



The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

Volume 40 Number 7, February 1999

Saturday, February 20, 2:30 p.m.

Ken Meyer speaking on

"The Swallow-tailed Kite"

Surpassingly
may be
its life



elegant and graceful, the Swallow-tailed Kite
North America's loveliest bird. Much of
history was poorly known, however, until

Dr. Ken Meyer began his field research. Starting with nesting kites in South Florida several years ago, Ken eventually radio-tracked them in 1997 to their wintering grounds in Brazil, finding their migration route in the process. Join us as Ken shares his discoveries about this beautiful and fascinating little hawk. The lecture will be illustrated with slides, and afterwards Ken will answer your questions. Stay for refreshments and meet your fellow Audubon members.

Millhopper Branch - Alachua County Library - 3145 NW 43rd St.

You are invited to come on these guided field trips:

Sunday, February 14, 6:00 a.m.

Zellwood

Call the SunDial birding line, 335-3500 ext.2473, for meeting place and updated information. In its first winter as a wildlife area, Zellwood has surpassed all expectations. The Dec. 22 Christmas Bird Count found 175 species there, perhaps the largest-ever inland count in the entire United States. Even in mid-January such rarities as Golden Eagle, Ruff, Western Kingbird, Clay-colored Sparrow, Dickcissel, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher were still being seen there, as well as numerous shorebirds and waterfowl. We'll attempt to take advantage of Zellwood's avian abundance on this trip; however, much of our success depends on water levels remaining high, and the trip may be shelved if conditions aren't right (call the SunDial to be sure). Bring lunch and something to drink

on this trip, and wear a pair of comfortable shoes, since we may be walking some distance. Expect to be home by the latter part of the afternoon.

Saturday, February 27, 7:30 a.m.

San Felasco Hammock State Preserve

Meet at the Publix parking lot at NW 53rd Ave. and NW 43rd St. to carpool to San Felasco (this will prevent overcrowding at the small parking lot and allow most of us to avoid the \$2 parking fee). As winter turns into spring, we should hear newly-arrived Northern Parulas and Yellow-throated Warblers singing, and we'll look out for such wintering species as Blue-headed Vireo, Hermit Thrush, Ovenbird, and Cedar Waxwing. New green leaves and such early-flowering plants as Yellow Jessamine and Cross Vine should enliven the walk as well.

Around the County...

by Mike Manetz

Alachua County is a great place for birding, but when it comes to the occurrence of really rare birds—you know, those hot-line birds that draw listers from all over the state—we generally get less than our share. However, once in a while we make headlines, as we did January 11. Unfortunately, the headlines read... "Best Bird of the Year Found Dead!" I am, of course, referring to the extraordinary discovery of a deceased **Lesser Nighthawk** on Paynes Prairie by rangers Roy Ozmore and Howard Adams. As the story goes, Roy was checking a recently burned area near the Rail Trail when he came across a dead but remarkably intact member of the Nightjar (*Caprimulgidae*) family, which Howard Adams recognized as a Nighthawk. Howard, a careful and experienced birder, knew he had something highly unusual, as no species of Nighthawk is known to occur this far north in winter, and the few winter reports from south Florida are undocumented. He brought the unfortunate remains, which he described as "not yet cold," to the Florida Museum, where ornithologist Andy Kratter declared it to be a Lesser Nighthawk, a species that normally breeds no farther east than Texas, and winters in Mexico. While a few birders chided Howard for not performing CPR, or at least tossing the bird one time so they could count it, most felt he should be congratulated for providing the only Florida specimen of a species whose winter occurrence was previously unsubstantiated.

Several other less-than-usual birds were still hanging around at the time of this writing. The flock of **Rusty Blackbirds**, apparently with a **Brewers** or two in tow, continued their presence south of George's Pond off Hwy. 441 near Micanopy. This is the largest and most reliably found group of Rusties we've had in the county in several years. The **Vermilion Flycatchers**, one at the Williamson farm, the other farther south at Tuscawilla Prairie, were still being seen as of Jan. 15, the latter bird apparently moving toward adult male plumage.

Just as we were fearing **Hairy Woodpeckers** had been all but extirpated from the county, three have been reported over the last few months. One was along the Rail Trail at the end of September. Then in December, Scott Duncan heard one at Austin Cary Forest. On Jan. 8, Rex Rowan saw another in the Lochloosa WMA near CR 346. Another species seen most winters and overdue for an appearance was **Wilson's Warbler**. Scott Duncan reported one Jan. 16 at the Landings, on land adjacent to Bivens Arm Nature Park. Bryant Roberts found a *selasphorus* hummingbird Jan. 5 at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens. This marks the third winter hummer reported in the county this winter.

Around this time of year, some backyard birders get distressed that no Goldfinches are showing up at their

feeders. It is fairly typical on the part of Goldfinches to rely on wild foods early in the winter and then mass at feeding stations later in the season. Occasionally we will get a winter in which they pass up feeders all winter, but that is rare. I would guess that by the time this issue goes to print, the Goldfinches will be ubiquitous around most feeding stations.

There were some great backyard birds reported in January. Janie Edwards, who lives in Cross Creek, had a **Painted Bunting** visiting her feeder. Ike Fromberg and Cathy Reno reported a **Rose Breasted Grosbeak** in their yard Jan. 2, and the adult male **Redstart** continued to be seen in my yard through January 17. Chapmans Pond, which was loaded with dabblers into early January, became unproductive due to high water levels, but **Goldeneyes** and **Bufflehead** continued at the Post Office Pond. (Someone reported a **Merlin** hanging around there, also.) Mary Landsman found a drake **Canvasback** lingering through mid-January on Bivens Arm Lake, and **Shovelers** were reported by several birders on Tuscawilla Prairie.

With most of our most interesting sightings coming from the southern part of the county, places like San Felasco Hammock, Poe Springs Park, and the Hague Dairy seem to be underbirded lately. Hopefully someone will turn up some good birds there, too.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through January 17, 1999.



Visit AAS Web Site:

<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud/aud.htm>

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Or fax to 331-2585. Or e-mail evperry@aol.com

***The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.**

The following article begins a series written by Alachua Audubon members describing favorite hikes. These hikes are located in or near Gainesville, and the articles include directions to the trails so that you can make the hikes on your own. For the most part, the hikes described are in spots which are not widely known or described in guidebooks such as "The Hiker's Guide to Florida."

Big Shoals Hiking Trail

by John Winn

Big Shoals on the Suwannee. To Florida's paddlers—folks who use canoes and kayaks—that name means the state's only stretch of true whitewater rapids. Thanks to a Nature Conservancy purchase that is now one of the newer state forests, it also is a place for hikers.

A note of caution: the trail to Big Shoals is not necessarily an especially birdy place. On a trip there the Sunday after Thanksgiving, I saw only a few Ruby-crowned Kinglets, an Ovenbird, and a Hermit Thrush—typical winter residents of dense forest, arguably not worth burning up the gas for a round trip of 100 miles, as they can be found much closer to home. But this wasn't just a birding trip, so they actually were a bonus. I expect that later in the winter, there will be a lot of berry-eating birds as there was an abundance of holly berries along the trail. In spring, in addition to many Parula Warblers, you might expect to hear—but perhaps not see on account of thick vegetation—Hooded and Prothonotary Warblers, and maybe even a Swainson's Warbler, although you shouldn't count on that.

Big Shoals is located a little over three miles northeast of White Springs, off Route 135 and down the Old Godwin Bridge Road (see directions below). At the parking area, there is a sign showing the extensive trail system, most of which can be used by horses and fat-tire bikes, as well as hikers. When I was there, we encountered only two bikers, so they probably are not much of a hazard. The wide trail to the rapids is very obvious and is marked with yellow blazes.

It's a little over a mile to the Big Shoals. For most of that, especially at the start, the presence of the Suwannee River is more felt than actually seen. The trail is some distance away from the river, but somehow you can tell that it's there, somewhere out beyond the thicket of the trees. When you come to some places where the vegetation thins out a little, you can't resist the temptation—at least I couldn't—to bushwhack out for a look at the river. And what you see might surprise you: you're forty or fifty feet above the river. Unless, of course, it's flooding. We had an Alachua Audubon field trip scheduled for this spot in March of 1998, but that had to be cancelled because the trail, or at least parts of it, were underwater.

As you walk along this stretch of river, except for the trail itself, the only traces of human activity you'll encounter are the rusted metal pilings from the Old Godwin Bridge. What a great place for an interpretive sign, as these relicts raise numerous questions. When was the bridge built? Obviously, it was at a time when

Florida's roads weren't paved and were little more than sandy trails through the woods, but how recent was that? 1880's? 1920's? Why did they build the bridge here? White Springs—once a thriving resort—is only a few miles downstream, so was there another bridge there? And what finally happened to the bridge? Did it get carried away by high water or what?

At just about the spot where you start hearing the rapids, Shoal Pond is on the other side of the trail.

You can catch only glimpses of it through the trees. With all the cypress, there's not much open water, but it might be a place where some ducks or wading birds could be. You might want to push your way in closer for a better look, although it's more likely you'll want to hurry along to the rapids, now quite close by. When you get there, it's a little bit of a scramble down to the water's edge, but there you'll find a big Ogeechee tupelo with some roots offering a seat to watch the show. On the Sunday after Thanksgiving, there wasn't much of a wait. Within a few minutes, paddlers showed up.

Compared to whitewater rapids from the rivers of north Georgia and points north, Big Shoals is pretty tame. Depending on the water level, however, it can be a dangerous place, so it's a good idea to pull over to scout the rapids before running them. Most paddlers do that on the far shore where the banks are low and there's a well-worn path for portaging supplies they don't want to risk losing. When they come back out into the current, they swing over to the other side and run right past the big tupelo. It's all over in ten or fifteen seconds. While we were there eating our lunch, a half dozen parties came through. One ambitious pair even roped their canoe back up to run the rapids a second time. For all I know, they may have spent the whole afternoon there, going down the rapids time and again, but it was time for us to start back to the parking area and head home to Gainesville.

(See directions for reaching Big Shoals - top of page 4)



How To Reach Big Shoals

From Gainesville, take 1-75 north to the White Springs exit, the first exit after the I-10 interchange. From there, follow Route 136 east into White Springs. Cross the bridge over the Suwannee River and turn right at the intersection with U.S. 41 (the Stephen Foster State Folk Culture Center is to the left). After only a few blocks, turn left on Route 135. In about a mile, Route 135 passes the main entrance to Big Shoals State Forest on the right, and about two miles beyond is the Old Godwin Bridge Road, also on the right. There is a canoe launch logo sign. Follow this dirt road about a mile and a half to the picnic and parking area at the end.

2nd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count - February 19-22

National Audubon Society and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology invite your participation!

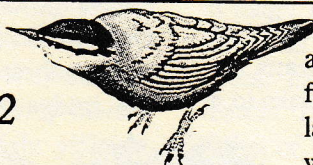
During one weekend last February, more than 14,000 citizen scientists took part in the first-ever Great Backyard Bird Count. People all across the continent made bird-watching history by taking to their backyards, parks and neighborhoods, counting birds, and then logging their results on the BirdSource website. As the weekend counts progressed, participants could literally see the results appearing on BirdSource's maps like election-count returns. By the beginning of the next week, scientists at Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology had gotten an unprecedented snapshot of the North American winter bird population the weekend before spring migrations began.

This year, Audubon members and Cornell staff are working together to increase the effectiveness of the count as a tool for conservation. Wild Birds Unlimited has also signed on to the project this fall as a sponsor.

The goal this year is to multiply participation many times over. This year's data will allow Audubon and Cornell scientists to begin to look for trends and population shifts, help to define the status of birds at the close of the millennium, allow a comparison of the effects of El Niño on migration one year later, and create educational opportunities for school children, some of whom are already involved in *Audubon Adventures* and FeederWatch classrooms. It is also a great chance to educate the public at large about the significance of backyard habitat.

The key to this history-making event is that participants contribute their sightings online, through a World Wide Web site, BirdSource <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu/>>. In turn, BirdSource provides almost instantaneous feedback to participants through graphics, animated maps and constantly updated summaries. If even five percent of the approximately 54 million bird watchers in the United States participate, it will add significantly to the knowledge of the current health of wintering birds across the continent.

Participants can spend as little or as much time as they want counting birds during the three-day period. They then submit their counts via BirdSource—which also offers



assistance in bird identification—on an easy-to-use form. Forms will be integrated with the accumulating data and displayed almost instantly on the web. BirdSource allows virtually up-to-the-minute analysis of important data.

Like last year, participants will be able to quickly see for themselves how their reports fit into the continent-wide perspective, as animated maps illustrate which birds are reported where in real-time. This year, however, participants will be able to ask the database their own questions, such as which species were reported in a particular zip code, or how many of a certain species were seen. In addition, BirdSource will supply novices with help in identifying birds by sight and by their distinctive calls.

To participate, simply go to the BirdSource website at <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu/>>, click on the 2nd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count button and fill in the easy-to-use form. In addition to animated maps, visitors to the site can view colorful bird images, hear examples of songs and calls, read about the conservation status of key species, compare maps with other BirdSource projects, and more.

Jam for the Undammed Ocklawaha jam'n jambalaya

Saturday, Feb. 6 7 p.m. - midnight

Thelma Boltin Center

516 NE 2nd Ave., Gainesville

Florida Defenders of the Environment invite you to join us for a night of music, food and fun to benefit the Ocklawaha River Restoration Project.

Foot Tappin' Jam'm by:

- ▶ The Nonessentials ▶ Grant Livingston
- ▶ Dale Crider ▶ Jane Yii

Belly Fillin' Food:

- ▶ Jambalaya ▶ Red Beans & Rice
- ▶ Cold beer ▶ And more

All for \$35 donation per person

Hurry! Call 378-8465

fde@bellsouth.net

POGO Coalition

by John Winn

Pogo was a cute little cartoon character drawn years ago by Walt Kelly. POGO is something entirely different. It's a coalition of Florida and Georgia environmental organizations—including Alachua Audubon—working to protect the ecosystem of the Pinhook, Osceola and Greater Okefenokee.

Formed about a year ago and broadly modeled on the Everglades Coalition, POGO's impetus was at least partially the threatened titanium mine proposed by DuPont. But there are other threats, both current and potential, which the coalition will address as it works to, in the words of the POGO Mission Statement, "protect and maintain the health, integrity, connectivity, biodiversity, and natural resources of the ecosystem."

The heart of the ecosystem is the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. The other largely protected area is the Osceola National Forest. In between is the Pinhook Swamp, now in mixed public and private ownership. Also part of the ecosystem are the floodplains of the upper Suwannee and St. Marys Rivers, as well as Dixon Memorial State Forest on the north side of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. Obviously, the Georgia-Florida state border is just an artificial, mostly straight, line cutting across the ecosystem, and it will take efforts from both states to bring about full protection. But if this can be achieved, a vast, wild, largely undeveloped area will be available as habitat for wildlife. It's an important wildlife area now, and as population spills south from Atlanta in Georgia, north from Miami, and east from Jacksonville, it will become increasingly significant.

In addition to opposing the obvious threats posed by development and such incompatible uses as mining, the coalition is focusing on supporting land acquisition. The timberlands in the Pinhook Swamp between the Okefenokee NWR and the Osceola NF are a wildlife corridor used by many species, including black bears, otters, bobcats, and many others kinds of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. It would be utilized by panthers if they were ever reestablished in this area and is very important for black bears, allowing for a large enough intact population to be viable over a long period of time. Some of these lands have already been obtained as an addition to Osceola NF, but much more could be acquired if Congress would fully fund their purchase before it's too late.

Another issue is that of the Suwannee Sill, a structure that is essentially a dam and which keeps the waters in the Okefenokee at artificially high levels. Over the years that the sill has been in place, the swamp's hydrology has been altered, resulting in, among other things, an unnatural increase in wetland species and changes in the

fire regime. Removal of some or all of the sill to restore a more natural flow to the Suwannee River is under consideration, but this is controversial and opposed by some residents along the Suwannee River who claim the sill is necessary for flood control.

There's more that the coalition is involved in. Call me at (352) 468-1669 if you'd like more information about the POGO Coalition or if you'd like to attend some of the meetings. The coalition doesn't have a fixed meeting schedule, but meets somewhere between monthly and quarterly, usually on a month's third Thursday. I've been going to some of the meetings for Alachua Audubon but can't get to all of them, so it would be good if someone else were also a delegate. The POGO ecosystem isn't exactly in our backyard, but it's pretty close, and it's important that we participate in its protection.

"Additions and Corrections" to the CBC Report in Last Month's Crane:

From Barbara Muschlitz

I found one mistake in my report for the 1998 count. I listed only 1 Brown-headed Nuthatch; 10 were counted.

For the 1997 count, American Birds has a "Summary of Highest Counts of Individuals for Canada and the United States." Gainesville was listed for 4 warblers and one icterid. They were: Blue-winged Warbler 1 (we apparently had the only one counted in North America!); Black-throated Blue Warbler 1 (in this case, we were tied with 4 other counts); Black-and-white Warbler 41, Ovenbird 8, and Baltimore Oriole 8.

Now's the Time to Get Nest Boxes Up

We welcome a new sponsor to *The Crane* this month: Karen Ausley and Jim Ahlers, who manufacture and sell bird nesting boxes.

You may remember seeing their flyer in the December issue of *The Crane*. For each nest box purchased, Karen and Jim contribute \$1 to Alachua Audubon Society. Karen recently presented us with a check for \$46 for nest boxes they sold as a result of the flyer!

The boxes are superbly designed and constructed. They "look good" as well as being highly functional for the birds. Choices are titmouse, bluebird, flycatcher, screech owl/kestrel, flicker/woodpecker or Karen and Jim will build special orders at your request. You can see some of the boxes on display at AAS program meetings. See the sponsor page for more information and telephone numbers to place an order.

For 24-hour AAS Information:

Call SunDial Bird Line: 335-3500, ext. BIRD (2473) for information on field trips, programs, where to see birds, and what's happening in AAS.

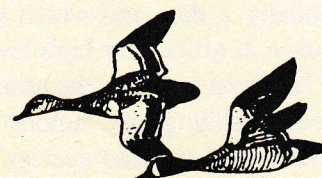
1998 Cedar Key Christmas Bird Count - 2 January 1999

by Dale C. Henderson

Balmy weather conditions proved to be more to the liking of the counters than to the counted on January 2, the day of the 1998 Cedar Key Christmas Bird Count. Despite generally low counts, a few notable new maximums were recorded: American White Pelican 273 (previous high 230, 1997), Magnificent Frigatebird 3 (one seen, 1991), Great Egret 162 (154, 1986), Tricolored Heron 40 (35, 1979, 1980), Marbled Godwit 20 (14, 1997), Dunlin 6,085 (4,622, 1979), and White Winged Dove, a species first counted in 1991 and regular since that time (though not always on the CBC) 11 (previously 9, 1996). Unfortunately, the new lows are too numerous to mention; but most shocking was the number of Common Loons 3, (high 446, 1991, previous low 5, 1993). Thank goodness for the boaters! Brian McNab found the Frigatebirds lounging around their summer haunts on Seahorse Key, and John Hintermister, Don Morrow, and Ken Litzenberger discovered the only "new" bird, a Greater Black Backed Gull while airboating the northwest areas of the count circle. Concerns about Y2K and the thought of losing John, Don, and Howard to the greater charms of the Jacksonville Count have resulted in the Cedar Key Count date being once again shifted. The 1999 count will be held Thursday, December 30.

Compilers: Ron Christen and Dale Henderson. Other observers: John Hintermister, Grace Kiltie, Carmine Lanciani, Ken Litzenberger, Mary Landsman, Mike Manetz, Brian McNab, Don Morrow, Barbara Muschlitz, Bryant Roberts, Betty Smocovitis.

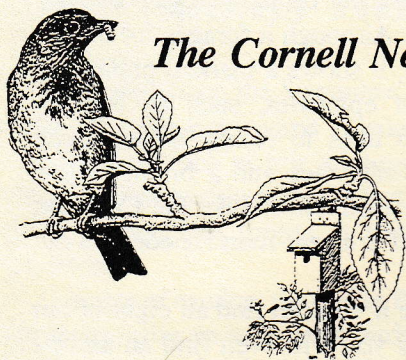
Common Loon	3	Killdeer	49	Carolina Chickadee	25
Pied-billed Grebe	1	Am. Oystercatcher	588	Tufted Titmouse	25
Horned Grebe	2	American Avocet	61	Carolina Wren	21
Am White Pelican	273	Greater Yellowlegs	27	House Wren	23
Brown Pelican	527	Lesser Yellowlegs	1	Sedge Wren	6
Dbl-cr Cormorant	2396	Willet	643	Marsh Wren	11
Magnif. Frigatebird	3	Spotted Sandpiper	13	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	51
Great Blue Heron	90	Whimbrel	12	Bl-gray Gnatcatcher	16
Great Egret	162	Marbled Godwit	20	Eastern Bluebird	28
Snowy Egret	80	Ruddy Turnstone	249	Hermit Thrush	12
Little Blue Heron	28	Red Knot	102	American Robin	585
Tricolored Heron	40	Sanderling	100	Gray Catbird	34
Reddish Egret	2	Western Sandpiper	835	Northern Mockingbird	47
Blk-cr Night-Heron	26	Least Sandpiper	335	Brown Thrasher	6
Ylw-cr Night-Heron	13	Dunlin	6085	Cedar Waxwing	5
White Ibis	20	Peep, sp.	2550	European Starling	160
Wood Stork	11	Short-bld Dowitcher	1071	White-eyed Vireo	3
Wood Duck	2	Common Snipe	2	Blue-headed Vireo	3
Green-winged Teal	53	American Woodcock	1	Orange-cr Warbler	6
Northern Pintail	1	Laughing Gull	283	Ylw-rumped Warbler	1252
Northern Shoveler	1	Bonaparte's Gull	4	Ylw-throated Warbler	6
Redhead	1	Ring-billed Gull	492	Pine Warbler	21
Greater Scaup	200	Herring Gull	62	Prairie Warbler	1
Lesser Scaup	1322	Caspian Tern	3	Palm Warbler	24
Common Goldeneye	1	Royal Tern	38	Blk-&-White Warbler	12
Bufflehead	39	Forster's Tern	541	Common Yellowthroat	52
Hooded Merganser	89	Black Skimmer	1285	Northern Cardinal	41
Red-brstd Merganser	182	Eur. Collared Dove	217	Eastern Towhee	37
Ruddy Duck	10	White-winged Dove	11	Chipping Sparrow	3
Duck, sp.	120	Mourning Dove	35	Savannah Sparrow	2
Black Vulture	6	Common Ground Dove	41	Nelson's Sharp-tailed	11
Turkey Vulture	48	Rose-Ringed Parakeet	4	Sharp-tailed Sparrow, sp.	2
Osprey	23	Eastern Screech Owl	5	Seaside Sparrow	11
Bald Eagle	13	Great Horned Owl	5	Song Sparrow	6
Northern Harrier	8	Barred Owl	5	Swamp Sparrow	15
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Belted Kingfisher	37	White-thr Sparrow	12
Cooper's Hawk	2	Red-bell. Woodpecker	24	Red-winged Blackbird	673
Red-shouldered Hawk	6	Ylw-bell. Sapsucker	1	Boat-tailed Grackle	268
Red-tailed Hawk	5	Downy Woodpecker	10	Common Grackle	16
American Kestrel	5	Northern Flicker	12	Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Clapper Rail	21	Pileated Woodpecker	11	American Goldfinch	21
Virginia Rail	4	Eastern Phoebe	24	House Sparrow	47
Sora	2	Tree Swallow	2		
American Coot	1	Blue Jay	13	Number of species	134
Black-bellied Plover	166	Florida Scrub-Jay	3	Total individuals	25618
Wilson's Plover	1	American Crow	10		
Semipalmated Plover	74	Fish Crow	1		
		Crow, sp	9		



Board meeting:

Wednesday, February 10, 6:30 p.m.

Held in the Florida Museum of Natural History conference room. Members and public invited.



The Cornell Nest Box Network invites you to help all cavity-nesting birds.

Thirty years ago, bluebird numbers were declining. Thanks to the grassroots efforts of concerned citizens—like AAS's Cathy Reno and all our local nestbox monitors—bluebirds are now among the most rapidly increasing bird species in North America.

Scientists at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology need your help to ensure the continued success of bluebirds and other species that use nest boxes.

As a CNBN nest-box monitor, you can learn how and where to put up nest boxes to provide a "home" for birds on your property, gather useful information on cavity-nesting birds by learning how to safely check your nest box without harming the birds, and have fun participating in a hands-on science project that benefits cavity-nesting birds. You decide how much time you spend monitoring your nest box(es) and can choose to count the eggs in your nest box for a clutch size study, offer feathers for nesting materials, measure nest-box characteristics, such as entrance hole size, box height, and direction, offer calcium to learn if birds need extra calcium for healthy egg production.

To join the Cornell study, the fee is \$20. You'll get a quarterly newsletter, species accounts about the birds in the study, descriptions of what you'll find inside your nest box(es), access to an e-mail discussion group, and more—everything but the nest box itself. (The project materials show you how to make your own and how to select a good nest box.)

To sign up or for more information, call 1-800-843-BIRD (2473), e-mail <cornellbirds@cornell.edu>, or write to Cornell Nest Box Network/BC, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850. Cornell's web site is <<http://birds.cornell.edu>>.

The AAS bluebird nestbox monitoring program is still going strong. The CNBN project offers an additional opportunity to get involved and help nesting bird populations.

Our Over-Wintering Warblers

by Frank Stehli and Hank Purdy

Almost everyone who enjoys the out-of-doors has at times admired a bright flash of color as a wood warbler flitted through a patch of brush, darted among the twigs of an ancient live oak or foraged on the ground in a yard or pasture. Many of us have noted their passage through our area in spring and fall migrations that may extend from wintering grounds in northern South America to breeding areas in Labrador, and involve flights across the Caribbean or the Gulf of Mexico. Fewer of us may realize that eight species of wood warblers (Yellow-rumped, Common Yellowthroat, Palm, Pine, Black-and-white, Orange-crowned, Prairie, and Yellow-throated) consistently winter in North-Central Florida, and may be found in Alachua County in areas of suitable habitat. Certain of these are here only in winter, but others are year-round residents. Six of the over-wintering eight species are common to abundant, and two others are present but less regularly seen because we are situated close to the northern limit of their winter range.

The most common warbler that is a winter resident is the ubiquitous **Yellow-rumped Warbler** that may be seen on almost every bird walk. These birds often travel in large flocks feeding in the tree tops, low brush or even on the ground. The winter diet of this warbler includes many kinds of berries which may account for the fact that it may winter as far north as New England. Variable in appearance depending on the season, age or sex, nevertheless all show the characteristic yellow rump, and in flight, white tail spots.

Generally found in wet areas with low brush, sedges, or rushes, the **Common Yellowthroat** is frequently found here both in winter and summer. It responds readily to "pishing" which will generally coax it into view atop a twig or rush. The brown back, bright yellow throat and black mask of the male are distinctive among our winter warblers. The female is less distinctively marked, but it is the only winter wood warbler in our area with a yellow throat, no wing bars and an eye ring. This is one of our year-round residents.

Despite their name, not all wood warblers are denizens of the woods. The **Palm Warbler** characteristically feeds on the ground and prefers open spaces, so you are wasting your time looking for it in palms. This warbler is easily distinguished by its bright yellow undertail coverts and its habit of pumping its tail up and down. A relatively common winter warbler here, it heads for our northern states and adjacent Canada to spend the summer.

If you live in an area with abundant pines, especially open pine woodlands, you are likely to see the **Pine Warbler** that is quite common in its preferred habitat,

the tops of pine trees. Normally feeding on insects, seeds and berries, this warbler will occasionally visit bird feeders for suet, and sometimes will feed in deciduous trees and brush. Clear white wing bars, a yellow throat and darker auricular area bordered by an extension of the yellow color of the throat and variable streaking at the sides distinguish this species. A year-round resident in our area, its summer breeding range also extends much further north.



The **Black-and-white Warbler** is aptly named, as it is exclusively black and white except for a slight yellow wash on the undersides of some females.

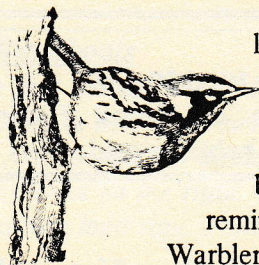
Its feeding behavior is somewhat like that of a nuthatch, as it feeds on insects hidden in the bark of trees and it is able to feed on undersides of branches and to creep head down on tree trunks. The

Black-and-white Warbler is often found in "feeding groups" associated with chickadees, titmice, Downy Woodpeckers and various other warblers. Although wintering here, the breeding range of this bird is farther north.

The rather plain **Orange-crowned Warbler** is primarily a western species during the breeding season, but like many humans, it heads for Florida for the winter. This warbler is most likely to be found in brushy areas and open woodlands with an understory of brush. Feeding mostly on insects and a few berries, during winter it will also feed on sap oozing from holes drilled in trees by sapsuckers or woodpeckers. The Orange-crowned Warbler lacks wing bars like the Common Yellowthroat but can be distinguished from the somewhat similar female of that species, which has a brighter yellow throat and lacks the indistinct breast streaking of the Orange-crowned Warbler. This species can be confused with several other warblers, but none of them is present in our area in winter.

One of our two less common winter warblers is the **Prairie Warbler** which, like the Palm Warbler, is a tail pumper, but tends to forage in open scrubby areas rather than on the ground. The Prairie Warbler is easily recognized by a facial pattern consisting of a yellow supercilium, dark eye line, yellow crescent below the eye with a dark border below and yellow underparts with black streaks or rows of dots on the sides. This warbler is not a resident of prairies despite its name but prefers brushy areas, slashings and low evergreens. It feeds on insects, a few berries and, like the Orange-crowned Warbler, will occasionally feed on sap from sapsucker holes. Principally a winter resident in our area, there are nevertheless breeding enclaves in Florida, mostly in coastal areas.

Last of our winter warblers and another one of our



less common winter residents is the **Yellow-throated Warbler** (not to be confused with the Common Yellowthroat). This

bird exhibits a feeding behavior reminiscent of the Black-and-white

Warbler. Although it forages for insects

in many kinds of woods, it shows a marked preference for trees with abundant epiphytes, such as Spanish Moss. In winter, it also likes to forage among palm fronds. The black and white face and a bright yellow throat of this species are distinctive. Like the Common Yellowthroat, this warbler is a year-round resident in our area.

Give it a try and see if you can find all eight of our winter warblers. Perhaps you will even find an associated individual of other species as was the case with the most recent Christmas Bird Count.

Birdfest coming—April 3

The Second Annual Suwannee River Birdfest will be held April 3 — rain or shine — 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Fanning Springs State Recreation Area located off Highway 19/98.

There will be birding, bicycling, canoeing, hiking for the entire family, exhibits, ecocrafts, a Kid's Korner, local food, and "homegrown" music. No admission charge. Details will be in next month *Crane*. Or you can call (352) 493-6736 or e-mail ppds@svic.net.

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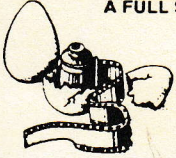
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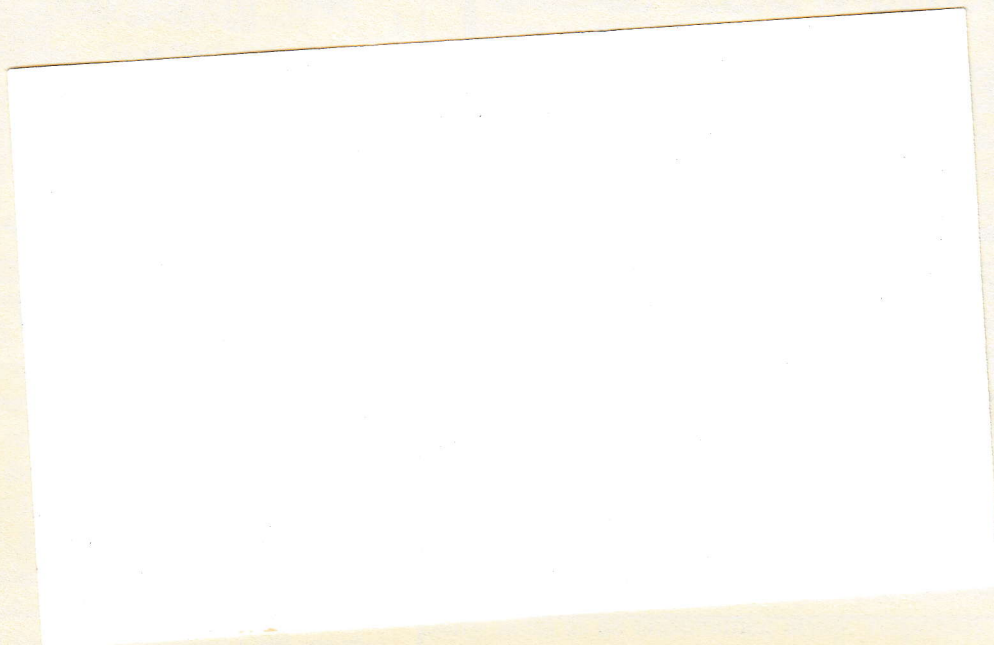
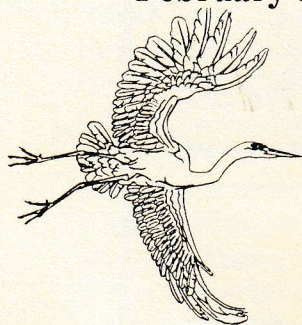
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The Crane

February 1999



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