

The National Audubon Society will again be conducting [a nationwide Christmas Bird Count](#). If you are interested in participating on a count team in this year's Duval County CBC on December 30, 2023, please contact Anne Turner at [sungrebe86@yahoo.com](mailto:sungrebe86@yahoo.com), Jessica Dyszel at [jessica.dyszel@gmail.com](mailto:jessica.dyszel@gmail.com), or Pete Johnson at [petejohnson71@gmail.com](mailto:petejohnson71@gmail.com). Note this is not a field trip, but a serious bird count.

LINK: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>

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North Florida Land Trust (NFLT) has facilitated [the preservation of 470 acres in Marion County](#) known as Swan-Smilely Big Pine Preserve, located within the Ocala to Osceola, or O2O, Wildlife Corridor. The O2O is a vital connector within the State-designated Florida Wildlife Corridor.

The acquisition was primarily funded through the Florida Forever program approved by the Governor and Cabinet in May with additional private support. The preserve was purchased for \$4.997 million.

LINK: <https://www.nflt.org/2023/11/20/north-florida-land-trust-has-preserved-the-470-acre-swan-smiley-big-pine-preserve-in-marion-county/>

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The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is seeking public input on a draft addendum to the State Wildlife Action Plan. The purpose of this addendum is to incorporate 596 native plant species into the state's Species of Greatest Conservation Need list. Species listed as SGCN are declining or are at risk of becoming imperiled in the future.

Written comments are being accepted via survey until Dec. 15. If you would like to comment but are unable to do so in the specified timeframe, or if you require an alternate format in which to comment or review the draft Addendum, contact information can be found at [www.MyFWC.com/SWAP](http://www.MyFWC.com/SWAP)

Florida has the greatest diversity of native plant families in the United States. Native plant species are vital to Florida ecosystems and provide food and shelter to wildlife species. They also provide many benefits to Florida residents, including hurricane protection and water filtration.

Florida's action plan is a comprehensive, statewide plan for conserving wildlife and natural areas for future generations. The action plan takes an ecosystem approach, focusing on the needs of Florida's terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystems that will benefit the most Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

LINK: [www.MyFWC.com/SWAP](http://www.MyFWC.com/SWAP)

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There was another [major oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico last month](#). Have you heard anything about it? Ask yourself why not.

Oil spills are inseparable from oil drilling and transportation. Period. History proves this.

LINK: [https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/oil-spill-dumps-million-gallons-of-oil-into-gulf-of-mexico-raising-concerns-about-wildlife-180983312/?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_campaign=editorial&utm\\_term=11232023&utm\\_content=new](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/oil-spill-dumps-million-gallons-of-oil-into-gulf-of-mexico-raising-concerns-about-wildlife-180983312/?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=editorial&utm_term=11232023&utm_content=new)

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A devious plan by FWC to remove a PERMANENT conservation easement from a property in Orange County known as the Split Oak Forest to allow development appears to have been thwarted by local

residents and conservation groups who pressured the Orange County Board of Commissioners to [rescind their support for a toll road](#) which would have bisected the forest and set the stage for removing its permanent conservation easement.

This is a major victory as it could have set dangerous precedent that no conservation protection, no matter how supposedly “permanent,” was outside the reach of developers. I’ll be keeping an eye on this one to make sure it stands.

LINK: <https://mynews13.com/fl/orlando/news/2023/11/29/split-oak-forest-toll-road-project>