



The Crane

Volume 52 Number 4 January—February 2012

Special Program and January and February Field Trips

SPECIAL PROGRAM FLORIDA HUMMINGBIRDS; THERE ARE MORE THAN YOU THINK! MR. FRED BASSETT

We are excited to announce that Fred Bassett, noted hummingbird researcher, will provide a presentation for Alachua Audubon on **Sunday, January 22, at 2:00 p.m.** at the Senior Recreation Center (5701 NW 34th Street Gainesville). Tickets are free but must be picked up in advance at Wild Birds Unlimited (4215 NW 16th Blvd.) Questions? Contact Emily Schwartz at emilysgfl@gmail.com or (352) 372-0754; or visit Fred's website at www.hummingbirdresearch.net

Saturday, January 7 & 8, 8 am; St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Call Wild Birds Unlimited [352-381-1997] to register. Limit 20 people. Meet John Hintermister at the St. Marks visitor center (Saturday 8 am) for a trip to 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. Diff. 3

Saturday, January 21, 8 am; Alligator Lake Recreation Area Meet Jerry Krummrich at Alligator Lake Park parking lot in Lake City (enter from SE Country Club Rd.) for a site that has often provided new and unique birds. Difficulty 3

Sunday, January 22, 8 am; Persimmon Point
Call Wild Birds Unlimited [352-381-1997] to make a

reservation. Limit 15 people. Join local sparrow guru Adam Kent and park ranger Howard Adams for a special trip to one of the county's best kept birding secrets. Access to Persimmon Point is strictly managed to protect the resource for ongoing restoration and wildlife. Difficulty 3

Saturday, January 29, 8 am; LaChua Trail
Meet Caleb Gordon at the LaChua Trail parking lot (Camp Ranch Road) for this trip into the heart of Paynes Prairie. LaChua Trail is one of the best spots in Florida for sparrow and raptor observation. Difficulty 2

Saturday, February 4, 8 am; Chapman's Pond or alternative Meet Ron Robinson at the Home Depot parking lot on Newberry Road. Conditions vary wildly at Chapman's Pond but over the years has hosted a number of different wading birds and waterfowl. If conditions are poor on the day of the trip, the leader will provide an alternative. Difficulty 1

Saturday/Sunday, February 11-12; Tall Timbers Research Station Sparrow Banding and the Wade Track Call Wild Birds Unlimited [352-381-1997] for details or to make a reservation. Overnight Saturday in 'TTRS' comfy bunkhouse and leave early the next morning for a day of birding in The Wade Tract, a 200-acre stand of old growth longleaf pine. Jim Cox and Adam Kent will be the lead. Come see how Florida looked 200 years ago. Difficulty 2

Fieldtrips continued on Page 5

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 the editor and fulfills stated objectives and goals of Alachua Audubon Society. Annual subscription to *The Crane* is included in National Audubon 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
Mar-Apr Crane:
Feb. 15th**



Normally the most productive place for winter birding in Alachua County is La Chua Trail on Payne's Prairie basin. Recall last winter hundreds of ducks and coots, thousands of cranes, including small numbers of Whooping Cranes, White Pelicans, Snow Geese, and even a Tundra Swan were visible from

the platform at the end of the trail. This winter, drought turned our birding world upside down and left the basin totally dry. Fortunately, Newnans Lake continued to hold water and proved to be a good stand-in for La Chua. From vantage points at Powers Park, Palm Point, and the now-dry shoreline south of the Windsor boat ramp, several birders collectively tallied an impressive eighteen species of ducks by mid-December, including locally rare Red-breasted Mergansers (amazingly, 79 of them found by Rex Rowan) a few Canvasbacks reported by Anne Casella, and one nearly mythical Black Duck, found by Rex Rowan and John Killian. Other rare species included a Wilson's Phalarope seen November 25 by Adam Zions, and an American Avocet scoped out December 5 by Caleb Gordon and Julia Willmott. Several very uncommon species, observed by many, included Common Loon, Horned Grebe, White Pelican, and Laughing Gull. The marshy shoreline of the lake was one of the few spots left for rails in the county, including King, Virginia, and Sora; and in the bulrushes along the shore a Lincoln's Sparrow and a couple of Wilson's Warblers made appearances.

The uplands at the beginning of La Chua Trail still managed to put on a solid sparrow show. All the expected species, especially White-crowned Sparrows, were easily viewed, along with goodies such as Lincoln's, Grasshopper, and Clay-colored Sparrow. The dry and neglected stretch of the basin along US 441 suddenly got lots of attention after John Killian stopped for a visit and found a strong candidate for bird-of-the-year, a Green-tailed Towhee. This western species is considered extremely rare in Florida, and was the first ever recorded in the county. It became a common and curious sight for those driving across the basin in early December to see a knot of birders staring intently into the ditch along the side of the highway hoping to catch a glimpse of this elusive sparrow.

The Hague Dairy also put in a bid for bird-of-the-year: a gorgeous Nelson's Sparrow found by Rex Rowan November 6 while leading an Alachua Audubon field trip. Many local birders have seen Nelson's at Cedar Key, but the species is almost never recorded inland and was another "first-ever" for us. Also in the *ammodramus* department, Rex and I drove down to Orange Lake December 6 to check for sparrows and were not disappointed. There, among swarms

of Savannah and Swamp Sparrows we also found a mind-boggling twenty-four LeConte's Sparrows. These exquisitely "ochre-licious" gems are so rare and elusive here that one could bird actively for years and never see one.

I am currently organizing another birding trip to beautiful Costa Rica set for June 20-28, 2012. While focusing mainly on birds, we will enjoy other tropical flora and fauna, and visit a few places that exemplify the conservation ethic in the country. A portion of the proceeds will go to Alachua Audubon, so if you are hankering to experience the excitement of tropical birding and support conservation at the same time, please consider joining us. More information is available at: www.birdsandconservation.weebly.com

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through December 14, 2011.

Happy New Year and Thanks to All!

Our Christmas tree sale was a great success and again AAS sold many trees and wreaths. Thanks to Anne Casella and Stacy Porvasnik for organizing the sale, Ivor Kincaid and Adam Kent for traveling to Virginia to pick up the items, and to those who unloaded and distributed the trees and wreaths—Helen Warren, Scott Flamand, Mike Manetz, Craig Parenteau, Adam Kent, Mike Pellett, Mike Murphy, Carmen Harris, and Devon Hickey. We appreciate the use of space at The Gardener's Edge provided by Dorn's Liquors and Wine Warehouse for our distribution activity.

The Holiday Social at Wild Birds Unlimited was joyful and well attended, and continues to provide a warm gathering of friends. Thanks to Barb Kerkhoff for her festive and peaceful harp music. Thanks to Helen Warren, Leslie Straub, and Debbie Segal for collecting donations for the silent auction and special thanks to all who graciously donated items. And of course, thanks to the staff at WBU who donated their store for our festivities.

Our next big event is coming up this month. Mark your calendar for January 28th and buy your tickets early for the Alachua Audubon's Wildlife-Friendly Yards Tour. If you're interested in making your yard more attractive to birds and other wildlife, this self-guided tour of six local yards that double as wildlife havens will give you all the inspiration and good exam-

ples you need. Tickets are \$10 per person and will be available on January 2nd at Wild Birds Unlimited. Ticket holders will receive addresses and maps to each location at the time of ticket purchase.

Gainesville's Christmas Bird Count

It was a heroic performance by the participants in the Gainesville Christmas Bird Count held on December 18th. The 75+ participants went above and beyond the call of duty to locate and count birds, because even without any water on Paynes Prairie - or anywhere else but Newnans Lake - they managed to find 157 species of birds, one of our best counts ever. The stars of the show were two species new to the Gainesville Count. The first was the Green-tailed Towhee initially discovered by John Killian on December 4th.

The second new species was discovered by the Kanapaha Prairie team late in the morning. First-time Christmas Counter David Tufts pointed out a sparrow-like bird in the short grass beside a dirt road. I was momentarily puzzled by the streaky black and white eye-ring in combination with a narrow, pointed bill, and then everything fell into place: Sprague's Pipit! John Hintermister had told me that he'd seen one in a dry field near Lake Alice when he was 15, and I'd been skeptical that this western species, almost invariably coastal on the rare occasions when it occurs in Florida, would turn up in Gainesville. Yet here it was. And Steven Goodman pointed out a second one a moment later! We floated through the rest of the day.

Several other notable birds were reported as well during the Gainesville Christmas Bird Count, including Snow Goose, Canvasback, Redhead, Greater Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser, Limpkin, Solitary Sandpiper, Laughing Gull, 3 unidentified hummingbirds (one a possible Allen's), Least Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Winter Wren, Tennessee Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Henslow's Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Summer Tanager, and Rusty Blackbird.

By Rex Rowan

Conservation Careers Forum

The Alachua Audubon Society and the University of Florida's Wildlife Society Student Chapter co-sponsored a Conservation Careers Forum on November 8th in the University of Florida's Reitz Union. The focus of the event was careers working with wildlife. Speakers each discussed the following: What do you do for your job? What experiences did you have that led you to this job? What is your favorite part about your work? What are some drawbacks to your job? Can you offer some helpful hints for people interested in a job like yours? Do you have any volunteer/internship opportunities at your work?

The speakers and their affiliations were: Sarah Lauerman, Aves Consulting LLC; Allison Costello, Normandeau Associates, Inc.; Gina Kent, Avian Research and Conservation Institute; Geoffrey Parks, City of Gainesville Nature Operations; Kevin Ratkus, Alachua County Environmental Protection Department; Alexander Pries, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC); Courtney Hooker, FWC; Joshua Watson, Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo; and Jamie Barichivich, U.S. Geological Survey.

At the end of each presentation all speakers gathered for a question and answer session. Afterwards there was a chance for students to mingle with professionals during a social time with refreshments.

Approximately 100 students attended the event, including more than 20 from Santa Fe College and one high school student. While most students were from a biology or wildlife course of study, the group also included students in more than a dozen other areas. Another Conservation Careers Forum will be planned again for next fall!

By Adam Kent

Fieldtrips (continued from Page 1)

Saturday, February 18, 8 am; San Felasco Milhopper Park Meet Mike Manetz at San Felasco Park parking lot (just off NW 43rd St.) for a tour of this underexplored county park. San Felasco is the county's most reliable spot each winter for Golden-crowned Kinglets. Diff. 1

Sunday, February 26, 6:30 am; Matanzas Inlet at Crescent Beach Meet trip leader Bubba Scales at Powers Park. Matanzas Inlet is the only inlet on the east coast of Florida without a permanent hardening structure thus making it highly dynamic and full of ephemeral topographic features. Large, diverse flocks of gulls, terns, and other seabirds and shorebirds often gather on the sandbars in Matanzas Inlet while the nearshore waters can host large flocks of Northern Gannets and occasional jaegers. Difficulty 3

Bird Camp for Kids

Alachua Audubon hosted the Bird Camp for Kids on November 6th at Alachua Conservation Trust's Tusawilla Lake property in Micanopy. This interactive and engaging event was attended by 30 kids and received rave reviews from both kids and parents. The kids watched a power point presentation called Bird Detective that taught them about identifying birds. Then they broke into groups and learned birding by ear, how to use a field guide, and using binoculars. The program ended with a demonstration about bird rehabilitation by Florida Wildlife Care. See photographs of the Kids Bird Camp on Page 5 and 9.

By Melissa Jenkins

Please support our advertisers and tell them you saw their advertisement in the Alachua Audubon Crane Newsletter.



Photograph of Kids Bird Camp taken by Chris Burney.

Birding Class Offered

Would you like to learn more about bird identification? Santa Fe College's Community Education Program in collaboration with the Alachua Audubon Society is offering a four week course in Field Bird Identification. The next class starts January 21st and concludes February 11th. Classes are on Saturday mornings and last 2.5 hours. The final class will be a longer trip to Cedar Key. Each class is led by a local birding expert. This class will benefit both beginning birders and more advanced birders. Learn to identify local birds by use of binoculars, field guides, birding scopes, and other media. We will visit local natural areas to identify birds in their natural habitat.

The course costs \$50 and generates revenue for AAS. Registration is through Santa Fe College. For more information and registration, go online to Santa Fe College Community Education or call (352) 395-5193. Registration for the class begins on January 5th.

This class has received great reviews and many students have returned for additional instruction. Limit 12 students so register early as this class fills quickly. Hope to see you in class.

Kathy Haines, Class Coordinator

Would You Like to Receive the Crane Electronically?

Help Alachua Audubon reduce our printing and mailing costs and reduce our use of paper and all the energy and resources that go into the paper, printing, and mailing. By receiving the Crane electronically you can view the Crane in color (color photos are so much better) and you can more easily share the Crane with other birding enthusiasts.

If you choose to receive the Crane electronically, we will not bombard you with emails. Typically you will receive only one email per newsletter and the email will contain a link to the Alachua Audubon Website. Simply click on the link and you will have your newsletter. Your email address will not be given to anyone and there will always be an unsubscribe option. To start receiving the Crane electronically, simply send an email to AAS-thecrane@att.net. In the subject line put the word Newsletter. Please include your complete name, address, and membership number, if possible (top number on your mailing label on the back page of the Crane). If you wish to continue receiving a mailed paper copy of the Crane, simply do nothing and delivery of your copy of the Crane will not change.

Thanks To Our Sponsors

Thanks to our sponsors, Alachua Audubon was able to supply 45 elementary school classrooms with Audubon Adventures kits. This allows us to connect with over 900 students regarding conservation of our natural resources. Alachua Audubon wishes to thank the following for their generous donation: Ann Adams, Carol R. Alderson, Jane Brockmann, Mary-Ellen Cross, Jeanne and Charles Earnest, S.P. and K.M. Eoff, Scott and Kirsten Flamand, Laurel J. Freeman, Chandler and Kathy Jones, Martha E. King, Mary Landsman, Barbra Larson, Kate Lee, Paul and Deanne Moler, Barbara Mollison, Barbara Muschlitz, Ann Fearney Paul, Martha F. Pilcher, Sara and Warren Rice, Susan S. Rout, Claire and Betty Schelske, Debra Segal, Dr. John Sharp, and John Winn.

Community Calendar

January 14th—Florida Crane and Nature Festival hosted by the Florida Trail Association. 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. Meet at the Paramount Plaza Hotel for presentations, a special dinner and keynote speaker, and silent auction. Questions, contact The Florida Trail Association at 352-378-8823 or www.floridacrane festival.com.

January 17th—Native Plant Society Meeting; “Florida Springs: The Original Native Plant Community” Speaker: Dr. Bob Knight, The Florida Springs Institute. Talk begins at 7 pm and a plant identification session begins at 6:15. United Church of Gainesville, 1624 NW 5th Ave.

February 11th - “I DID A HIKE” Hike the FL National Scenic Trail along beautiful sandhills. Meet at Gold Head Branch State Park and catch shuttle to the starting point west of the Keystone Airpark. Hike meanders past Camp Crystal, Camp Blanding, and Gold Head Branch SP, passing pristine spring-fed lakes, ravines, and wildlife viewing areas. The hike is 12.2 miles with take out points at 3.2, 4.9, 7.2, and 9.1 miles. Shuttle service begins at 8 a.m. through noon. Sag wagons will pick up hikers at all mid points to return to the parking area. Bring comfortable shoes, water and snacks. Food available for purchase. Enjoy the great outdoors for just \$20! Reservations requested idadihike@gmail.com or call [352-258-3058](tel:352-258-3058). Ticket fee does not include park entrance fee of \$5 per car.

Speakers Corner

Mark your calendars now for these exciting new programs in 2012!

January 18, Millhopper Library, 3145 NW 43rd Street. Meet and Greet 6:30, Program 7:00. Erika Simons will share images of her trip to **Antarctica**. You will love hearing about this adventure.

January 22, 2:00 p.m. Senior Recreation Center, 5701 NW 34th Street. **Fred Bassett’s presentation on Hummingbirds** (see front page)

February 16, Millhopper Library, Meet and Greet 6:30, Program 7:00. Adam Kent on **Beginning Birding**. Bring a child, grandchild, or interested friend who wants to learn about identifying birds.

March 21, Millhopper Library. Meet and Greet 6:30, Program 7:00 Caleb Gordon on **Wildlife and Wind Energy**. What is the impact of wind towers on wildlife? Listen to the latest research on this topic.

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**Alachua Audubon Society
Wildlife-Friendly Yards Tour
Saturday, January 28th, 2012
9:00 am to 3:00 pm**

Interested in making your yard more attractive to birds and other wildlife? The Alachua Audubon Society invites you to take a self-guided tour of six local yards that are wildlife havens. Tickets are \$10 per person and will be available for purchase beginning January 2nd at **Wild Birds Unlimited**. Ticket holders will receive addresses and maps to each location at the time of ticket purchase.



4215 NW 16th Blvd. Gainesville, FL 32605
www.wbu.com/gainesville

Each yard has unique features to attract a variety of birds and other wildlife such as wintering hummingbirds, orioles, tanagers, finches, as well as our year-round residents. Learn how to design and maintain your own yard or green space for wildlife with native plant landscaping, birdfeeders, water features, nest boxes, wildflower beds, garden paths, and natural areas.

Several Florida Friendly Yards will be included in the tour and will demonstrate gardening techniques for attracting wildlife. Join us for our second annual Wildlife-Friendly Yards Tour and fundraiser to benefit Alachua Audubon Society. www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud
For more information contact: Ron Robinson (gonebirden@cox.net or 352-332-4867)

INFORMATION FOR DAY OF TOUR

Please wear or show wrist band for admission to yards.
Self-tour may be conducted in any order.
Less noise and motion in the bird feeding areas may produce more wildlife
Sorry no public restrooms will be available.

Kids' Christmas Bird Count
Sponsored by the Alachua Audubon Society

Join us for an exciting morning of birdwatching -

Followed by a tally session & pizza

Who: Kids under 17, accompanied by an adult*

When: January 21, 2012: 9:00 A.M.-2:00 p.m.

Where: Teams meet at assigned locations; locations provided when you register

Questions and to register: Contact Emily Schwartz at: emilysgfl@gmail.com or 352-372-0754

This event will take place unless there is heavy rain. If you need binoculars, please let us know when you register.

Following the bird count, teams will meet from 12:30-2:00 p.m. at Mill Pond Condominiums Clubhouse (240 NW 48th Blvd.) to tally numbers of birds seen

Pizza & drinks will be provided by Alachua Audubon Society

*Parents are asked to attend and help with transportation, but please leave the birdwatching to the kids!



Photographs of Kids Bird Camp taken by Chris Burney



Alachua Audubon Society
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The Crane
Jan.-Feb 2011

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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

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

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