



# The Crane

Volume 54 Number 6 July—Aug. 2013

## **The June Challenge Edition of the Crane Newsletter**

### **Results of the 10th Annual June Challenge**

We didn't have a drought at Newnans Lake like last year; water was high, in fact. And this year didn't produce the equal of Tropical Storm Debbie. Andrea seemed promising, coming ashore at Steinhatchee and passing to our north, but it didn't bring us a single coastal bird. And unlike last year, we came up short on unusual strays as well as early and late migrants. But if we set aside 2012, which broke existing records for species recorded, the results of the tenth annual June Challenge exceeded all previous years.

We had almost fifty people (and many others in other Florida counties, and in far-flung locations like Maryland, Texas, California, and Great Britain) participate in the June Challenge. One of the chief aims of the Challenge is to motivate people to get out birding during a month when they often spend indoors. Admittedly, June is uncomfortably hot and buggy, but at the same time it's a treasure trove of bird song, wildflowers, butterflies, and magnificent skies, and it's frustrating to see anyone – especially birders – cowering in their air-conditioned homes, watching television, when nature is putting on such a show!

If you get 50 people out looking for birds, they're liable to find some interesting things. It's common knowledge in birding that so-called rarities abound, but that birders are so sparsely scattered that those rarities don't have anyone to recognize and report them. But we found at least a few. Ron Robinson attracted a late-migrant American Redstart to his west Gainesville feeder on the first couple days of the

month. John Hintermister and I discovered a few summering water birds by taking a boat trip all the way around Newnan's Lake on the 25th – two Lesser Scaup, two Ruddy Ducks, and a Horned Grebe. And frequent scans of Newnan's Lake from Palm Point, Powers Park, and Windsor yielded a Caspian Tern and a Forster's Tern for Jonathan Mays, a Greater Yellowlegs for Dean and Samuel Ewing, a Tree Swallow for Lloyd Davis, and a Ring-billed Gull for Anne Kendall. It was while scanning Palm Point unsuccessfully for terns that Adam Zions found a Short-tailed Hawk that lingered there through the afternoon and into the next morning. There were several others, enough for Jonathan Mays to record 116 species, which was the second-highest total we've ever recorded in The June Challenge in Alachua County. Congratulations Jonathan!

Without further ado, here's the list of participants and the number of the species they found followed by the list of birds recorded in the 10th annual Alachua County June Challenge.

Jonathan Mays 116; Rex Rowan 114; Howard Adams 113; Lloyd Davis 113; Adam Zions 113; Barbara Molison 112; Ron Robinson 110; Anne Kendall 109; Marie Zeglen 109; Frank Goodwin; 105; Danny Shehee 105; Chris Cattau 104; Maralee Joos 103; Ria Leonard 103; John Martin 102; Anne Barkdoll 102; Barbara Shea 101; Samuel Ewing 97; Dean Ewing 96; Bob Carroll 96; Irma Harris 91; Phil Laipis 91; Felicia Lee 90; Helen Warren 89; Sharon Kuchinski 88; Becky Enneis 88; Judy Bryan 87; Tina Greenberg 86; Elizabeth Martin 84; (Continued on Page 3)

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**Deadline for  
Sept—Oct Crane:  
Aug. 15<sup>th</sup>**



With everyone occupied with the June Challenge and exciting summer trips, it would be easy to forget what an interesting spring migration we had here in Alachua County. It started with the familiar progression... Louisiana Waterthrush; then Black-and-white Warblers, Prairie Warblers, and American Red-

starts. But mixed in with our “usual” spring migrants we had several species that typically only show up here in fall—especially thrushes. On April 20 Caleb Gordon found a Gray-cheeked Thrush in the Hogtown Creek Greenway; three days later Adam Zions spotted another at Loblolly Nature Center, and the following day he saw a Veery at Ring Park. Samuel Ewing discovered a Swainson’s Thrush April 22 on UF campus. We had another pulse of thrushes in early May, with a couple of Gray-cheeked and a Veery at San Felasco Hammock, and Caleb found a late Swainson’s Thrush May 31 along the Rail Trail. One could bird actively here for years and not see any of these thrushes in spring.

The warblers also seemed to follow this fall-migration theme. Along with our typical spring assortment of Blackpoll, Cape May, Redstart, and Black-throated Blues there were numerous reports of Tennessee Warblers and a smattering of Yellow, Chestnut-sided, and Black-throated Green Warblers. Jonathan Mays found a Swainson’s Warbler April 15 at Payne’s Prairie. Swainson’s are always rare here, but most sightings have been in fall. Perhaps the most exciting migrant of the season was the Kirtland’s Warbler that showed up May 6 at San Felasco Hammock. Kirtland’s are among our most threatened warbler species. They breed mainly in a very restricted area of Michigan, winter in the Bahamas, and are rarely seen anywhere in their migration. Luckily, it stayed around at least a day, allowing many birders to admire it, and was a county “lifer” for all.

La Chua Trail on Payne’s Prairie basin continued to host some great birds. Chris Hooker reported a Dickcissel April 25, and on May 6 John Hintermister spotted a Short-tailed Hawk. Roseate Spoonbills, Whooping Cranes, Black-necked Stilts, and singing Yellow-breasted Chats continued to attract local and out-of-town birders. Jonathan Mays reported a pair of hard-to-find Yellow-crowned Night Herons on two occasions along the north rim of the basin.

With water levels back to “normal” at Newnans Lake there wasn’t anything like the birding bonanza we had last spring, but I managed to find a Royal Tern April 30, and Jonathan Mays spotted a Brown Pelican two days later. Toward the end of May a small flock of Laughing Gulls took up temporary residence. Tropical Storm Andrea didn’t produce any serious pelagic species, (*continued on page 3*)

## June Challenge (continued from page 1)

John Hintermister 83; Steven Goodman 83; Conrad Burkholder 82; Erin Kalinowski 81; Matt Kalinowski 81; Ignacio Rodriguez 80; Debbie Segal 79; Barbara Woodmansee 76; Francisco Jiminez 72; Geoff Parks 67; Mary Landsman 65; Nora Parks 65; Bob Knight 64; Emily Schwartz 64; Sidney Wade 63; Carol Huang 61; Angel Kwolek-Folland 53; Owen Parks 44; Bill Enneis 42; and Kathy Fanning 34.

And now the birds:

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck; Swan Goose (domestic); Graylag Goose (domestic); Black Swan (domestic); Muscovy Duck (domestic); Wood Duck; Mallard (domestic); Mottled Duck; Blue-winged Teal; Lesser Scaup; Ruddy Duck; Northern Bobwhite; Wild Turkey; Pied-billed Grebe; Horned Grebe; Wood Stork; Double-crested Cormorant; Anhinga; American White Pelican; Least Bittern; Great Blue Heron; Great Egret; Snowy Egret; Little Blue Heron; Tricolored Heron; Cattle Egret; Green Heron; Black-crowned Night-Heron; Yellow-crowned Night-Heron; White Ibis; Glossy Ibis; Roseate Spoonbill; Black Vulture; Turkey Vulture; Osprey; Swallow-tailed Kite; Mississippi Kite; Bald Eagle; Cooper's Hawk; Red-shouldered Hawk; Broad-winged Hawk; Short-tailed Hawk; Red-tailed Hawk; American Kestrel; King Rail; Purple Gallinule; Common Gallinule; American Coot; Limpkin; Sandhill Crane; Whooping Crane; Killdeer; Black-necked Stilt; Greater Yellowlegs; Laughing Gull; Ring-billed Gull; Least Tern; Caspian Tern; Forster's Tern; Rock Pigeon; Eurasian Collared-Dove; White-winged Dove; Mourning Dove; Common Ground-Dove; Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Barn Owl; Eastern Screech-Owl; Great Horned Owl; Barred Owl; Common Nighthawk; Chuck-will's-widow; Chimney Swift; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Belted Kingfisher; Red-headed Woodpecker; Red-bellied Woodpecker; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Downy Woodpecker; Hairy Woodpecker; Northern Flicker; Pileated

Woodpecker; Eastern Wood-Pewee; Acadian Flycatcher; Great Crested Flycatcher; Eastern Kingbird; Loggerhead Shrike; White-eyed Vireo; Yellow-throated Vireo; Red-eyed Vireo; Blue Jay; American Crow; Fish Crow; Purple Martin; Tree Swallow; Northern Rough-winged Swallow; Barn Swallow; Carolina Chickadee; Tufted Titmouse; Brown-headed Nuthatch; Carolina Wren; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher; Eastern Bluebird; Gray Catbird; Northern Mockingbird; Brown Thrasher; European Starling; Cedar Waxwing; Prothonotary Warbler; Common Yellowthroat; Hooded Warbler; American Redstart; Northern Parula; Pine Warbler; Yellow-throated Warbler; Yellow-breasted Chat; Eastern Towhee; Bachman's Sparrow; Summer Tanager; Northern Cardinal; Blue Grosbeak; Indigo Bunting; Red-winged Blackbird; Eastern Meadowlark; Common Grackle; Boat-tailed Grackle; Brown-headed Cowbird; Orchard Oriole; House Finch; and House Sparrow.

By Rex Rowan

## Around the County (continued from Page 2)

but Andy Kratter picked out a couple of Forster's and a Least Tern, and the following day Jonathan noted a Caspian Tern.

Shorebird migration was fairly weak in our area due to uncooperative water levels. The Hague dairy was the only exception. At its peak, as many as 50 Least Sandpipers, plus a dozen or so Semi-palmated Sandpipers, and a couple of Semi-palmated Plovers were present at the lagoon. At least one White-rumped Sandpiper made a cameo appearance there, seen by John Hintermister and Adam Zions.

Hard to believe, but by the time you receive this copy of the *Crane* fall migration will have already started, with our first returning Louisiana Waterthrushes at places like Cellon Creek at Progress Center, and Gum Root Swamp. The birding fun just never stops around here! Thanks to those who shared their sightings through June 8, 2013.

## An Adventurous June Challenge Day

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, my Dad and I decided to do some June Challenge birding. We arrived at Longleaf Flatwoods Reserve shortly after 8 a.m. and began birding. Our goal was to see a Bachman's Sparrow, which would be a life bird for both of us. We didn't hear any near the parking corral so we headed out on the White Loop, where we saw a Common Nighthawk, lots of Eastern Towhees and Common Yellowthroats, a couple of Red-bellied and Red-headed Woodpeckers, and more. We returned to the open area around the parking corral and it wasn't long before we heard at least two Bachman's Sparrows singing. We headed over to where we were hearing one of them singing and spotted some Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and a Common Yellowthroat sitting in a scraggly tree. Then we spotted a juvenile Bachman's Sparrow sitting low in a small pine. Soon others came in and we saw at least four, getting awesome views.

We then headed to Newnan's Lake, starting at Powers Park. We spotted a pair of Fish Crows nesting in a large pine, a Limpkin standing on the dock, 25 American White Pelicans, lots of herons and egrets, a Common Gallinule, a Greater Yellowlegs, and more. We then headed to Palm Point where we saw a family of turkeys, a Laughing Gull, more American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, etc. We headed for home just as it started to rain. It was a very enjoyable and memorable birding day for me.

By Samuel Ewing (age 12)

*Samuel started birding at age 6 and tries to bird every day. He was the winner of the Alachua Audubon 2013 youth June Challenge, having tallied a whopping 97 birds! Congratulations Samuel!*

Photograph (right) of Samuel Ewing receiving the June Challenge award from Helen Warren, president of the Alachua Audubon Society. Photograph taken by Dean Ewing.



Photograph of Jonathan Mays receiving a congratulations from Helen Warren for logging the most bird species (116) during the June Challenge. Photograph taken by Dean Ewing.



## Bad Guy on the Birding Trail

The June Challenge in 2012 was a first for our family. We were newcomers to Alachua County and had never heard of the “June Challenge.” But the novel idea of birding when birding was more challenging was exciting to several of us, so off we went to a great birding spot—La Chua Trail. I took along three of my sons who were into birding: Benjamin, Caleb, and Samuel. As we hiked along La Chua Trail, we spotted many wading birds and we carefully wrote down all we saw.

As our group was just about to step off the boardwalk by Alachua Lake and onto the grassy trail that would lead us to the observation tower, we were startled by something we have never seen before at La Chua. There, cruising along quickly parallel to the boardwalk were two police cars! Yes, two police cars! They drove past us, one behind the other and stopped right in front of us on the trail.

“What was going on here?” I wondered. “Had we done something wrong? Or was there someone dangerous out on the La Chua Trail?” We didn’t have to wait long to find out. The policeman in the first vehicle hopped out of his car and walked quickly towards the second vehicle. That policeman also quickly jumped out of his car and flung the back door of the squad car open. Then quickly, he grabbed the criminal in the back seat and flung him out on the grass in front of us.

Exactly what this convict had done wrong was not clear. But it must have been serious because his mouth was gagged, his hands were tied behind his back, and his feet were also bound together. The fellow just lay there in the grass. He couldn’t move. One of the policemen looked over at me, must have seen my surprised look, and said, “There are different kinds of bad guys.”

The policemen were cautious with this bad guy, viewing him as potentially dangerous. Yet, they had decided to let him go. But, this they did carefully. First, they unbound his arms, then his legs, and last of all they removed

## Winners of the 10th Annual June Challenge

### Adults:

1st Place Jonathan Mays (116)  
2nd Place Rex Rowan (114)  
3rd Place Adam Zions (113)  
Lloyd Davis (113)  
Howard Adams (113)

### Youth:

1st Place Samuel Ewing (97)  
2nd Place Steven Goodman (83)  
3rd Place Nora Parks (65)

the gag. Then the bad guy took off down the grassy bank. He was free!

I asked the policemen what this fellow had done wrong. After all, how would you like to be gagged and bound and then tossed out of a police car onto the La Chua Trail? The policeman explained to me that that they had caught this guy wandering around a neighborhood in Gainesville.

Now imagine that? Just wandering around a neighborhood is enough to get you arrested! At least it was for this guy! So, a word of caution is in order for you birders out there. If you are out birding in some neighborhood in Gainesville, be careful that it doesn’t appear that you are just wandering around. Make it look like you are there on purpose – that you have an agenda to attend to. After all, none of us would like to see you dumped out on La Chua Trail like what happened to this guy during last year’s June Challenge! (*Photograph of the “Bad Guy” on Page 6*)

By Dean Ewing

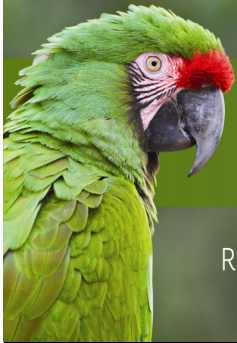


Photograph of the “Bad Guy” taken by Samuel Ewing at La Chua Trail during the 2012 June Challenge. (See Article on Page 5).

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## Old Biota in a Young Land

Florida hasn't been above sea level very long, geologically speaking. The sands, soils, and rocks we walk on are all ocean sediments that date back only a few million years, as opposed to ages of hundreds of millions of years for most of the rest of North America. (There is one deposit with terrestrial fossils from about 30 million years ago from here in Alachua County, but Florida was totally submerged several times since then, and has been above sea level continuously for only about the past two and a half million years, according to "The Fossil Vertebrates of Florida" – a book by Richard C. Holbert, Jr.) And yet we are blessed with diverse fauna and flora that includes some species of very ancient lineage.

It is not that surprising that we have a wide diversity of birds. Birds can fly. They can colonize new habitats that rise above the ocean almost as soon as they appear. And so it is no great mystery how our herons, egrets, spoonbills, storks, cranes, and other spectacular birds got here. However, it is not so clear how such mobility-challenged critters as the worm lizard and sand skink came to live here.

There are several main groups of reptiles—turtles and tortoises, crocodilians, lizards, snakes, and worm lizards. Florida is the only part of the United States that has representatives of all these groups. We have two species of crocodilians, we have tortoises and turtles, we have snakes and lizards, and we have the only worm lizard in the country - the Florida worm lizard, *Rhineura floridana*.

Florida also has some plant species from plant families that are far more ancient than the land where they live. For instance, we have coontie, *Zamia integrifolia*. It does get a bit into Southeast Georgia, but is primarily a Florida plant. It is a cycad, which is one of the most ancient groups of terrestrial plants. Cycads predate the dinosaurs in the fossil record (as do crocodilians).

So, why does this youngest part of our country have some of the most ancient species? (Perhaps someone can write a follow-up article for the "Crane").

By Bob Simons

## Water and Land Legacy Campaign *Important Call*

As members of the birding community, we realize that we can't put a price tag on clean drinking water, extensive natural areas, and biological diversity. And you probably realize that once natural areas have been impacted, they cannot be fully restored, nor the ecological functions fully recovered. We are powerful when we band together and preserve the natural gems of Florida—our springs, lakes, rivers, beaches, forests, and prairies. The Water and Land Legacy Campaign is all about protecting these natural gems.

***Please make a commitment to spend just a few hours each month to collect signatures. You have nothing to lose and a legacy to create!*** Contact Debbie Segal ([Debbie.segal@gmail.com](mailto:Debbie.segal@gmail.com)) or Emily Schwartz ([emilysgfl@gmail.com](mailto:emilysgfl@gmail.com)) and let us know if you can help us collect signatures for the Legacy Campaign.

If you haven't signed the conservation petition, you can now download it here <http://4fla.org/getform> (note: link is case-sensitive).

## Kid's Corner

The Alachua Audubon Education Committee met on June 7th and set some ambitious goals. We are planning to have youth activities each month during the academic year. We have some fun activities in the works and urge you to check our website frequently to see what is being offered for children. We are also inviting more adults to get involved with our Education Committee as we plan activities that encourage children to enjoy nature. Why not join our team? If you are interested in getting involved with our youth activities, please contact Emily Schwartz at [emilysgfl@gmail.com](mailto:emilysgfl@gmail.com) or Helen Warren at [helenkwarren@cox.net](mailto:helenkwarren@cox.net).



## My First June Challenge Experience

I decided to participate in the Alachua County June Challenge for the first this year as I wanted to bird more, sharpen my identification skills, and meet other birders. On June 1st, Rex Rowan invited all interested birders to kick off the June Challenge together, and this really lured me in. We met at 6:15 a.m. and birded many local hot spots – Longleaf Flatwoods, Windsor boat ramp, Powers Park, Palm Point and La Chua Trail.

The first day was off to a great start as I tallied 54 species and hooked up with four other enthusiastic birders for future bird outings. We hit it hard every weekend. We strategically planned our excursions, relying on Rex's email posts of local sightings from our 'friendly' competitors.

I scouted for birds before, during, and after my commute to and from work. I used my lunch hour to quickly check out nearby birding hot spots. I walked my dog with binoculars around my neck each morning and evening. Every time I was in the car I was checking out birds on the wire or on the wing. I became totally obsessed with and happily consumed by the June Challenge. My husband even got drawn into the frenzy by pointing out birds to me. Some friends heard of my quest and took me to their friends' bird-friendly yard where I observed a Northern Bobwhite and Wild Turkey, both which had eluded me until that point.

There were many memorable and absolutely perfect birding moments that took place during the June Challenge. To view an Acadian Flycatcher at San Felasco Hammock while being serenaded by a Hooded Warbler was pure birding bliss. Having a long, spell-binding gaze at the beautiful and elusive Prothonotary Warbler along Lakeshore Drive next to Newnan's Lake will not be forgotten. And my favorite moment was the absolute spine-chilling thrill of not one but two Barn Owls gliding effortlessly overhead at the US 441 platform at Paynes Prairie on the night of the super moon.

I achieved my three goals at the end of

## Audubon Adventures

In 1920, an eleven year old boy joined the Junior Audubon Club, a program of the National Association of Audubon Societies, which was being formed by his teacher, Miss Hornbeck. He signed an oath to "learn all he could about the wild birds and to be kind to them and protect them." He paid 10 cents to become an Audubon member and receive a set of color bird pictures and informational materials. Who was this? Why, Roger Tory Peterson!

National Audubon creates exciting and colorful educational packets for children in grades 3, 4, and 5. Alachua Audubon has a long history of providing these "kits" of four environmental lessons to elementary school teachers in this county. During the 2012-13 school year, your donations allowed us to supply 37 classrooms with the environmental learning kits. It costs \$46 per kit to be a sponsor for a classroom. ***Would you be willing to sponsor an Audubon Adventure kit for an elementary classroom for the 2013-14 school year?*** If so, please contact Emily Schwartz at 372-0754 or emilysgfl@gmail.com.

the June Challenge. I went out birding more, I observed and learned many new fascinating facts about birds, and I found some really nice birding buddies thanks to Ron Robinson, Tina Greenberg, Maralee Joos, Barbara Shea, and Rex Rowan. I ended up observing a total of 103 species and I even logged a life bird!

By Ria Leonard

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*The Crane*  
July—Aug. 2013

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