



SCIENCE MATTERS

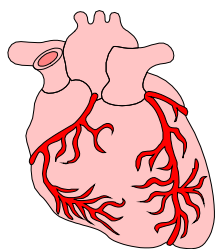
Science Partners Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2026 - IN THIS ISSUE:

- The Human Heart – By Design
- Great Backyard Bird Count: February 13-16, 2026
- Register NOW for Upcoming “Open” Creation Adventures!
 - ✓ Monday, March 9: *The Heavens Declare!*
 - ✓ Friday, March 13: *Manatee Snorkel Encounter*
 - ✓ Friday, April 17: *Florida’s Water Systems*
- Plan a **CREATION ADVENTURE** for Your Group!
- Senior Adult Ministry: by Bill Clifton.



THE HUMAN HEART - BY DESIGN



The human heart is the focus of Valentine’s Day. Here are some interesting facts about our heart and circulatory system that were designed by our Creator to provide us with “abundant life.” (Selections from *Body By Design*, by Alan L. Gillen.)

- ♥ The human body has over 60,000 miles of blood vessels – that’s 2½ times the distance around the Earth’s equator.
- ♥ The heart beats an average of 70 times per minute. That’s 4,200 beats per hour or 100,800 beats per day – nonstop – for the rest of your life!
- ♥ The heart pumps about 2,000 gallons of blood each day for a total of over 700,000 gallons each year! To accomplish this, chambers of the heart must contract and relax on a highly coordinated series of actions.
- ♥ The circulatory system even has a method of clotting in case a rupture occurs that might cause blood loss. Imagine a punctured bicycle tire repairing and re-inflating itself without your even knowing it!
- ♥ Red blood cells bathe every other cell in the body with fresh oxygen from the lungs and carry away harmful carbon dioxide gas to be expelled by the lungs.

Isn’t God awesome to create such an amazing thing as the human heart! Have you given Him yours?

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT: FEBRUARY 13-16, 2026



Each February, for four days, the world comes together for the love of birds. People spend time in their favorite places watching and counting as many birds as they can find and reporting them to Cornell Lab of Ornithology. These observations help scientists better understand global bird populations before one of their annual migrations.

Launched in 1998 by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the **Great Backyard Bird Count** was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real time. In 2013, GBBC became a global project and citizens began entering data into eBird. In 2025 citizens reported **8,078** species of the world’s known birds. Hundreds of thousands of people all over the world were birding for four days last February! Participating is easy, fun to do

alone or with others, and can be done anywhere you find birds.

Step 1: Decide where you will watch birds.

Step 2: Watch birds for **15 minutes or more, at least once over the four days**, February 13–16, 2026.

Step 3: Identify all the birds you **see or hear** and use the best tool for sharing your bird sightings:

- If you are a **beginning bird admirer and new to bird identification**, try using the [Merlin Bird ID app](#) to report what birds you are seeing or hearing.
- If you have **participated** in the count **before** and want to record **numbers of birds**, try the [eBird Mobile app](#) or enter your bird list on the eBird website at www.ebird.org/gbbc/submit using your computer.

For more information, check out this link: www.birdcount.org

REGISTER NOW FOR UPCOMING "OPEN" CREATION ADVENTURES!

Monday, March 9, 2026 – ***THE HEAVENS DECLARE!***

Deadline for Minimum Number is February 16. Information/registration form:

https://www.sciencepartners.net/uploads/9/8/8/0/9880494/the_heavens_declare_-_rocket_town_church.pdf



Join us at Rocket Town Church in Titusville as we focus on astronomy in an "out of this world" workshop! We'll compare and contrast the biblical and secular worldviews of astronomy. Topics include astronomy vs. astrology, astronomy in the Bible, the earth, moon, stars, constellations, meteors, planets, our Solar System, and more. Mr. Clifton will present a fascinating astronomy program, and we will make astronomy crafts. The highlight of this astronomy workshop will be a "***Gospel in the Stars***" presentation inside **STARLAB, a portable planetarium!**

Friday, March 13, 2026 – ***MANATEE SNORKEL ENCOUNTER***

Deadline for Minimum Number is February 13. Information/registration form:

https://www.sciencepartners.net/uploads/9/8/8/0/9880494/2026_03-13_manatee_snorkel_encounter.pdf



In the morning, outfitted with wetsuits, snorkels, masks, and fins, we will take a **pontoon boat ride in search of manatees**. When we find them, we'll join them in the crystal clear, springfed waters of **King's Bay** – the only place in Florida where it is legal to swim with manatees! During our manatee encounter, we'll observe these sociable, threatened mammals "up close and personal." We'll study them in their natural habitat, learn what threatens their survival, and find out how we can help.

In the afternoon, we'll tour **Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park**. This 166-acre park, located at the headwater of the Homosassa River, is a showcase for native Florida wildlife. We'll see many examples, some endangered or threatened as we take the "Wildlife Walk" through natural wildlife habitats, keeping an eye out for alligators, snakes, deer, Florida black bear, bobcats, otter, Florida panthers, manatees (underwater viewing), and a variety of birds including endangered whooping cranes.



Friday, April 17, 2026 – ***FLORIDA'S WATER SYSTEMS***

Deadline for Minimum Number is March 20. Information/registration form:

https://www.sciencepartners.net/uploads/9/8/8/0/9880494/2026_04-17_floridas_water_systems.pdf



Our group will explore Canaveral National Seashore (CNS), the Indian River Lagoon (IRL), and the St. Johns River (SJR), observing **Florida's (three) Water Systems** from the perspective of God's design in creation. At CNS, we'll begin with an orientation, beach walk, and sea bean hunt at this **saltwater ecosystem**. Then, we're off to the IRL where we will also get into the **brackish water** with seining nets. Our Capture and Release permit allows us to study the marine specimens we catch in our nets and then return them to the water. We never know what we might find, but have caught fish, shrimp, crabs, seahorses, jellyfish, puffer fish, horseshoe crabs, stingrays, and more! Sometimes we see dolphins and manatees. Our last stop is the SJR where we'll observe the plant and animal life of this **freshwater habitat** from an airboat. Watch for alligators, bald eagles, many other birds, turtles, and more!



Plan a CREATION ADVENTURE - FIELD TRIP for Your Group!

CREATION ADVENTURE - FIELD TRIPS



JOIN BILL & MERILEE CLIFTON, creationists, authors, Florida Master Naturalists, and science educators, as we look for God's great design in nature. **CREATION ADVENTURES** information / registration forms are linked to event dates at www.sciencepartners.net/calendar.html. For additional details such as minimum and maximum numbers, costs, destinations, and more, each event has a dedicated web page at www.sciencepartners.net under the "**Creation Field Trips**" or "**Creation Workshops**" tabs. Contact Merilee Clifton if you have questions or you'd like to schedule a **CREATION ADVENTURE** for your group.

CENTRAL FLORIDA HABITATS: Our first stop is Blue Spring State Park, home to hammock, marsh, swamp, and flatwoods habitats. We will cruise the St. Johns River and enjoy a fully narrated introduction to the wildlife and vegetation of this fragile ecosystem! We'll test river water for temperature, salinity, and turbidity; dip, collect, and identify marine specimens; and keep a look out for manatees, gators, otters, snakes, deer, bears, turtles, birds, and more. We'll have the opportunity to earn a birding certificate from Florida Fish and Wildlife. On a boardwalk hike along Blue Spring Run, we'll look for manatees. Then, we're off to Lyonia Preserve where we will hike into a scrub habitat looking gopher tortoises and one of Florida's most threatened birds, the Florida scrub-jay. We'll learn about plants and animals created specifically for the scrub habitat. We'll end with a visit to Lyonia Environmental Center.

CREATIONIST GUIDE TO SEAWORLD: Mr. Clifton, former head of SeaWorld Orlando's Education Department, knows his way around the park and will provide a unique and fascinating perspective of SeaWorld as we learn about the sea and the animals that live in it. Did you ever wonder why marine mammals have tails that move up and down instead of side to side like fish? Or why they are born tail first instead of head first like land mammals? Find answers to these questions and more as we explore SeaWorld from a creationist viewpoint! Our creation tour of SeaWorld lasts from 9:30 AM – 1:30 PM (time may vary slightly). Then, you may stay on your own until the park closes.

FLORIDAS WATER SYSTEMS: At Canaveral National Seashore, we'll begin with an orientation, beach walk/clean up, and "**BINGO**cean" scavenger hunt at this saltwater ecosystem. After our picnic lunch, we will wade into the Indian River Lagoon's brackish water environment with seining nets. Our Capture & Release permit allows us to study the marine specimens we catch and return them to the water. On previous trips, we have caught fish, shrimp, crabs, seahorses, jellyfish, puffer fish, horseshoe crabs, stingrays, and more! Sometimes we see dolphins and manatees. Our last stop is the St. Johns River where we'll observe the plant and animal life of this freshwater habitat from an airboat. Watch for gators, eagles, turtles, and more!

FOR THE BIRDS: Join us as we focus on Florida birds at Orlando Wetlands Park. On this "Introduction to Birding" field trip, we will learn how birds were specifically designed by their Creator to do what they do. We'll cover the basics of birding: how to use binoculars, how to use a field guide, and how to identify birds. Then, we will take a nature walk observing birds (and possibly other animals) in the wild. We'll have the opportunity to earn a birding certificate from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and also learn how to continue earning advanced birding certificates on our own. Our day will include information on birding resources, how to start a bird "life list," how to create a backyard habitat for birds, where to see birds around Florida, bird crafts, and more!

MANATEE SNORKEL ENCOUNTER: We'll focus on "Florida's Gentle Giant" - the West Indian Manatee. Outfitted with wetsuits, masks, snorkels, and fins, we will take a pontoon boat ride in search of manatees and join them in the crystal clear, spring-fed waters of Crystal River. During our manatee encounter, we'll observe these sociable mammals. We'll study them "up close and personal" in their natural habitat. After lunch, we'll head for Homosassa Springs Wildlife Park, a showcase for native Florida wildlife including alligators, snakes, deer, Florida black bear, bobcats, otter, Florida panthers, manatees, and a variety of birds including endangered whooping cranes. After our "Wildlife Walk," you may stay in the park until it closes.

CREATION ADVENTURE - WORKSHOPS

Science Partners Comes to Your Location

THE BEAR ESSENTIALS: What is a bear? Where do bears live around the world? Could they be living in your neighborhood? We'll look at the eight bear species of the world in general, and then we'll focus on our own Florida Black Bear. This bear is our state's largest mammal. Through a variety of activities including a teaching time, crafts, and a game, we will learn bear anatomy and physiology, behavior, seasonal activities and movement, life cycles, habitat requirements, and limiting factors. We'll see bear skulls, claws, tracks, fur, scat, and more as well as learn ecological concepts to help us understand how our actions impact the Florida Black Bear's survival. We will learn to "Be Bear Aware."

THE HEAVENS DECLARE: At our "out of this world" workshop, we'll compare and contrast the biblical and secular worldviews of astronomy. Topics include astronomy versus astrology, astronomy in the Bible, the earth, moon, stars, constellations, meteors, planets, our Solar System, galaxies, and the universe. Mr. Clifton will present a fascinating astronomy program, and we will make astronomy crafts. The highlight of this workshop will be an exciting astronomy presentation in the STARLAB, a portable planetarium. PLEASE NOTE: This workshop is best suited for ages 5 and up. The presentation inside the STARLAB is not suitable for preschoolers.

HIDDEN KINGDOM - INSECTS & ARACHNIDS: Buzz on by as we learn about the "Hidden Kingdom" of insects, spiders, and other creepy things! You'll be bug-eyed when you see preserved specimens of the world's longest insect, the world's heaviest insect, the insect with the largest eyes, and more! Learn about the butterfly and its life cycle – from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly. Do butterflies grow? How do they smell things? Do they migrate? What is "metamorphosis?" What does the Bible say about metamorphosis? Discover much about creepy crawlies during our teaching time, by playing a game, viewing a short video, and making creepy, crawly crafts.

MARINE SCIENCE - A SEA OF EVIDENCE: Can a male sea animal give birth? Are there fish that actually have their own lighting systems? What sea animal has eyes as big as soccer balls? Mr. Clifton will share with us his knowledge of the sea and its awesome creatures. We'll view a fascinating visual presentation / teaching time, see marine artifacts (shark jaw, megalodon tooth, horseshoe crab, stingray barbs, and more!), and participate in a game and crafts to reinforce what we learn about the sea.

NOAH'S ARK AND THE WORLDWIDE FLOOD: The story of Noah's ark and the worldwide flood has been told for centuries with variations in cultures all over the world. Is this story really true? Could one man build a floating wooden structure that big? How could all the animals fit on the ark? What about dinosaurs? Did the flood destroy every living thing? Was it global or just local? Where did the flood waters come from - and where did they go? Is there any evidence of a worldwide flood? What about fossils? How are they formed? What can we learn from them? And what does all this mean to me today? Find answers to these and other questions during this workshop that includes a teaching time, artifacts including a scale model of the ark and fossils, crafts, and a game.

WALK WITH THE DINOSAURS: Are dinosaurs mentioned in the Bible? Did they live along with man or did they die out millions of years ago? Why did they become extinct? Are they all extinct? What can we really know about them? Mr. Clifton will share surprising information about dinosaurs with us. We'll also learn about dinosaurs through a game and crafts. We'll see actual fossils of dinosaurs and other animals, learn how fossils form, and much more!

Senior Adult Ministry by Bill Clifton

While serving on church staff at First Baptist Church of Altamonte Springs, Bill developed a special desire to minister to, entertain, challenge, and spiritually engage older adults. He does this through leading group singing of the old Gospel hymns accompanied by his banjo *Harriette*, storytelling, and Biblical devotions.

Some of the churches Bill has ministered to are Downtown Baptist Church, Orlando Baptist Church, Lockhart Baptist Church, and First Baptist Church of Altamonte Springs – although being a Baptist is not a requirement! 😊

Bill and his wife Merilee look forward to using their gifts and talents with your senior adult luncheons or other gatherings. Contact us if you love to sing the old Gospel hymns, laugh 'til you cry, and reflect on God's Word.



“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.”

Proverbs 17:22

***“Give thanks to the LORD with the banjo;
make melody to him with the instrument of five strings.”***

Psalm 33:2 (Clifton Version)

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.

Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing.”

Psalm 100:1-2

***For more information or to have Bill share at your event,
contact Bill or Merilee Clifton at 407-808-4458 or info@sciencepartners.net.***

