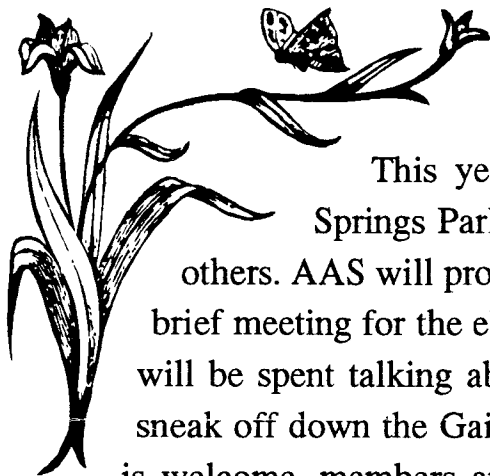




The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

Volume 40 Number 9, April 1999



Wednesday, April 21, 6 p.m.

Alachua Audubon Society Picnic

This year's annual meeting and picnic will be held at Boulware Springs Park (3300 SE 15th Street). Bring a covered dish to share with others. AAS will provide drinks, plates, and eating utensils. There will be a very brief meeting for the election of board members and officers, but most of the time will be spent talking about birds and eating good food (and a few members may sneak off down the Gainesville-Hawthorne Trail with their binoculars!). Everyone is welcome, members and non-members alike! To get to Boulware Springs Park, consult the map on the next page or follow these directions: going east on University Avenue, cross Waldo Road, and turn right onto SE 15th Street (the second traffic light after Waldo Road, just after the Chevron station and In-n-Out Hamburgers). Go 2.1 miles south on SE 15th Street to the park entrance - the second yellow gate, with a big sign saying Boulware Springs Water Works.

Other AAS Activities This Month:

-Program-

- **Saturday, April 3, 2 p.m.**

Pamela Bowen speaking on **Burrowing Owls in Florida**. See last month's *Crane* for details and/or read Pam's article this month on page 5. Join us at the Tower Road Branch Library, 3020 SW 75th Street (Tower Road). Refreshments will be served.

-Field Trips-

- **Saturday, April 17, 6 a.m.**

Wards Bank / Cedar Point

- **Saturday, April 24, 6 a.m.**

Ft. DeSoto

- **Saturday, May 1, 6:30 a.m.**

Cedar Key

See Field Trips Details on Next Page

-No Board Meeting This Month-

*You are invited to come on these
guided field trips:*

Saturday, April 17, 6 a.m.

Wards Bank / Cedar Point

CALL KATHY HAINES AT 372-8942 IF YOU'RE GOING ON THIS TRIP. Spring at Wards Bank brings Painted Buntings, American Oystercatchers, Wilson's Plovers, and Gull-billed, Sandwich, and Least Terns to nest in the dunes, and the migration ought to be sufficiently advanced for us to find some warblers (notably Cape May and Blackpoll) in the beautiful moss-draped live oaks at Cedar Point. This early in the spring, deer flies shouldn't be the problem they often are in May, but bring insect repellent as well as food and drink.

Saturday, April 24, 6 a.m.

Ft. DeSoto

CALL KATHY HAINES AT 372-8942 IF YOU'RE GOING ON THIS TRIP. Ft. DeSoto County Park in St. Petersburg is probably the best spot in Florida for spring migrants, and the third week of April is probably the best time to see them. Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks should be in the mulberry trees, and the warbler count ought to be high. Expect terns and shorebirds in good numbers and variety, and raptors such as Merlins and Peregrine Falcons are more likely than usual. A special treat: one of the state's ace birders, Ron Smith, will lead us around this, his home territory. Ron literally wrote the book on Ft. DeSoto ("Checklist of the Birds of Ft. DeSoto Park and the Pinellas Bayway, Florida"), and is the best possible guide for the spring migration's best possible field trip.

Saturday, May 1, 6:30 a.m.

Cedar Key

Meet in front of the Target Store on Archer Road just east of I-75. By this time, spring migration is in full flood, and even the *sandpipers* are decked out in bright colors (well, relatively speaking...). In addition to arriving warblers, swallows, thrushes, and tanagers, we should see Gray Kingbirds, Magnificent Frigatebirds, and Florida Scrub-Jays. Cedar Key is a good spot by any standard, and a good substitute trip if you can't make Ft. DeSoto.

**For Year-Round
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.

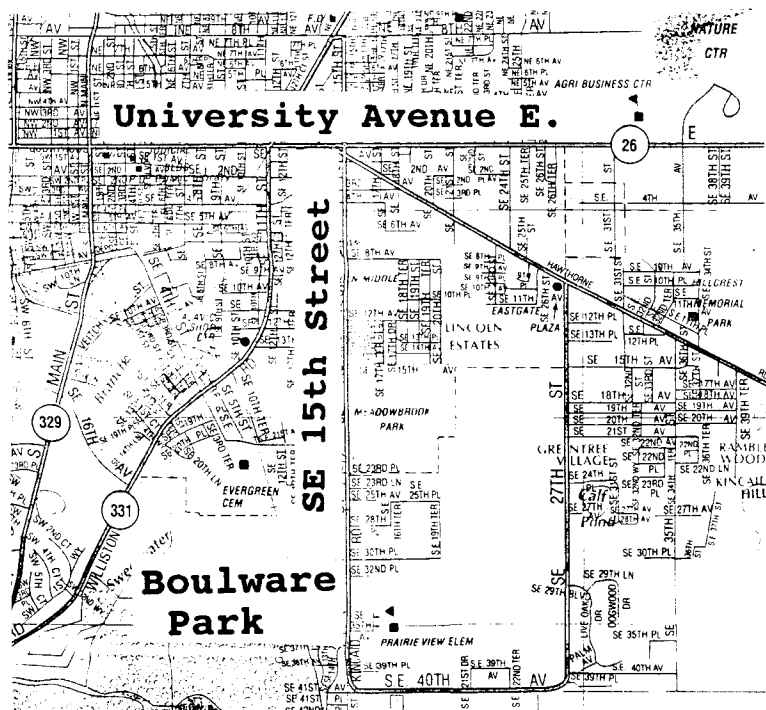
Visit AAS Web Site:

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

Nominating Committee Report

Nominations for Alachua Audubon Society officers for next year are: President, Rex Rowan; Vice-President, Tom Webber; Secretary, David Wahl; Treasurer, John Winn. Five three-year board member terms are expiring. The Nominating Committee presents the following slate to fill those five positions: Howard Adams, Scott Flamand, Kathy Haines, Evelyn Perry, and Leslie Straub. Nominations "from the floor" will also be accepted. The general membership will vote on officers and directors at the annual meeting on April 21.

See map below for Boulware Park:



Coming Saturday, May 8

North American Migration Count

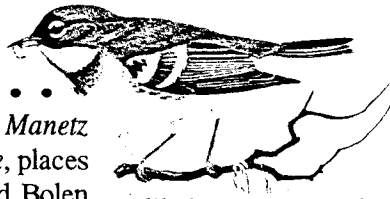
Experienced birders are needed for this county-wide bird count. Call Barbara Muschlitz, 372-4638, for details.

The Crane is published monthly throughout the year except June and July. 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. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed, can be e-mailed or on disk or hard copy and must be received by **April 21** to be included in the May issue. Please limit each article to no more than two pages. Mail or bring your disk or hard copy to Evelyn Perry, The Branch Office, 519 NW 60th St., Suite A, G-ville 32607. Or fax to 331-2585. Or e-mail evperry@aol.com.

The Crane is printed on recycled paper.

Around the County...

by Mike Manetz



By the time you receive this issue of *The Crane*, places like San Felasco Hammock, Lakeshore Drive, and Bolen Bluff will be alive with newly arrived neotropical migrants singing to proclaim dominion over their territories and attract prospective mates. Adding to the voices of our common year-round birds in local woodlands and most neighborhoods will be **Northern Parulas**, **Red-eyed Vireos**, **Great-crested Flycatchers** and **Summer Tanagers**. Two of our breeding birds with very specific habitat requirements are the **Prothonotary** and **Hooded Warblers**. The beautiful Prothonotary Warbler can best be observed along Lakeshore Drive, appearing as a golden orb in the darkness of the cypress swamp. The spectacular Hooded Warbler, also a golden-yellow with a rich black velvet hood, is pretty much restricted to the moist woodlands at San Felasco Hammock. Their ringing songs make them relatively easy to find, and if you are relatively new to birdwatching, the sight of either of these species can make you a firm believer!

There were two significant sightings last month. One was the hummingbird in Dave Beatty's yard. Previously suspected to be a **Black-chinned Hummingbird**, John Hintermister made the first definitive identification March 6; while staring at the bird through his Leica scope, the sun momentarily glinted on its throat feathers long enough for John to proclaim, "Purple!", which is the diagnostic color for the gorget of a Black-chinned. Several other birders, some from as far away as St. Augustine, have since converged to enjoy seeing the bird. So what's the big deal? This is the first Black-chinned Hummingbird ever officially recorded in Alachua County.

The other great report came from Andy Kratter, who was out along Bolen Bluff on March 17 when a **Whooping Crane** flew over. Whooping Cranes have not been reported in the wild in Florida for over fifty years, so the bird was almost certainly an individual from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission release program down in Osceola County. The combined state and federal effort to reintroduce the birds seems to be having some limited success. As that program becomes more successful, Whooping Cranes could become a rare but regular occurrence here, as Whoopers share the same habitat preferences as Sandhill Cranes. Add to those two sightings the Lesser Nighthawk found last month along the Rail Trail and the Black-bellied Whistling Ducks residing on the flooded Prairie basin, and you could say we have had a remarkable winter season. With that said, I'm ready for spring!

Goldfinches remained scarce at my feeders through March, but not so at other locations. Evelyn Perry, for instance, had a buildup of over two hundred during the month. In addition, Linda Fitzgerald reported a **Rose-**

breasted Grosbeak visiting her yard since March 11. That date is much too early for migrant grosbeaks, so this individual was likely a rare, wandering winter visitor.

Chapman's Pond continues to be the place to go for shorebirds. Last month's species list included both species of **Yellowlegs**, **Common Snipe**, **Solitary** and **Pectoral Sandpipers**, and **Dunlin**. The latter three species are quite extraordinary here for the month of March.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through March 16, 1999.

Audubon Seeks Angels

The Alachua Audubon Society's board of directors thinks big. That's a good thing, but AAS can only be as ambitious as its checking account allows. It's feeling pretty ambitious right now, with a big slate of projects that focus on wildlife conservation and environmental education. Since our young people often know only as much about natural history as they see on TV, teachers and (through our evolving Junior Audubon group) students are considered high priorities. And of course Alachua County's own birds and natural areas are important to us all.

The board has a lot of good ideas, but a limited amount of money to work with. So it is sharing some of these ideas and projects with you, in hopes that you will back them financially:

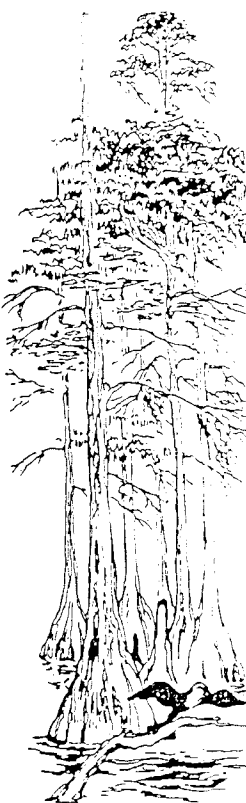
- a sign for Palm Point Park that describes bird migration, lists the usual species frequenting the park during migration, and directs the visitor to the best locations for birding;
- footing the bill for a graduate student's research on the effect of feral cats on native wildlife (about \$2000);
- sending a local teacher to a National Audubon Society camp or workshop (such as the \$695 teacher workshop in Connecticut);
- habitat enhancement for the Colclough Pond Sanctuary;
- Junior Audubon expenses: bus rental, canoe rental, park admission fees, inexpensive binoculars, perhaps even the purchase of a video camera for the production of a video on Alachua County's natural history (good for teaching the ones who make the video, as well as the ones who watch it afterwards);
- birdhouse materials;
- donations to the Zellwood project;
- and the normal expenses: chapter insurance, newsletter printing and mailing, etc.

We hope you'll agree that these are worthy projects, and will make a generous donation to support them. If you do, make your check out to Alachua Audubon Society, and mail it to AAS, P.O. Box 140464, Gainesville, Florida, 32614-0464. Thank you. - Rex Rowan, President AAS

Note from the Editor: The following article is one of a series describing favorite hikes. In the past few issues, John Winn has shared information about trails in or near Gainesville and promises to tell us in May about a trail in Goethe State Forest. But John says his hiking boots are about worn out. Perhaps you have a favorite trail you'd like to share with other Audubon members. Please submit your article via e-mail: evperry@aol.com; on disk or printed, mailed: Evelyn Perry, The Branch Office, 519 NW 60th Street., Suite A, G-ville 32607.

A New Okefenokee Trail

by John Winn



The Suwannee Canal Recreation Area of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is about 80 or 90 miles from Gainesville, depending from where you start. Although there have been none recently, we've had several Alachua Audubon field trips there, so some of you may be familiar with the various short trails we've taken and the boardwalk out to the observation tower. This report is about a new trail.

The new trail doesn't yet have a name, but when it's named, it'll probably include somewhere the words "longleaf pine restoration," as that is the trail's main theme. I wrote about the trail on the LEAFS longleaf pine restoration project in the *March Crane*, so you know this is a subject I'm pretty enthusiastic about.

The trail begins on the right just after you turn off from Route 121 onto the road leading up to the administration/visitor complex at Suwannee Canal. There's no trailhead sign or designated parking (see below). However, there are many very informative interpretive signs all along the length of the trail. They are not those standardized metal signs you find on so many so-called nature trails in state parks, which really don't tell anything new to anyone with a minimum of knowledge about natural history. Instead, although they are just temporary, these are really good signs telling specifically what is being done on this particular project.

The land along the road up to Suwannee Canal has not always been part of the refuge, but now that it is, it is being managed to restore the native groundcover. To do this, the area is being frequently burned—one side of the road one year and the other side the next. When I was there at the end of February, the south side of the road had been burned only a few weeks before. The other side, where the trail starts, had been burned the year before so now was full of lush green growth and lots of busy noisy Carolina Wrens, Common Yellowthroats, and Towhees. Higher up, there were Pine Warblers, Brown-headed Nuthatches, and Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers.

What about Red-cockaded Woodpeckers? Someday this is going to be excellent habitat for them. Unlike the LEAFS project which is starting out with few really mature pines, this area has a good collection of older trees. The slash and loblolly pines are being selectively removed,

and longleafs are either hand-planted or regenerate by seeds from the mature trees. Eventually the stand will be almost all longleafs as the other pine seedlings are killed by the fires—except in the wet areas, and those are a problem on this trail. It's very much a work in progress, so where you have to cross some wet spots, you'll likely get wet feet until some planks are laid down. Also, after a half-mile or so through the pine woods, the trail comes back to the road and there's nothing to tell you that it continues on the other side. Nor is there anything to tell you that this part of the trail will abruptly end where it would cross the ditch (if there were some planks) which is all that remains of the old extension of the Suwannee Canal. For now, you either have to backtrack or get very wet feet to get back to the road and then walk along it for a little while back to the trailhead. The plan is to eventually have the final part of the trail loop back to the start where, presumably, you will have left your car. From there, if you've driven up for the day, you'll probably want to continue up to the entrance and pay station for Suwannee Canal Recreation Area, as it's unlikely that this trail will have taken more than an hour or so. At Suwannee Canal, you can see the nice displays in the visitor center and either walk or drive out to Chesser Island and the boardwalk. The trails leaving from Swamp Island Drive, such as the Canal Digger's Trail or the Peckerwood Trail, are described in brochures you can get at the visitor center and in *The Hiker's Guide to Georgia*; most are short loops and can be taken in assorted combinations.

An alternative to a day trip is to spend the night. There is, of course, no camping allowed on the refuge. However, Okefenokee Pastimes Campground (912-496-4472) is right across the road. In fact, it would be a good place to make your first stop and leave your car while you walk the new trail. The friendly and knowledgeable couple that operate the campground can tell you the current conditions on the new trail and let you know if there are any good bird sightings; this winter there was at least one Vermillion Flycatcher hanging out right at the campground. If you want to spend the night to have two days at the refuge, they have tent sites, RV hookups, and small cabins (which are even air conditioned!)

Directions: From Gainesville, take Route 121 north from the intersection of US 441 near the Highway Patrol Station. Stay on 121 through Lake Butler and Macclenny and on into Georgia. After passing through the little town of St. George, it is a little over 14 miles to the turn-off (on the left) to the refuge; Okefenokee Pastimes is on the right.

The Florida Burrowing Owl Project Needs Your Help

by Pamela J. Bowen

Did you know that the Burrowing Owl was listed as a "species of special concern" in Florida in 1979? Did you know that since then a statewide population survey of the Burrowing Owl has never been done? Did you know that in 1987 Florida was estimated to have between 3,000 and 10,000 pairs of Burrowing Owls?

If there are only 3,000 pairs of Burrowing Owls in Florida, that would be less than the number of breeding endangered Wood Storks (5,523 pairs were surveyed in 1995) and less than the number of threatened Scrub Jays (4,000 pairs were estimated in 1992). If there are 10,000 pairs of Burrowing Owls, that would be close to the number of Brown Pelicans, a species of special concern, with 9,950 pairs breeding in Florida in 1995. Like the Wood Stork and Scrub Jay, work needs to be done to learn more about Florida's current Burrowing Owl population.

Pam Bowen, a University of Central Florida graduate student, is coordinating The Florida Burrowing Owl Project, a statewide population survey of the Burrowing Owl. The survey will be conducted during the 1999 breeding season and will begin in the Keys in April and end in the Panhandle in July. **If you know of a Burrowing Owl site, please contact Pam with information about that site. She is also looking for volunteers who want to help with the survey** — surveying owls in their own county or monitoring a known Burrowing Owl site close to home. If you have information on Burrowing Owl sites or want to take part in the statewide population survey, please contact: Pam Bowen, 3068 Whisper Lake Lane #F, Winter Park, FL 32792; Phone: (407) 677-8595 e-mail: PJBowen@aol.com

Moss Park to Host 4th Annual Wading Bird Festival

The Florida Game & Freshwater Fish Commission and Orange County Parks & Recreation will host the 4th Annual Wading Bird Festival Saturday, May 8 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Moss Park. This free event is to celebrate the nesting wading birds on Bird Island will allow visitors to observe the beauty of Florida's wildlife in a natural environment. The focus of the festival is to learn about Florida's many wading birds and how we can better protect them. As many as nine different species nest on the island in the spring, including the endangered Wood Stork.

The festival will feature activities for all ages, including free pontoon boat tours of Moss Park's wading bird colony, viewing the island with scopes and an ID station, education exhibits, art, children's activities and much more. Guest speakers are: Steve Nesbitt, Game & Fish expert on Sandhill and Whooping Cranes; Julie Brashers, wading

bird nesting disturbances; and Joanie Ellis, Birdwatching Basics. Call 407-273-2327 for more information.

Moss Park is located at 12901 Moss Park Road in Orlando. Moss Park Road is off SR 15 (Narcoossee Road) north of 417 (Greeneway) and south of 528 (Beeline). There are exits for Narcoossee Road off both of these major highways.

Twenty-First Annual

Farm and Forest Festival

Morningside Nature Center

3540 E. University Ave.- Gainesville

Friday, 4/30 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Saturday, 5/1 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Sunday, 5/2 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Adults \$4, Children 12 & under \$2

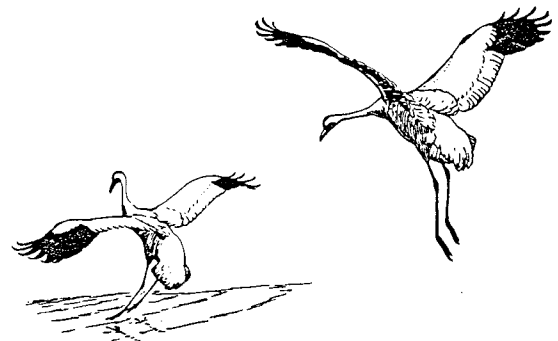
Centered around turn-of-the-century lifestyles, as well as preservation of natural resources.

Historical crafts demonstrations, live animals, nature walks, artisans, old-time children's activities, live entertainment, hay rides, environmental groups, southern food.

All proceeds are used to fund the City of Gainesville's environmental and folk-life programs.

↑ **Volunteers** are needed by Morningside Nature Center for almost all aspects of the Farm and Forest Festival described above. "Volunteers will receive breakfast and lunch along with our undying appreciation."

- Jon Reaves, MNC - 334-2170



Alachua Audubon Society

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Vice-President.....Tom Webber 392-1721

Secretary.....David Wahl 336-6206

Treasurer.....Howard Adams 373-4270

Membership.....Paul Moler 495-9419

Programs.....TBA

Field Trips.....Kathy Haines 372-8942

Education.....Susan Sommerville 378-2808

Conservation Chair.....John Winn 468-1669

Birding Classes.....Ike Fromberg 375-2246

The Crane Editor.....Evelyn Perry 331-2223 or 371-2917

The Crane Circulation.....Margaret Green 378-3314

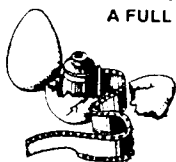
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The Crane

April 1999



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