-day Florida Birding and Nature Festival will feature field trips, boat excursions, seminars by experts, nationally renowned keynote speakers and a free nature expo.

The event will be held Oct. 12-15 at the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center, 6650 Dickman Road, in Apollo Beach (just south of Tampa). The festival coincides with the peak of fall migration of birds through Central Florida. More than 180 species have been observed during previous festivals.

The outings, led by knowledgeable guides and in some cases the managers of the nature habitats visited, include walking, wagon, boat and kayak trips and a bus tour of Central Florida birding hot spots. Some field trips explore sites not normally open to the public.

Among the field trip destinations: Egmont Key, the Cross Bar Ranch in Spring Hill, Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve, Alafia River Corridor South Nature Preserve, Cockroach Bay Ecosystem Restoration Project, Fort DeSoto Park, Coffeepot Bayou, the Alafia Bank Bird Sanctuary, and the Lower Green Swamp Nature Preserve. A trip to the Schultz Nature Preserve will highlight butterflies and dragonflies as well as birds. There even will be an outing devoted to bird banding.

Space is limited so early registration is advised.

Naturalist, wildlife photographer and writer Stan Tekiela will present the Friday keynote address. Tekiela is the renowned author of more than 190 field guides, nature books and wildlife audio CDs for nearly every state. He will talk about the mysteries of bird migration.

David Johnson, the director of the Global Owl Project, will present Saturday's keynote on the taxonomy and science about Burrowing Owls. He recently was featured in a segment of CBS Sunday Morning. A buffet will accompany both keynote presentations.

The festival also will offer two days of in-person and Zoom broadcasted seminars, with experts covering fascinating nature topics. Among them: "Secrets of Sandhills," "Why Snakes Are Cool," "Birds as Predators and Prey of Turtles," "Bird Nests," "Butterflies of Florida," and "Prescribed Fires and Wildlife of Hillsborough County."

A free Nature Expo on Friday, Oct. 13, and Saturday, Oct. 14, at the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center will feature displays from numerous environmental organizations, nature-related businesses, and artists. Exhibitors will sell binoculars, artwork, bird boxes and native plants that attract birds and butterflies,

For info information and registration, see <https://www.floridabirdingandnaturefestival.org/>