



The Crane

Volume 54 Number 4 March-April 2013

March and April Field Trips

Saturday and Sunday, March 9 and 10 – Canoe Trip; Canceled.

Saturday, March 16, 8:00 a.m. – Trees of Alachua County; Meet trip leader Bob Simons at the San Felasco Hammock Millhopper Road Parking Lot (\$4.00 per vehicle parking fee) and learn identification of and interesting tidbits about many of Alachua County's native trees. Multiple habitats in San Felasco Hammock support a wide variety of trees. Bring binoculars to scan the canopy leaves (and birds). Diff. 3.

Saturday, March 23, 8:00 a.m. - Wildflowers with Dana Griffin; Meet retired UF botany professor Dana Griffin at the Sweetbay parking lot at the corner of SW 20th Avenue and SW 34th St. Dr. Griffin will lead a caravan to several locations near Gainesville where the wildflowers are at their best. Dr. Griffin's "Local Flora" class was legendary and you'll get to find out why without paying tuition or taking tests. Diff. 2

Saturday, March 30, 8:00 a.m.-Morningside Nature Center – CLEP*; Meet City Naturalist Geoff Parks at the Morningside parking lot. MNC contains more than seven miles of trails that wind through sandhills, flatwoods, cypress domes, and habitat restoration areas. We might see newly-arrived Summer Tanagers and Great Crested Flycatchers, but the resident breeders – Pine Warblers, Eastern Towhees, Brown-headed Nuthatches, and Red-headed Woodpeckers - should be busy singing and building nests. Difficulty: 2

Saturday, April 6, 7:30 a.m.-Ocala National Forest; Meet trip leader Bob Simons in the Sweetbay parking lot at the corner of SW 20th Avenue and SW 34th Street. Bob knows pine forests better than almost anyone, and he's a great guide to the longleaf sandhills and scrub of this marvelous 383,000-acre remnant of aboriginal Florida. Birdwise, we'll hope to see Florida Scrub-Jay, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bachman's Sparrow, and Swallow-tailed Kite. Difficulty: 3

Saturday, April 13, 7:30 a.m.- San Felasco Hammock (Progress Center); Meet trip leader Mike Meisenburg at the Tag Agency and carpool to San Felasco Hammock Progress Park (north) entrance near Alachua (\$4.00 per vehicle parking fee). Alachua Audubon spearheaded the effort to buy San Felasco Hammock in 1974 and we're especially interested in showing everyone what a beautiful place it is. We'll follow a trail along Lee Pond and Cellon Creek, looking for woodland-nesting species and spring migrants. Difficulty: 3

Sunday, April 14, 7:30 a.m. - Prairie Creek Lodge – CLEP*; Meet trip leader Ivor Kincaide at Powers Park. Ivor is the land manager for the Alachua Conservation Trust. We'll walk the trails through upland oak woods, swampy edges, and the borders of Prairie Creek, looking for such neotropical migrants as Prothonotary Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Blue Grosbeak. Difficulty: 2

(Fieldtrips continued on pg. 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. See back page for subscription information. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed. *The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.

**Deadline for
May-June Crane:
Apr. 15th**



Most of the birding action this winter was at La Chua Trail and the adjacent Pasture Trail (AKA Sparrow Alley, the trail that runs west after you pass through the barn). In fact, I considered calling this edition “Around La Chua” instead of “Around the County”! Initially the main attractions were the Groove-billed

Ani and the Vermilion Flycatcher that were found before the end of last year. But the bird that really blew the lid off was Alachua County’s first ever Bell’s Vireo, discovered by Chris Burney January 6 along the Pasture Trail. The bird was only reliably seen for a few days, but the flood of birders descending on the prairie began pulling out birds that had either more recently arrived or previously gone unnoticed. While searching for the vireo January 8, Adam Kent found a Fox Sparrow. The same morning, while searching for Adam’s sparrow, I bumped into a Nashville Warbler, and further down the trail our party was greeted by a Yellow-breasted Chat that popped out nicely for us. Eventually it would be determined that there were two Chats in the same area. Later that morning along the same route, an Ash-throated Flycatcher was discovered. Around the same time the Bell’s Vireo appeared, a Peregrine Falcon took up residence in the vicinity of Sparrow Alley, scanning frequently from the large power poles that cut across the prairie. A Kestrel and a Merlin had already become regularly present near Alachua Sink, thus making it possible to see all three falcon species in a single outing. Later in the month, a Red-breasted Merganser turned up in the canal near the water control structure and was joined briefly by a Horned Grebe. Even the Ani got over its initial shyness and began regularly and unabashedly posing for photos. Out at the platform, a Whooping Crane and the Vermilion Flycatcher were still being seen intermittently, Phyllis Mansfield found two Snow Geese, and Keith Collingwood spotted a Roseate Spoonbill. Adding to this wonderful ambiance of rare and semi-rare birds was the presence of up to nine species of sparrows, if one spent the time to dig them out.

Another blockbuster bird was found February 6 on Lake Santa Fe. While surveying the lake by boat, Rex Rowan, John Hintermister and I had the good fortune to spot a Pacific Loon hiding amidst a flock of Common Loons. This was the first inland record for that species in the state and the third new species for the county in less than two months. Unfortunately the only way to see this bird was by boat, as it would have to be studied fairly close to identify.

Rusty Blackbirds disappeared from their usual haunt at Magnolia Parke, but fortunately they didn’t leave us altogether. Chris Burney found a large flock at the new Levy Lake trail at Barr Hammock

Preserve February 2, and Geoff Parks, who has been doing annual Rusty Blackbird blitzes, found smaller numbers at Possum Creek Park and around Bivens Arm Lake. By the way, the new Levy Lake trail looks to be an interesting addition to our local birding locations. Rex, Jonathan Mays and I visited February 5, and among the many species we saw was a Least Flycatcher, first pointed out by Jonathan.

Fox Sparrows used to be considered very rare here, but they have become a little more common in recent years. Besides the four seen on the Christmas count and the one mentioned above at La Chua, individuals were also reported at both Mill Creek and Prairie Creek Preserves.

As you probably noticed from the unseasonably warm temperatures and unusually early flowering plants, spring came a little early this year. The birds seemed to notice, too. Caleb Gordon spotted our first Purple Martins of the year on January 26, and Geoff Parks, on February 5, heard our first singing Northern Parula, which is my personal favorite first sign of spring.

Last year's Alachua Audubon trip to Costa Rica was so much fun we decided to do it again! Nearly thirty species of hummingbirds, twenty species of flycatchers, dozens of wrens and tanagers, plus toucans, motmots, antwrens, antvireos, woodcreepers, and all the rainforest flora and fauna you can absorb. If you have not experienced the excitement of birding in the tropics, this is a great place to start! Please join us for a balanced look at some wonderful tropical birds and some inspiring efforts to conserve the habitats the birds depend on. A portion of the proceeds of this trip will go to Alachua Audubon. Please see the ad on page 11 of the *Crane*.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through February 9, 2013.

Photograph of Ash-throated Flycatcher taken by Adam Zions at Cones Dike on Paynes Prairie.

Annual Pot Luck Dinner Celebration and Election of Officers and BOD

Please join us on Wednesday, April 17th at 6:30 pm for our annual pot luck dinner party and election of officers and board of directors. Our dinner party will be held at Bubba and Ingrid Scales' house at 3002 SW 1st Way, Gainesville, located in the Colclough Hills neighborhood between south Main Street and Williston Road. (Look for the Audubon signs!) Bring some food to share for the pot luck, a drink of choice, and enjoy visiting with our Alachua Audubon Board Members. This will be a fun gathering and provide time to share our more recent spring migration observations!

The Alachua Audubon Society is a volunteer-based organization. We have four officers and 15 members on the Board of Directors. The officers of Alachua Audubon are:

President—Helen Warren

Vice President—Scott Flamand

Secretary—Anne Casella

Treasurer—Dotty Robbins

The returning board members are Ron Robinson, Rex Rowan, Debra Segal, Ivor Kincaid, Geoff Parks, Bob Simons, Mike Manetz, Emily Schwartz, and John Hintermister. Our new board members are Barbara Shea, Felicia Lee, Jonathon Mays, Bob Carroll, and Barbara Fennelly. ***Please join Alachua Audubon for this annual pot luck dinner party as we celebrate spring and welcome our new board members!***



Volunteer Today to Protect Florida's Cherished Waters and Natural Areas

Florida has a proud legacy of conserving the water quality of our lakes, rivers, and springs and acquiring lands necessary to protect drinking water sources. Because of popular programs like Florida Forever and its predecessor, Preservation 2000, we have successfully protected over 2.4 million acres of critical water resources, natural areas, wildlife habitat, parks, greenways, and trails in Florida.

Our water bodies, natural areas, and wildlife are fundamental to a healthy and vibrant Florida. And right now, you can help Alachua Audubon and Florida's Water and Land Legacy Campaign place a critical conservation amendment on the November 2014 ballot. ***Alachua Audubon fully supports this important initiative, and we encourage each of our members to volunteer.*** The Legacy Campaign needs to double the number of volunteers to cover the many festivals and events happening throughout Florida in the coming months.

So far, campaign volunteers have collected more than 41,000 signatures, and there is less than one year to gather the remaining 464,000 signatures. Please volunteer today to gather signatures at festivals, farmers' markets, and other public places near your home. ***With your help, we will achieve our goal of securing dedicated funding for public water and land conservation and restoration.*** Join the campaign and get involved by signing up at www.floridawaterlandlegacy.org/volunteer.

Jason Brady

From a recent email newsletter from the Legacy Campaign: ***Alachua Audubon, will you be our Valentine? We love getting petitions from you week after week. The synergy of your hard work as individuals and dedication as a team really pays off!***—Laura Ciociola (Legacy Campaign)

Kanapaha Botanical Gardens Spring Garden Festival

The Alachua Audubon Society will sponsor an educational table at the upcoming Kanapaha Botanical Gardens Spring Garden Festival on March 23—24. We are also teaming with the Florida Water and Land Legacy Campaign to collect signatures for conservation lands. ***We need helpers at our table to share with others our excitement for birds, conservation, and natural areas. And volunteers to collect signatures.*** You don't have to be a birding expert, just friendly and enthusiastic. Would you please sign up for a 2 or 3-hour shift on Saturday or Sunday? The time slots are: 9:00—11:00; 11:00—2:00; or 2:00—5:00. To sign up, please contact Emily Schwartz at emilysgfl@gmail.com or 352-372-0754.

Our New Website is Up and Running!

Many thanks to Florida Museum of Natural History webmaster Sarah Fazenbaker for designing and implementing Alachua Audubon's new website! Visit us at alachuaaudubon.org and peruse the wealth of information posted there, such as up-to-date local birding reports, a schedule of field trips, programs, and classes, a list of Alachua County's best birding sites, a history of birding in Alachua County, info on caring for injured birds, lists of other wildlife that occur in Alachua County, a page of links to other birding and conservation websites, and much more. There's even a photo gallery of Alachua County's most notorious birders (is your picture posted there? why not?), from which we've taken a picture of Rex Rowan, the author of our online birding reports.



Fieldtrips (continued from Page 1)

Saturday, April 20 8:00 a.m. Powers Park and Palm Point; Meet trip leader Bob Carroll at Powers Park to check for birds in the trees along the boat channel and scan the lake from the fishing pier. Then travel to nearby Palm Point – a local migrant trap – to search for migrant activity. Diff. 1.

Sunday, April 21, 6:30 a.m.-Cedar Key; Meet trip leader Rex Rowan in the Target parking lot on Archer Road at I-75. The emphasis on this trip will be migrants – mainly warblers and shorebirds. We'll also look for some uncommon and/or coastal nesting species: Gray Kingbird, Swallow-tailed Kite, and possibly Short-tailed Hawk. Some people stick around after the trip for lunch. Difficulty: 2

Saturday, April 27, 6:00 a.m. Hickory Mound WMA and Surrounding Area; Meet trip leader John Hintermister at the Tag Agency on SW 34th St. across from the new Walmart to carpool. We will spend most of the day exploring this wonderful mix of salt and freshwater marshes and coastal hardwood swamps. We hope to see spring migrants plus the local nesters—Swainson's Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Short-tailed Hawk, Acadian Flycatcher, Seaside Sparrow, King and Clapper Rails, and others. Bring a lunch, water, and bug repellent.

Sunday, April 28, 8:00 a.m.-San Felasco Hammock (south entrance); Meet trip leader Adam Kent at San Felasco's Millhopper Road parking lot (\$4.00 per vehicle parking fee). Sandhills, meandering streams, forested slopes, and sinkholes set the stage for the diversity of birds we hope to find, such as Yellow-throated and Red-eyed Vireos, Hooded Warbler, Acadian Fly-

catcher, and the locally-rare Wood Thrush. Difficulty: 2

Saturday and Sunday, May 4-5. Georgia Coast; Cancelled.

**Conservation Lands Educational Program (CLEP) is designed to bring attention to local land conservation efforts. These trips are conducted on properties purchased to protect natural resources and will be led by a representative who will discuss ecological features and history. CLEP trips will be educational experiences, so the emphasis will be on much more than birding.*



Photograph of Pacific Loon taken by Jonathon Mays (one of AAS's newest board members) at Lake Santa Fe.

Visit Alachua Audubon Society on Facebook for postings on field trips, special events, and other items of interest!

Barr Hammock Levy Prairie Preserve Now Open to Visitors

The Levy Prairie portion of Barr Hammock—Alachua County's newest Public Use Natural Area—is now open for hiking, bird watching, biking, and other passive forms of recreation. Alachua County celebrated the grand opening on February 2nd with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, hikes, and a hay ride. The excitement and enthusiasm of the 200+ attendees at the Open House exemplified the community's desire for nature-based, passive recreation. The 5,700-acre preserve of marsh and wet prairie was acquired through the Alachua County Forever program four years ago, and since acquisition has undergone wetland restoration activities and construction of public use facilities.

Barr Hammock features a 6.5 mile trail along a raised berm that encircles a restored wetland marsh. It is located in south-central Alachua County near Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. To reach Barr Hammock, drive either south or north on US 441 to Wacahoota Road. Turn west on Wacahoota Road (across from Lake Wauberg) and go approximately 1 mile. Turn left on SE 11th Drive, which is the first left after crossing over I-75. Continue south on SE 11th Drive to the preserve trailhead and parking area. Look for Barr Hammock on next year's list of Alachua Audubon field trips. It is already presenting itself as a premier birding site with the discovery of a flock of Rusty Blackbirds during the February 2nd open house and a Least Flycatcher a few days later. For more information on Barr Hammock, contact the Alachua County EPD at 352-264-6800 or at www.alachuacountyforever.us

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Speakers' Corner, Family Birding, and Events

Mark your calendar now for these exciting upcoming events!

March 9th and April 6th, 9:00 a.m. *Family Birding at Paynes Prairie* Pre-register by calling 252-466-4100. Space is limited.

Wednesday, March 20, 7 p.m. Millhopper Library at 3145 NW 43rd St. *Birds of Africa, Presented by Bob Wallace.* Bob will introduce us to birds in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda, where he saw 840 species of birds (1/12 of the world's species) in 32 days with renowned bird guide Brian Finch. Photos of birds, discussion of birding regions and endemic rarities, plus travel tips for those dreaming of going to Africa on a bird safari.

March 23 & 24 Kanapaha Botanical Gardens Spring Garden Festival—*Come by our Alachua Audubon Booth and say hello!*

April 5—7 Suwannee River Paddling Festival—Paddle for a cause! Experience one of the nation's most iconic rivers, enjoy Florida's best folk musicians, and join efforts to preserve North Florida's rivers and springs.

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Kids' Christmas Bird Count

The fifth annual Christmas Bird Count for Kids took place this year on Saturday, January 19th. The number of participating youths is growing each year, with 31 youths and their parents participating this year. After registering by email, children and their parents met their leaders (Helen Warren, Sharon Kuchinski, Ted and Steve Goodman, Caleb Gordon, and Adam Kent) at various sites around Alachua County for a morning of birding. Sites visited were LaChua Trail, Paynes Prairie State Preserve, local ponds, and Lake Alice shores. Alachua Audubon provided loaner binoculars for many of the kids who were without binoculars.

After a great morning of birding in excellent weather, participants met at the Mill Pond Clubhouse for the count up and lunch furnished by Alachua Audubon. Children from each group announced and tallied their results. How exciting that 103 species and 2,473 individual birds were reported. Parents expressed thanks and gratitude to Audubon members for providing this healthy and enjoyable morning for their children and for nurturing their interest in nature.

We thank David Jowers of Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park for waiving entrance fees for this educational activity, and the many Alachua Audubon volunteers who made the event possible.

By Emily Schwartz



Birding Class Offered

Would you like to learn more about bird identification? SFC's Community Education Program, in collaboration with the Alachua Audubon Society, is offering a 4-week course in Field Bird Identification. The next class starts April 13th. Classes are on Saturday mornings and last two hours. The final class will be a longer trip to Cedar Key. Each class is led by a local birding expert.

The course costs \$49 and generates revenue for AAS. Registration is through SFC. For more information and registration, go online to Santa Fe College Community Education or call (352) 395-5193. Registration for the class begins on March 20th. Class is limited to 12 students so register early as this class fills quickly. Hope to see you in class.

By Kathy Haines, Class Coordinator

Audubon for Kids

On February 16th, a chilly Saturday morning, a Nuthatch Survey for Kids was held at Morningside Nature Center. Five families (8 children) learned how scientists conduct a field survey. They then walked with guides to look for Brown-headed Nuthatches and record their findings. Our thanks to Ted Goodman and son Steve who guided one group, and Geoff Parks who gave an introductory talk, prepared survey papers, and led a group of enthusiastic kids. Nuthatches were seen! After a tally and sharing stories of bird observations, the group enjoyed a picnic in the park. Although chilly, the groups had a fine morning and parents thanked Audubon for this nature experience.

By Emily Schwartz

Photograph of the Kids Christmas Bird Count on the south side of Paynes Prairie. Photo taken by Adam Kent.

Wading Bird Rookeries at Orange Lake

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is proposing to enhance aquatic habitat around historical and known wading bird nesting colonies at Orange Lake by maintaining an open water zone around seven islands. An open water zone that prevents predators such as raccoons from accessing nesting islands is essential to promote a successful nesting colony of wading birds. However, a thick stand of emergent plants has colonized around the islands in Orange Lake, thus allowing predatory mammals access to these islands.

The FWC requested input from Alachua Audubon Society regarding the proposed enhancement plan. Members of AAS toured Orange Lake with FWC staff and discussed specific elements of the aquatic plant enhancement plan. Based on this field meeting, changes were made to the enhancement plan in order to provide greater protection to nesting birds by allowing maintenance activities to occur after June 30th when nesting activities will have ceased and providing a larger buffer area between the islands and plant removal areas.

AAS appreciates the opportunity to consult with FWC and looks forward to evaluating the long-term success of these enhancement activities.

By Debra Segal

Another Purple Martin House Ready for Occupancy

Alachua Audubon recently installed a Purple Martin house on the grounds of O2BKids on Newberry Road. The house is visible from NW 69th Terrace behind the smaller of the two ponds known as the “Red Lobster Ponds”. The location is excellent for martins and will give us the opportunity to provide educational outreach

with the O2BKids after-school science program. This is the third Purple Martin house that Alachua Audubon has installed— one can be seen along Newberry Road west of NW 34th Street behind the Thaler and Townsend dental office, and the other at the east end of Chapman’s Pond. A fourth Purple Martin house was installed next to Hogtown Creek to replace the houses that were removed when George’s Hardware store was sold; however, this martin house was apparently removed during recent renovations. Alachua Audubon plans to talk to the new tenant—Sunflower Health Foods—about sponsoring a new Purple Martin nest box, since this location has been a long-time nesting spot for martins.

By Mike Manetz

Colclough Pond

The Audubon Sanctuary at Colclough Pond is a 34-acre Audubon-owned conservation land fully within the city limits of Gainesville, near the intersection of South Main Street and Williston Road. The Sanctuary has about a half mile of hiking and biking trails in two main sections leading from the trailhead at the northern cul-de-sac of SW 1st Way, down through the hardwood floodplain, over the rail bed, and up onto the southeastern bluff of Colclough Pond. Sanctuary managers are looking for volunteers to help with trail maintenance and ongoing improvements. If you would like to contribute labor and/or materials to the enhancement of passive recreational uses of the sanctuary please call Bubba Scales at fodderwing@bellsouth.net or 352-367-1065. Typical tasks would include general trail maintenance and erosion control, debris removal, footbridge construction, trash pick up, trailhead beautification, and invasive plant control.

By Bubba Scales

Wading Bird Nesting in the Florida Everglades

Audubon Florida has released their **2012 Wading Bird Nesting in the Everglades** Fact Sheet. The fact sheet is based on the results of the South Florida Water Management District's annual **South Florida Wading Bird Report**, which provides an overview of wading bird nesting efforts across the Greater Everglades Ecosystem. An indicator of ecosystem health, wading bird populations are a central component of evaluating Everglades restoration efforts. Numerous ecologists contributed data from all corners of the ecosystem, which is compiled to evaluate overall nesting effort with notes on long and short-term trends.

Audubon's 2012 Wading Bird Fact Sheet outlines their summary of a few report components, including a status of nesting Roseate Spoonbills in Florida Bay and Wood Storks at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary provided by Audubon scientists. 2012 was the third consecutive year of relatively poor nesting effort across the Everglades, with success better in some regions and among certain species than others.

Restoration projects currently under construction or in the planning phase are urgently needed to reverse ecological declines in the Everglades and enable wading birds to return to historical nesting locations and to nest in greater abundance. Stay engaged with Audubon's Everglades Conservation Team and help protect one of Florida's gems, our famed River of Grass.

Download Fact Sheet: <http://bit.ly/ZcUKdQ>.

Jonathan Webber
Conservation Campaign Manager
jwebber@audubon.org

Audubon FLORIDA

Outdoor Cats Kill Native Wildlife

Cat overpopulation is a human-caused tragedy that affects the health and well-being of our native wildlife population. Outdoor cats, even when well fed, kill hundreds of millions of wild birds and other animals each year in the U.S. Birds that nest or feed on the ground are especially vulnerable. The domestic cat is an effective predator, and when left outside will prey on native wildlife who are ill equipped to defend themselves. For the cats, it means one easy meal after another. For native wildlife, it is a death sentence. According to the American Bird Conservancy, there are about 95 million outdoor cats in the U.S., and these outdoor cats are responsible for killing at least 532 million birds each year. The Alachua Audubon Society encourages all cat owners to keep their cats indoors. This is especially important as nesting and breeding season approaches. Young birds, rabbits, squirrels, and other wildlife are vulnerable to these domesticated predators.

Volunteers throughout Florida are asking registered Florida voters to please sign the Florida Land and Water Legacy Campaign petition so we can secure a dedicated funding for conservation lands. Otherwise, those conservation dollars will continue to be reallocated for other (non-conservation) projects.

Petition gatherers are needed at the Alachua Audubon booth at the Kanapaha Botanical Gardens Spring Garden Festival on March 23-24 (see page 4 to sign up).

Petition gatherers are also needed at the Four Rivers Audubon booth at the Alligator Lake Spring Festival on April 13th. For more information or to sign up to gather petitions, please contact Jacqui Sulek at jsulek@Audubon.org

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A portion of the proceeds of this trip goes to support the conservation efforts of Alachua Audubon Society

For more information and full itinerary:
www.birdsandconservation.weebly.com
Mike Manetz mmanetz@yahoo.com

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The Crane
Mar-Apr 2013

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