



The Crane

Volume 52 Number 5 May — June 2011

May Field Trips and Pot Luck Dinner Party

Saturday, April 30, 8:00 a.m. La Chua Trail

Meet trip leader Steve Hofstetter at the La Chua trailhead (\$2.00 per person admission). Paynes Prairie will be alive with wildflowers and birds at the end of April. Summer residents like Purple Gallinule, Least Bittern, Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, and Orchard Oriole will be the main attractions, flocks of Bobolinks are a definite possibility, and if the water levels are right we might find Black-necked Stilts and migrant shorebirds as well. Bring water and sunscreen. Difficulty: 3

Sunday, May 1, 6:30 a.m. Cedar Key

Meet trip leader John Hintermister 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 (probability ~20%) Short-tailed Hawk. Some people stick around after the trip and eat at one of the local seafood restaurants. Difficulty: 1

Saturday, May 28, 8:00 a.m. (NOTE CHANGE IN DATE) Wildflowers with Dana Griffin

Retired UF botany professor Dana 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. Bring water and sunscreen. Difficulty: 1

Regrettably, field trips for May 7, May 8, and May 14 had to be canceled.

Annual Pot Luck Dinner and Election of Officers and Board of Directors

Please join us on Wednesday, May 11th at 6:30 pm for our annual end of the year pot luck dinner party and election of officers and board of directors. Our annual pot luck dinner 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. Bring some food to share for the pot luck and come enjoy visiting with our Alachua Audubon Board Members. This will be a fun gathering and provide time to share our more recent spring migration bird observations!

The Alachua Audubon Society is a volunteer based organization. We have four officers and fifteen members on the Board of Directors who serve a three year term. The officers of Alachua Audubon are:

President- Helen Warren

Vice President- Scott Flamand

Secretary- Anne Casella

Treasurer- Dotty Robbins

The Board Members consist of Caleb Gordon, Rex Rowan, Debra Segal, Kathy Haines, Ivor Kincaid, Geoff Parks, Bob Simons, Joni Ellis, Adam Kent, Mike Manetz, Stacy Porvasnik Emily Schwartz, Adam Kent and Leslie Straub. Two new Board Members have been nominated for the Board and consist of Martha King and John Hintermister.

Please join Alachua Audubon for this annual pot luck dinner party!

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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Standing Committees

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Submittals: dsegal@wetlandsolutionsinc.com		
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Crane Circulation	Erica & Bob Simons,	
AAS Website.....	www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud	

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 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
July-August Crane:
June 15th**

Around The County...

By Mike Manetz

One of my favorite first signs of spring is the buzzy song of arriving Northern Parulas. These cheery sprites start showing up the second half of February, so early that their song, common in summer months, always strikes me as delightfully and quizzically out of place. I heard my first Parula of 2011 singing just after

dawn on February 26. Another early arrival is the transient Louisiana Waterthrush. Like Parulas, they show up so early it's sometimes hard to say if they are arriving or have been here all winter. Bubba Scales found our first of the season March 11 along the north rim of Payne's Prairie. Ron Bowden and Amanda Moore discovered a Yellow-breasted Chat on U of F Campus March 22. That's extraordinarily early for a migrant Chat, so it's likely this bird spent the entire winter here. Rex Rowan reported our first Prairie Warbler March 22 from his yard. Andy Kratter found a rare-in-spring Kentucky Warbler April 2, and an earlier-than-usual Cape May Warbler the following day; both birds were in the vicinity of Pine Grove Cemetery along the rail trail. Two new early records were a Blue Grosbeak March 30 at Greg Hart's property near Alachua, and a Scarlet Tanager heard by Caleb Gordon April 3 while birding near Westwood Park. Caleb also spotted a Broad-winged Hawk soaring over his house April 6. Broadwings breed here, but in such small numbers they are notoriously difficult to find. Likewise, Hairy Woodpeckers are local breeders, but are so thinly distributed that there are typically only one or two sightings a year. Adam Kent reported one March 28 at Hatchet Creek Preserve north of Newnans Lake.

As always, there were some interesting sightings along La Chua Trail. The Tundra Swan and Snow Geese that graced the Prairie this winter lingered into March, and were last seen on the 13th of that month, late records for both. John Martin found a migrant Stilt Sandpiper as early as March 5. By March 12 Pat Burns had added Solitary Sandpiper and Black-necked Stilt. Frank and Irina Goodwin reported two Roseate Spoonbills on the basin April 7. Spoonbills fairly predictably show up here in summer, much less so in spring. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons have been all but absent in the county the last couple of years, but Lloyd Davis found four of them roosting along Sweetwater Dike April 4.

I've suspected for a while there might be a small colony of White-winged Doves in southeast Gainesville. I have seen them twice in the vicinity of Lincoln Middle over the last few years, and Andy Kratter reported one April 8 of this year from Pine Grove Cemetery, which is a little over a half-mile from Lincoln as the dove flies. It might pay to look twice (Continued on Page 3)

(Continued from Page 2)

at any doves on the wires along SE 15th Street on your way to La Chua trailhead.

By the time you receive this copy of the Crane, spring migration will likely have passed its peak, hopefully with lots of Cape Mays, Blackpolls, and Black-throated Blue Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, and Gray-cheeked Thrushes seen by Gainesville birders. We often have a late cold front come through the first two weeks of May that gives us a last look at some of these great birds, as well as two of our latest arriving migrant species, the almost mythical Connecticut Warbler, (mythical only because I have never seen one here!), and White-rumped Sandpiper. Last year John Hintermister had a Connecticut at San Felasco Hammock, while the Hague Dairy has been fairly reliable for White-rumps.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through April 13, 2011

The June Challenge

The Eighth Annual June Challenge will run from June 1st to June 30th. What's the June Challenge? It's a friendly little competition originated by Alachua Audubon's Becky Enneis in 2004 in order to get us outside where we belong. The idea is to see as many species of birds in Alachua County as you can within the month of June. It's a competition because the desire to win will motivate you to go birding – and you're happy when you're birding, right? – but we don't take the competitive aspect too seriously.

June is a month that most birders spend indoors, and consequently it's largely terra incognita as far as bird movements are concerned. In 2004, the first year we did it, we were amazed to find several locally-rare tern species on Newnans Lake, and in 2006 we found a Snail Kite on Paynes Prairie; obviously we wouldn't have known about any of those birds if we'd stayed indoors. Who knows what else might be out there? If you're interested in joining us, here are the rules:

1. Only birds seen in Alachua County during the month of June may be counted. (Those of you living in other counties are encouraged to do June Challenges there, too, and to report the results to me at the email address below when it's over. You folks in Gilchrist, Marion, and Columbia may find yourselves discovering new birding spots.)

2. Heard birds do not count; you've got to see those Chuck-will's-widows and Eastern Screech-Owls.

3. You are free to put Muscovy Ducks and Whooping Cranes on your list. Almost any wild bird can go on your list. But not – Bob Simons, I'm looking at you – not chickens.

That's simple, isn't it? Now here are a few tips:

Do as much birding as possible during the first half of the month. You're more likely to see lingering migrants that way. There are June records for Common Loon, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Cedar Waxwing, American Redstart, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, and Black-throated Blue Warbler, as well as several shorebirds. Likewise the last few days of the month have produced early fall-migrant Louisiana Waterthrush and Lesser Yellowlegs.

Make several visits to Palm Point, Lake Lochloosa, or other large bodies of water to scan for gulls, terns, and pelicans, which may come and go on a daily basis. Go to Longleaf Flatwoods Reserve for Bachman's Sparrows and San Felasco Hammock for Hooded Warblers. There are over 100 species possible here in June. The first and last few hours of daylight are best. Birds tend to sing early in the morning.

Good luck to all of you who decide to join us! In the spirit of good sportsmanship, let me know (rexrowan@earthlink.net) when you see an unexpected bird so I can pass the word. Don't keep it a secret - as I say, it's a *friendly* competition, based on our shared enthusiasm for birding rather than a desire to come in first.—Rex Rowan

Speakers Corner

Why save the Whooping Crane and the Florida Panther? Conservation biologist and writer Joe Roman gives an illustrated talk on **April 26 at 7:00 p.m. in the Millhopper Library** on how the extinction of species matters to our health, cultural, spiritual well-being, and local economy. He will discuss the value of the Endangered Species Act, an unprecedented attempt at a zero-tolerance law that allows for no new extinctions. He will sign his new book "Listed: Dispatches from America's Endangered Species Act." after his talk.

Mark your calendar for this very interesting program!

Conservation Matters

Please consider signing up for Audubon of Florida and National Audubon Society action alerts to connect with state or national representatives and environmental issues that are being debated. It is an easy step and helps forward important environmental policies. And we are certainly in a time of need! For state action, go to: http://fl.audubonaction.org/site/PageServer?pagename=fl_homepage For national action, go to: <http://policy.audubon.org/take-action>

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WOODPECKER WALK FOR KIDS

Sunday, May 15, 2011, from 9:00-11:30 a.m. At the Northeast Park (400 NE 16th Avenue)

This fieldtrip is geared for kids of all ages. Northeast Park is a small, urban park in the heart of Gainesville that is home to a variety of songbirds, including at least 4 species of woodpeckers. The park provides the perfect setting to get acquainted with these colorful, animated birds.

Ted Goodman, Steven Goodman, and Adam Kent will be your guides for this trip. We'll meet at the parking lot by the tennis courts at 9:00 a.m. for a brief introduction, followed by birding in the park. Binoculars will be available, and drinks and snacks will be provided. For insurance reasons, all children must be accompanied by an adult.

To register or for more information, please email Emily Schwartz at schwares@gm.sbac.edu.



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Kids Surveyed for Nuthatches at Morningside Nature Center

One of the few places around Gainesville where Brown-headed Nuthatches are still readily found is Morningside Nature Center, but little is known about the size of the Morningside population. To help get kids involved in bird conservation, Alachua Audubon, in coordination with the City of Gainesville, organized a Kids' Brown-Headed Nuthatch survey to help estimate the size of the park's population.

Nine young birders, as well as interested parents and teachers, participated in the survey on March 5th. After an introduction to Brown-headed Nuthatches, their ecology, and their vocalizations, the participants divided into four groups, with each group tasked with covering a different part of the park. Participants looked and listened for Nuthatches, carefully recording their location, time, and the birds' behavior.

Each of the four groups was successful at locating Brown-headed Nuthatches in different parts of the park, suggesting that at least a half dozen birds, and possibly more, are present at Morningside. We are excited to see the young birders program grow and appreciate our Alachua Audubon volunteers who are fostering these youth birding and conservation activities.



Participants gather after a successful morning looking for Brown-headed Nuthatches. (Photo by Helen Warren)

Would You Like to Receive the Crane Electronically?

You now have the option of receiving the Crane Newsletter electronically rather than a mailed paper copy. Just notify us at AAS-thecrane@att.net and we will send you a link to the Crane Newsletter every other month. In the subject line of your email to AAS please put the word Newsletter. Also include your name and address in the email. Your email address will not be given to anyone and there will always be an unsubscribe option. 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.

The Flicker Mystery

The Northern Flicker seems to be rare in summer in Alachua County. But does that signify a decline? Has it ever been common? We can't say, because we have no historical data against which to measure current observations. Almost all our knowledge of their historical abundance is based on winter surveys (Frank Chapman in 1886-87, John Dennis from 1949-51, Christmas Bird Count from 1957 to the present), and in winter the Florida population swells with wintering northern birds, so those surveys didn't tell us anything about the size of the locally-resident population.

During the months of June, July, and August I'm asking Gainesville-area observers to take note of any flickers they see, and to contact me by email at rexrowan@gmail.com or to leave a message on my phone at (352) 371-9296 with the location (as exact as possible), the date, and number of birds seen. If you find a nest that would be particularly valuable.—Rex Rowan

Domestic Cat Predation on Birds and Other Wildlife

(From American Bird Conservancy)

Scientists estimate that cats kill hundreds of millions of birds and more than a billion small mammals each year. Cats kill common species such as Cardinals, Blue Jays, and House Wrens, as well as rare and endangered species such as Piping Plovers, Florida Scrub-Jays, and California Least Terns.

Loss of wildlife habitat and habitat fragmentation due to human development are the leading causes of declining bird populations. However, scientists now list invasive species, including cats, as the second most serious threat to bird populations worldwide. Habitat fragmentation provides cats and other predators easier access to wildlife forced to live on smaller tracts of land. Rather than havens for wildlife, these areas can be death traps.

Some free-roaming domestic cats kill more than 100 animals each year. One well-fed cat that roamed a wildlife experiment station was recorded to have killed more than 1,600 animals (mostly small mammals) over 18 months. Rural cats take more prey than suburban or urban cats. Birds that nest or feed on the ground are the most susceptible to cat predation, as are nestlings and fledglings of many other bird species.

Well-fed cats kill birds and other wildlife because the hunting instinct is independent of the urge to eat. In a study by Adamec (1976), six cats were presented with a live small rat while eat-

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ing their preferred food. All six cats stopped eating the food, killed the rat, and then resumed eating the food.

In a study of cat predation in an urban area, 83% of the 41 study cats killed birds. In all but one case, when feathers were found in scat, the owner was unaware that their cat had ingested a bird. Surprisingly, the declawed cat in the study killed more animals than any of the other cats in the study (Fiore and Sullivan; www.geocities.com/the_srco/Article.html).

Studies have shown that bells on collars are not effective in preventing cats from killing birds or other wildlife. Birds do not necessarily associate the sound of a bell with danger and cats with bells can learn to silently stalk their prey. Even if the bell on the collar rings, it may ring too late, and bells offer no protection for helpless nestlings and fledglings.

Cats are not ultimately responsible for killing our native wildlife—people are. *The only way to prevent domestic cat predation on wildlife is for owners to keep their cats indoors.*

For more information, contact American Bird Conservancy at www.abcbirds.org

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The Crane
May-June 2011

Please join us on

Wednesday, May 11th

at 6:30 pm

for our annual

end of the year

pot luck dinner party

and elections

Join Audubon!

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

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Questions? Contact Paul 495-9419 or
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