



# The Crane

Volume 53 Number 2 November—December 2011

## November and December Field Trips

**Saturday, November 5, 8:00 a.m. Hague Dairy**  
Meet Rex Rowan at the Tag Agency on NW 34th Street near US-441 to caravan to one of the county's best spots for sparrows, blackbirds, and raptors. Diff: 1

**Saturday, November 12, 7:00 a.m. Hamilton County mines FULL DAY TRIP!** Meet at the Tag Agency on NW 34th Street near US-441 and caravan to join trip leader Jerry Krummrich in White Springs. We'll explore a series of freshwater impoundments for ducks and other water birds, and look for sparrows in the fields and brushy margins. Diff: 2

**Sunday, November 20, 8:00 a.m. La Chua Trail**  
Table your bias against sparrows and get a fresh start with Bubba Scales at Paynes Prairie's La Chua Trail. Meet at the trailhead on Camp Ranch Road. La Chua is one of the area's best spots for close study of a variety of sparrows and other brush-loving birds as well as wintering flycatchers, raptors, waterfowl, and newly-arrived Sandhill Cranes. Diff: 3

**Saturday, November 26, 8:00 a.m. Tusawilla Prairie (CLEP trip)** Meet Ivor Kincaide in the parking lot of the Sweetbay grocery store (2003 NW 34th Street) to carpool to Tusawilla Prairie south of Micanopy. Depending on water levels we may see waterfowl and Sandhill Cranes, Sedge and Marsh Wrens, and several species of sparrows, most often Swamp and Savannah (though Lincoln's, Le Conte's and Henslow's have been recorded). Diff: 2

**Sunday, December 4, 6:30 a.m. Cedar Key**  
Meet Rex Rowan in the Target parking lot and carpool to Cedar Key. Cedar Key is a quintessential Florida birding destination where birders can often view shorebirds over one shoulder and songbirds over the other. Participants may stay in Cedar Key for lunch. Diff: 2

**Saturday, December 10, 8:00 a.m. Kanapaha Prairie** Meet Rex Rowan in the Target parking lot. The Kanapaha Prairie is an 804-acre pasture dotted with marshy ponds and ringed with huge live oaks. It is home to the county's second-largest flock of Sandhill Cranes. Numerous other birds enjoy its open spaces as well, such as Eastern Meadowlarks, Killdeer, American Kestrels, shorebirds, and waterfowl. It is normally off limits to the general public but AAS has special permission for this trip. Diff: 2

**Sunday, December 18, SPECIAL EVENT**  
**Christmas Bird Count** Contact John Hintermister (352-316-2396; [jhintermister@gmail.com](mailto:jhintermister@gmail.com)) to discuss details if you are interested in participating in this all-day event.

**Saturday-Sunday, January 7-8 St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge** Call Wild Birds Unlimited (352-381-1997) to register. Meet John Hintermister at the St. Marks NWR Visitor Center on Saturday at 8 a.m. to bird at one of Florida's premier winter birding spots. Expect a large number and wide variety of birds on this field trip. Overnight option. Sunday's meeting time and location will be decided on Saturday. Limit 20 people. Diff: 3

**Trip Difficulty 1:** Trip within easy access to the vehicle and/or level terrain one mile or less **2:** May involve uneven terrain one to two miles **3:** May involve elevation change, uneven terrain, and/or greater than two miles

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***The Alachua Audubon Society's mission is to foster appreciation and knowledge of birds and other native wildlife, to protect and restore wildlife populations and their habitats, and to promote sustainable use of natural resources.***

Content of **The Crane** is the sole responsibility of AAS and fulfills stated objectives and goals of AAS. Annual subscription to **The Crane** is included in AAS dues. Non-Audubon members may subscribe to **The Crane** for \$8 annually. All checks for subscriptions or changes of address should be mailed to Paul Moler, Membership Chairman: see back page for address. Submissions to **The Crane** are welcomed. **The Crane** is printed on recycled paper.

**Deadline for  
Jan-Feb Crane:  
Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>**



It was the best of fall migrations; it was the worst of fall migrations. Okay, I know how awkward and corny that sounds, but it does to some degree describe fall migration this year. During the latter half of August through the middle of September, with near drought conditions and temperatures relentlessly in the

mid-90s, it was tough to scrape up a warbler list worth mentioning. Not until the end of September could one consistently put together ten species in a single outing, and then only with the help of newly arriving Palm Warblers and Common Yellowthroats. The Fall Migration Count September 17 collectively tallied 22 warbler species, but many teams had well under 10.

Conversely, the same high temperatures and near drought conditions created a shorebird bonanza not seen here in over a decade. Attention was first drawn to Orange Lake in an area near McIntosh called Sportsman's Cove. There, birders as early as June noted a huge buildup of wading birds (including Roseate Spoonbills) around the receding muddy edges of the lake. Eventually shorebirds also began to show up. First there was a very rare-inland Willet, followed by a few yellowlegs, some peeps, and by the end of August at least 17 species had been recorded, including such local rarities as Short-billed Dowitcher and Marbled Godwit. When water levels at Orange Lake rose, attention shifted to Newnans Lake where south of the Power's Park pier dozens of shorebirds began to build up on exposed mudflats. Most notable, was an American Oystercatcher that made a brief appearance, and a Buff-breasted Sandpiper discovered on the fall count. The Newnans Lake team also added Common, Black, and Caspian Terns to the count-day list.

One of the best birds at Newnans Lake this fall wasn't a shorebird at all. While puzzling through the many small sandpipers at Powers Park September 18, Adam Kent noticed a small flycatcher in the bulrushes along the shore. Suspecting it might be a Willow Flycatcher, he played a recording and it responded, calling back. The next day Adam was able to record the bird definitively singing, verifying only the second Willow Flycatcher ever documented in Florida.

By the end of September the passerine migration became more evident. Several local birders noted large nocturnal flights of thrushes in late September and early October. Calling overhead pre-dawn were hundreds of Swainson's Thrushes, a smaller number of Veerys, Wood, and Gray-cheeked Thrushes, plus a smattering of other migrants. These thrushes seemed to pass over our area, as few could be found in local woods even after the heaviest of flights. That is, except for October 2, when Bob Wallace reported 50+ thrushes at San Felasco Hammock, one of which he (Continued on Page 5)

## **Alachua Audubon Society Wins Best Conservation Project Award**

Alachua Audubon Society (AAS) was just awarded the *2011 Best Conservation Project Award* at the Audubon of Florida (AOF) Assembly in Lake Mary, Florida. Helen Warren, President of AAS, accepted the award on behalf of AAS. As noted by Jacqui Sulek of AOF, AAS earned this award because of the numerous and varied conservation-related projects that our chapter has launched this year. Some of those projects include:

- « In response to the state's threat to close our State Parks, AAS supported AOF's campaign to visit 53 Parks in 53 days by rallying at our local State Parks;
- « AAS has been meeting with Paynes Prairie Preserve staff to develop a management plan that supports successful breeding of uncommon birds such as Yellow-breasted Chat, Indigo Bunting, and Blue Grosbeak;
- « AAS met with Florida Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a wading bird rookery plan for Bird Island on Orange Lake;
- « When a tree fell from AOF's Colclough Pond Sanctuary onto an apartment building, AAS's Bob Simons quickly responded by removing the tree;
- « AAS coordinates and sponsors numerous kids' birding activities to foster conservation;
- « AAS CLEP (Conservation Lands Education Program) fieldtrips that bring attention to local land conservation efforts by local and state organizations.

On behalf of AAS, Helen Warren was presented with a framed certificate and the book *Feathers: The Evolution of a Natural Miracle* by Thor Hanson. Congratulations AAS on this state-wide award and thanks to all the volunteers that contribute to these important conservation activities!

## **6th Annual Holiday Social Friday, Dec. 9th; 6:30—9:00 pm at Wild Birds Unlimited**

Come celebrate conservation, birds, and the holidays with Alachua Audubon Society. This festive event will include hors d'oeuvres, beverages, and a silent auction—one of our important annual fund raising events. If you own a business, provide a service, create cool art, or have items to donate for the silent auction, please contact Kathy Haines, 352-372-8942; or Helen Warren, 352-214-7755.

### **Speakers Corner**

Wednesday, Nov. 16 at the Millhopper Library Meeting Room (3145 NW 43rd Avenue in Gainesville) Bob and Erika Simons will present a video of a recent trip to Kenya. Highlights will include birds, other wildlife, and the people of Kenya. The Simons will share their video photography and stories. *New Format: 6:30 – 7:00 p.m. Meet and Greet social time and announcements, program begins at 7:00 p.m.*

### **Gainesville Christmas Bird Count**

Sunday, Dec. 18—Those interested in attending this all-day event should contact John Hintermister at (352-316-2396; [jhintermister@gmail.com](mailto:jhintermister@gmail.com)) or Howard Adams (352-665-3716; [HOWARDPPSP@aol.com](mailto:HOWARDPPSP@aol.com)) by Dec. 8th.

### **Backyard Birding Tour**

Our first Backyard Birding Tour, held last February, was quite a success—with over 200 participants, 7 yards on the tour, and over \$2,000 raised for the Alachua Audubon Society. Mark your calendars - the 2nd Backyard Birding Tour will be *January 28th*. This birding tour will be expanded to include Florida Friendly Landscaping for attracting wildlife. If you would like to consider having your bird-friendly or Florida Friendly yard featured in the next Backyard Birding Tour, please contact Ron Robinson at 352-332-4867 or [gonebirden@cox.net](mailto:gonebirden@cox.net).





## **WILL YOU BE BUYING A CHRISTMAS TREE OR WREATH THIS YEAR?**

**THEN PLEASE CONSIDER BUYING ONE FROM  
ALACHUA AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**AAS is selling Christmas trees and wreaths this year as a 2011 fundraiser and we need support from the citizens of Alachua County!**

### **Benefits:**

- Organically grown (no fertilizers, no pesticides)
- Fresher than most other trees (trees will be cut before we pick them up)
- Competitively-priced (and probably cheaper than most other trees)
- You will support a local non-profit environmental organization

### **Drawbacks:**

- Trees must be ordered and paid for ahead of time (by November 7<sup>th</sup>)
- Buying your tree sight-unseen

Tree and wreath pickup place, date, and time TBA

To order, please send an e-mail to [alachuaaudubons@gmail.com](mailto:alachuaaudubons@gmail.com) with your choice and telephone number. If you don't have e-mail, please call Anne at 352-378-0505.

	4'-5'	5'-6'	6'-7'	7'-8'	8'-9'	9'-10'	18" wreath	\$35
Grand Fir	\$50	\$56	\$65	\$75	\$82	N/A	24" wreath	\$40
Fraser Fir	\$52	\$58	\$68	\$75	\$95	\$120		
Concolor Fir	\$52	\$58	\$66	\$75	\$88	\$116		
Balsam Fir	\$52	\$58	\$68	\$75	\$95	\$120		

To view the trees and the farm, go to [www.swva.net/tbd](http://www.swva.net/tbd)

## AAS CHRISTMAS TREE Fundraiser 2011

AAS is planning our 6th Annual Christmas Tree and Wreath sale and we wish to thank all who have supported this important fund raiser in years past. With the money raised we have started birding programs for kids, purchased binoculars and birding books, and supported local conservation efforts. Thank you!!!! This year we need your orders and payment by **November 7th**. Please contact Alachua Audubon at [AlachuaAudubonS@gmail.com](mailto:AlachuaAudubonS@gmail.com) or Anne Casella at 352-378-0505.

The trees are comparably priced with other locally-available trees. However, our trees are fresher because they are harvested just before delivery. Although the trees must be paid for in advance and are bought sight unseen, our customers' satisfaction has brought them back six years in a row. Please consider buying a Christmas tree and/or wreath from AAS. And please tell your friends and family members!

## Remembering Susan Sommerville

Susan Sommerville passed away on September 5th at Hospice at the age of 69 after a courageous battle with brain cancer. Susan was a teacher for many years, first at Stepping Stones Nursery School and then at Littlewood Elementary School. As a teacher, she taught and mentored many students with nature-related projects. She was an active member of AAS and a former board member. She volunteered at the Cedar Key Museum and Dudley Farm in Gainesville by planting plants and installing bird baths. More recently, she volunteered at Kanapaha Middle School by teaching bird identification for an earth science class. Susan helped to instill a greater appreciation of nature to students, both during her many years as an educator and then during her retirement. In memory of Susan, her family has kindly donated her binoculars and bird books to Haven Hospice so the patients and families at Hospice may further enjoy observing birds that frequent the bird feeding stations that AAS maintains.

## Around the County (continued from Page 2)

described as having all the key field marks of the rare Bicknell's Thrush.

After the first of October the warbler migration also began to pick up. Particularly interesting were warbler concentrations in hackberry trees infested with Asian wooly hackberry aphids. Ron Robinson noted warbler activity from an infested tree in his yard that eventually included Tennessee, Blackburnian, Parula, Magnolia, American Redstart, Chestnut-sided, and Cerulean Warblers. I began to watch the little hackberry in my yard and found a similar assortment of species (minus the Cerulean!), plus Black-throated Blue and Wilson's Warbler. Many of these birds were present for several days in a row, feeding excitedly for long periods of time and allowing leisurely viewing...my kind of birding!

Other interesting sightings this fall included a Red-breasted Nuthatch reported by Debra Segal September 29 at San Felasco Progress Center. Efforts to relocate the bird were unsuccessful. Also at Progress Center, Grace Kiltie found a greenish-yellow tanager with wing-bars...most likely a Western Tanager. Rex Rowan, visiting Newnans Lake in the wake of a tropical-like storm October 10, found at least one Peregrine Falcon along with a large flock of Forster's Terns, a few lingering Black and Common Terns, and several Laughing Gulls. There were at least three reported Painted Buntings noted by Rachel Rocke, Gina Kent, and Carol Church from feeders in their respective yards. Ron Robinson spotted a *Selasphorus* hummingbird in his yard October 11 that he suspected was a Rufous, Alachua County's only stray western hummingbird thus far in the season.

By the time you receive this issue of the Crane, fall migration will be in the record books, and the onset of cooler weather will bring chances for stray western flycatchers along brushy trail edges and power lines. Ash-throated Flycatcher is pretty much annual, but other goodies such as Least, Vermillion, and Scissor-tailed are always hoped for. It will also be time to start checking the Hague Dairy for blackbird flocks including Yellow-headed Blackbird and Bronzed Cowbird. Most sightings of Clay-colored Sparrow occur during late October and early November. Thanks to those who shared their sightings through October 13, 2011.

## Volunteers Needed

Alachua Audubon Society was the recent recipient of Audubon of Florida's *Best Conservation Project Award* because of the many conservation and educational outreach programs we commit to each year. In addition to various conservation projects that AAS has implemented, we continue to sponsor over 40 volunteer-led fieldtrips annually, birding classes through Santa Fe College, Audubon Adventures learning kits to elementary school classes, bird identification books donated to Alachua County schools, bird seed donated monthly to Haven Hospice, kids' birding fieldtrips, support Scouts' conservation-related programs, and installation of bird nesting boxes throughout the county.

To maintain this ambitious list of programs, we need volunteers. Only a few hours of your time will help immensely with continuation of these and other programs. Volunteers are needed during the next several months for the following activities:

- « Backyard Birding Tour on Jan. 28th—We need 4 volunteers at each house (2 for a morning shift from 9:00-11:30 and 2 for an afternoon shift from 11:30-2:00) to greet visitors, hand out brochures, and direct visitors to various yard features. You will be rewarded with a complimentary ticket to attend the Backyard Birding Tour either before or after your shift.
- « Loading Christmas trees on Dec. 4th at Greenery Square— We need several people to help during the day (2-4 hour shift; you decide the time) to select and load trees on top of or inside cars as people pick up their tree.
- « Assistance with obtaining items from volunteers for our Silent Auction on Dec. 9th.
- « Assistance with obtaining food and beverages from volunteers for the Holiday Social on Dec. 9th.
- « Assistance with exotic species removal at Colclough Pond Preserve on a yet-to-be determined date.

## To Volunteer for an Upcoming Audubon Activity

Please contact Debbie Segal at 352-514-0596 or [debbie.segal@gmail.com](mailto:debbie.segal@gmail.com) or cut out and mail this form to: Debbie Segal 2821 NW 161 Ct. GNV, FL 32609

Yes, I would like to volunteer with Alachua Audubon for the following activities:

\_\_\_ Backyard Birding Tour on Jan. 28th

\_\_\_ Loading Christmas Trees on Dec. 4th

\_\_\_ Assisting with obtaining donations for the Silent Auction or food and beverages for the Holiday Social on Dec. 9th


\_\_\_ Assisting with exotic species removal at Colclough Pond Sanctuary (date undetermined)

\_\_\_ Man our Audubon booth at a future festival

\_\_\_ Other Audubon-sponsored activities (you tell us how you would like to volunteer your time)

Thank you for helping to make Alachua Audubon the best Audubon Conservation Chapter in Florida!

Thanks to Kathy Haines, AAS Birding Class Coordinator, for donating two pairs of binoculars and two bird identification books to Haven Hospice. These along with the ones donated by the family of Susan Sommerville will enable the patients and families to view the birds at the bird feeding stations maintained by AAS.



**The Turn of the Screw**  
October 14 - November 6  
The psychological thriller that will haunt you long past Halloween.

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## Upcoming Events

Sunday, Nov. 6th—Bird Camp for Kids (ages 5-18) at Tuscawilla Lake in Micanopy. Activities include Bird Detective, using binoculars, listening to and identifying birds, and using field guides. To register a child, please contact Emily Schwartz at [schwares@gm.sbac.edu](mailto:schwares@gm.sbac.edu) or 372-0754.

Tuesday, Nov. 8th—Conservation Careers Forum featuring Wildlife Careers. Brought to you by UF's Wildlife Society Student Chapter and AAS. Ever wanted to know what a wildlife biologist does? This is your chance to hear from representatives from private business, NGOs and government – how they got their jobs, what they like most and least about their job, and how to make yourself more marketable for a career in wildlife. Students of all ages welcome! Ritz Union 4th Floor Arredondo Room; 7-8 p.m. followed by a social hour at the Orange and Brew.

Saturday, Nov. 12th— Kids field trip to bird at Lake Alice with young birding enthusiast, Steve Goodman, and his dad, Ted Goodman. Lake Alice provides viewing of many birds at a close range. Contact Helen Warren for more details at [helenkwarren@cox.net](mailto:helenkwarren@cox.net) or 214-7755.

Saturday, Nov. 12— *The End of the Line* film on Longline Fishing at Paynes Prairie Preserve Visitor Center, 100 Savannah Blvd., Micanopy. Come early for social time and refreshments at 6 pm and the movie at 7 pm. Suggested donation \$5-\$7. AAS and Cinema Verde Environmental Film Festival will co-host this film about how overfishing is impacting the environment, our food, and our future. This is the first documentary film to reveal the devastating effect that global over-fishing is having on fish stocks and the health of our oceans, and is a wake up call to us all. After the film, join a discussion with a special guest speaker from the Pew Environment Group's Gulf of Mexico Surface Longline Campaign. He will highlight the issue of surface longline fishing in the Gulf of Mexico and dis-

cuss policy making with an interest in transitioning to more selective fishing practices.

Saturday, Jan. 14—Florida Crane and Nature Festival in Gainesville hosted by the Florida Trail Association. Come celebrate Sandhill and Whooping Cranes that congregate here in the winter. Fieldtrips to several locations around Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park to view the unique wildlife and flora on the prairie. The Paramount Plaza Hotel will be the gathering site for presentations, a special dinner and keynote speaker, and silent auction. For more information contact The Florida Trail Association at 352-378-8823 or [www.floridacranefestival.com](http://www.floridacranefestival.com).

Wednesday, January 18 – AAS Speaker Presentation featuring *Antarctica*/Erika Simons participated in a trip to Antarctica arranged by the Florida Museum of Natural History. She will share video and photography of that exciting trip with an emphasis on wildlife. Millhopper Library Meeting Room, 3145 NW 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue in Gainesville. 6:30 – 7:00 p.m. social time; program begins at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 21—Kids fourth annual Christmas Bird Count. More information in the next Crane Newsletter.



Birdwatchers at Powers Park searching for shorebirds and the Willow Flycatcher. Photograph taken by Helen Warren.



## Dead Skunk in the Middle of the Road

Remember that song? It was pretty funny when it came out. With all the animals being killed by cars, we might not laugh so loud now as we did back then. I always cringe when I see something “in the middle of the road”. I cringed just the other day.

Maralee Joos and I had just finished driving a portion of Crescent Beach and walking near Matanzas Inlet. We felt good after seeing so many shorebirds and decided to visit Washington Oaks State Park about five miles south. While driving south I spotted something on the opposite side of the road—perhaps a flat animal of some sort with a skinny head sticking up. I cringed... thinking some poor critter had gotten squashed, except for his head. I told Maralee “I think I saw a dead bird on the highway.”

We zoomed back to the area and she yelled, “It *is* a bird!! Pull over!” All I worried about was getting that bird off the road before more traffic came. I jumped out to run and grab him when Maralee suggested using a small blanket. I ran up to the “dead skunk in the middle of the road” and lo and behold it was a young Pied-billed Grebe! Just sitting there with his little head sticking straight up!

I began shaking! I kept looking for cars as I tried to throw the cloth over the grebe. Grebes don't walk too well but they can sure scoot around and *fast*! He kept moving toward the yellow lines while I tried to corral him off the side of the road. Maralee was out of the truck and ready to stop any approaching traffic. I finally got the cloth over the grebe and wrapped up well so he felt secure. I could tell he wasn't hurt; he was energetic with bright eyes. Maralee on the other hand, looked like a nervous wreck! and me? I was hyperventilating!

We were so excited about this *grebe* we could hardly contain ourselves. Who gets to hold such a treasure in their hands! As I was driving she uncovered its little head and we both went into the “mother nurturing” mode. We cooed over our little package...pointing out how tiny its head was, and that it had such a pointed, sharp

bill. They look so different up close. We were looking down this little ones bill! Amazing!

We found a place to release Fred. Yes, Fred! “I can't believe we rescued FRED!” While I held Fred, Maralee took numerous photos. Fred didn't seem to care. By that time he had thoroughly relaxed and was “chillin” in the “baby blanket”. In fact, when I put Fred on the ground and opened the blanket, he just sat there, looking around. We began coaxing him toward the water. At one point I pulled out his little legs to make sure all was OK. We couldn't believe we were actually inspecting and touching grebe feet!! Weird looking things! In a cute way, of course...they belong to our baby Fred!!

Fred finally decided to scoot into the water. We expected him to jet off. Instead, he floated around, turning his little head from one side to the other, taking in his new digs. He kept looking back at us as he ventured farther away. We felt really good when he sat straight up and fluffed his feather. We felt wonderful when he dove under water! He swam slowly away, kicking those cute little feet behind him.

So that's the story of Fred, the Pied-billed Grebe, in the middle of the road. Moral of this story? When in doubt, turn around! You might just find a Fred of your own!

By Mary Angela



Photograph of Fred by Maralee Joos

Alachua Audubon Society  
P. O. Box 140464  
Gainesville, Florida 32614-0464

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*The Crane*  
Nov.—Dec. 2011



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**Alachua Audubon Society is on Facebook!** Facebook users, visit <http://tinyurl.com/alachuaaudubon> and click "like" and you will be kept up to date on field trips, events, and more!

## Join Audubon!

To join Audubon on 3 levels (National, Florida, and Alachua), fill in application and mail to:

Paul Moler 7818 Highway 346 Archer, Florida 32618

Questions? Contact Paul 495-9419 or  
[paulmoler@bellsouth.net](mailto:paulmoler@bellsouth.net)

### Chapter E-18 New Membership Application **Not for renewals!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Please check level of membership:**

£ Basic \$35.00   £ Senior \$15.00   £ Student \$15.00

Introductory Membership:

£ One Year \$20.00   £ Two Years \$30.00

Make check payable to National Audubon Society