



The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

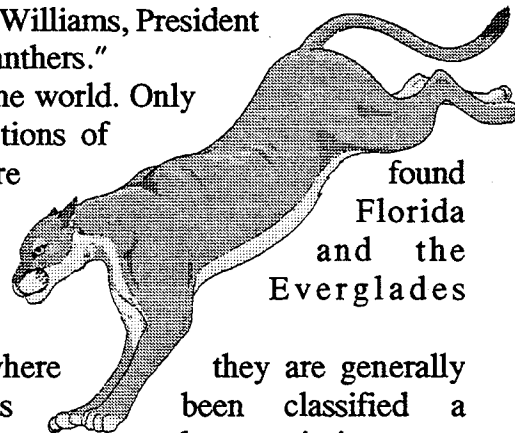
Volume 41 Number 4, November/December 1999

November 13 Program: the Florida Panther

2 p.m. at the Millhopper Branch Library - 3145 NW 43rd Street

This month's Alachua Audubon program meeting features Steve Williams, President of the Florida Panther Society, speaking on-what else?-" Florida Panthers."

The Florida panther is one of the most endangered animals in the world. Only 30 to 50 of them remain in the wild. Although people in all sections of Florida claim to have seen panthers, most of the remaining animals are in remote sections of southwest Florida. These places include the Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Big Cypress National Preserve, Fakahatchec Preserve. Panthers are also sometimes found in National Park.



found
Florida
and the
Everglades

There are large populations of panthers in the western states, where known as cougars, pumas, or mountain lions. The Florida panther has separate subspecies, *Felis concolor coryi*, with several distinctive found in the western cougars: a cowlick in the middle of the back and the tail. Once hunted and subjected to a bounty, the main threat to the Florida panther today is loss of habitat to development. The construction of underpasses on 1-75 (Alligator Alley) has reduced highway mortality, but it is still a concern. Other factors contributing to the panther's decline include the lack of genetic diversity, competition from human hunters for deer (the panther's main diet item), and even the mercury poisoning which is so pronounced in South Florida.

they are generally
been classified a
characteristics not
a crook at the end of

Steve's presentation will include the video "Edge of Extinction" produced by Florida Public TV. He will discuss recent developments in the intensive panther protection programs and the current status of the recovery program, including information on the genetic restoration of the South Florida population and reintroduction of captive-bred panthers in North Florida.

Please join us for this informative presentation. As usual, there will be refreshments and a chance to exchange birding stories with other Audubon members.

Field Trip This Sunday, November 7, 7:30 a.m. to Hague Dairy

Meet at the tag agency, on SR-121 (NW 34th Street) just south of US-441 - near the Highway Patrol station. Michael Meisenburg will be our trip leader. Early November is usually a good time to look for ducks in Alachua County, and we're hoping for a few on the dairy's ponds - Redheads or Ruddy Ducks would be

nice. Many of our winter birds will be arriving, notably American Pipits, Palm Warblers, and a variety of sparrows. Meadowlarks and Bluebirds are usually in good supply, as are hawks. And, depending on the weather, there's always the chance of a Yellow-headed Blackbird among the cowbird flocks.

AAS Calendar

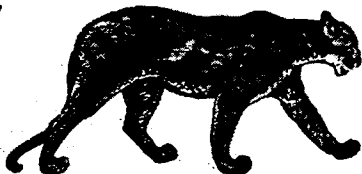
➔ Wednesday, November 10, 6:30 p.m.

Board Meeting

All AAS members and the public are invited to attend monthly board meetings. Location: Conference Room of the Florida Museum of Natural History, UF campus.

➔ Saturday, November 13, 2:00 p.m.

"Florida Panthers"



➔ Sunday, November 21, 6:30 a.m.

Hamilton County phosphate mines

CALL THE SUNDIAL 335-3500 ext 2473 TO CONFIRM THAT THIS TRIP WILL GO AS SCHEDULED. We'll meet at the Tag Agency on SR-121 (NW 34th Street) just south of US-441 — near the Highway Patrol station — and carpool to PCS Phosphate, north of White Springs. After a quick stop at McDonald's, we'll drive up onto the levees surrounding the huge settling ponds. Ducks are the main attraction here — Christmas Counts at this site have recorded 18 species of waterfowl in a day — but we generally see a large number of other things as well, for instance Horned and Eared Grebes, American Avocets, and Stilt Sandpipers. Last year's trip found a Yellow-headed Blackbird and 3 White-winged Scoters, and two winters ago birders found a Say's Phoebe and a drake Cinnamon Teal. Almost anything could turn up here.

➔ Saturday, December 4, 8:00 a.m.

Persimmon Point sparrow walk

THIS WALK IS LIMITED TO 12 SPARROW ENTHUSIASTS, FIRST-COME FIRST-SERVED. TO RESERVE A PLACE CALL REX ROWAN AT 371-9296 (and remember to ask for directions to the meeting site). We have obtained special permission to conduct this walk into a restricted area of Paynes Prairie. Howard Adams will lead us to a field where birders have regularly found the elusive and beautiful Henslow's Sparrow on the last few Christmas Counts - 7 of them last year - as well as Grasshopper, Fox, and LeConte's Sparrows. If little brown streaky birds are your thing, this is your dream trip.

➔ Saturday, December 11, 8:00 a.m.

La Chua Trail

Meet at the Park Service District HQ. From Hawthorne Road (SR-20) go south on SE 15th Street two and a half miles. When the road curves left, you continue straight

ahead, across a three-way intersection, through the wooden gate, and down the dirt road. Tom Webber, an ornithologist at the Florida Museum of Natural History, will lead us down Paynes Prairie's most interesting trail. Expect numerous herons and egrets, hawks, waterbirds, and sparrows. A good day's list should top 50 species, including at least a few of the following: Sandhill Crane, Bald Eagle, American Bittern, King Rail, Marsh and Sedge Wrens, and White-crowned Sparrow.

➔ Sunday, December 19: Christmas Bird Count

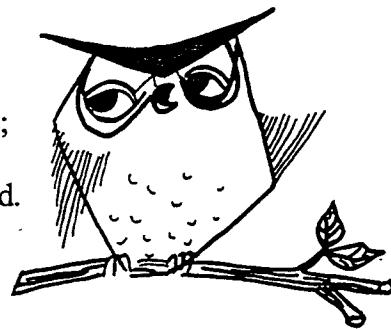
Experienced birders are needed for this full-day count. Call Barbara Muschlitz at 372-4638.

➔ Saturday-Sunday, January 8-9

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Call Rex Rowan at 371-9296 for meeting place and time, as well as information on accommodations if you plan to stay the whole weekend. Start the New Year right with a trip to North Florida's best single birding spot. On Saturday, leader John Hintermister expects to arrange a special guided tour of the waterfowl areas, where it's possible to see 15-18 species of ducks and many other waterbirds and shorebirds. Common Loon, Horned Grebe, and Nelson's and Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows should be found at the lighthouse. Sunday will probably feature birding spots further west, such as St. George Island State Park, where we may be able to find Snowy Plovers. There are fees for the refuge (\$5) and the state park (\$3.25).

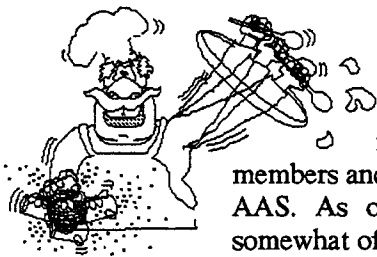
There was an old owl
liv'd in an oak
The more he heard,
the less he spoke;
The less he spoke,
the more he heard.
O' if men were all like
that wise bird!



Punch 1875

The Crane is published 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 January 3 to be included in the January 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, Gainesville 32607. Or fax to 331-2585. Or e-mail evperry@aol.com. *The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.

What's Cooking at AAS?



Your *Crane* editor has had the wild idea that creating an Alachua Audubon Society cookbook might be fun for all us members and double as a fundraiser for AAS. As of now, the project is in somewhat of a planning stage, and we'd like your input:

- 1) Would you contribute recipes? About how many?
- 2) Would you buy cookbooks priced at \$5.50 to \$6.50 per copy? About how many? (They make nice gifts, one size fits all, are easy to wrap, and some people make a practice of collecting them).
- 3) If you would be willing to help, how? (Help in the planning and organizing, help sell them, other ways you can think of).

Please respond to all above questions by one of the following methods:

- ☐ e-mail evperry@aol.com
- ☐ fax 331-2585
- ☐ call 331-2223 (get a live person 8:30-5, M-F; leave message before or after those hours).
- ☐ complete, clip out, and mail form below to Evelyn Perry, 519 NW 60th Street, Suite A, G-ville 32607.

I know the idea is certainly not novel, but it would be a first for AAS. Before we put a great deal of time and thought into it, I'd like to poll as many of you as possible. Please let me hear from you.

Thanks.

Evelyn Perry

1a) ☐ ____ Yes, yes! I'll help make the cookbook a success and will contribute as many as ____ recipes.

OR

1b) ☐ ____ Nope, I won't contribute any recipes.

2a) ☐ ____ Sure, I'll buy one for myself and possibly as many as ____ others to give as gifts or keep as collectors' items!

OR

2b) ☐ ____ Naw, I wouldn't spend my money that way.

3a) ☐ ____ I will help by doing the following:

OR

3b) ☐ ____ Sorry, cannot think of a thing I could do to help. Good luck, anyway!

Name _____

Phone number _____

e-mail address _____

Around the County...

by *Mike Manetz*

Late October and early November are exciting times to be birding in North Florida. Fall migration comes into its final phase with the first really noticeable cold-front, and with it the last wave of migrants, providing our only real chance of seeing such birds as Black-billed Cuckoo, Bay-breasted and Black-throated Green Warblers. This October had a rather bizarre twist when a late tropical storm crossed the state and then moved up the east coast. The storm disrupted the migration patterns of several species, most notably the Blackpoll Warbler. Interestingly, this species migrates from eastern Canada to the West Indies and South America primarily over the open Atlantic, with obviously no chance to feed or rest along the journey. This year's late storm blew thousands of these little birds to shore, some as far inland as Gainesville, where they are normally not seen in fall. Along with the Blackpolls, there were more reports of another coastal migrant, Cape May Warbler, that is usually seen in the fall.

Our first cold snap usually also opens the curtain for incoming sparrows, ducks, and stray western birds that, accidentally or otherwise, wander into the Florida peninsula. For instance, Yellow-headed Blackbirds regularly occur in small numbers at the Hague Dairy starting in the middle of October. This year, three showed up and stayed at least a couple of weeks. Rex Rowan checked on those birds Oct. 22 and found another interesting western stray, a Dickcissel. The real blockbuster stray was the Clay-colored Sparrow discovered Oct. 2 by Peter Polshek and son Lucien on a family outing along the dike at Bolen Bluff. This was the first Clay-colored ever reported here, and fortunately it stuck around at least a couple days so others could see it.

The onset of winter also offers the hope that some species that normally winter north of here will overshoot their destination and wind up in our county. Lloyd Davis found a good one Oct. 24 at San Felasco Hammock. While picking through a feeding flock of Titmice and Chickadees, he found at least one, maybe two, Brown Creeper(s). Creepers normally winter farther north, and you could bird intensely here for years and never see one. Other prize winter birds in this category include Fox Sparrow, Purple Finch, and Pine Siskin.

Well, I've left the most interesting story for last. Do you remember Zellwood? The flooded farm fields in central Florida that have, in the past, attracted shorebirds, ducks, and birders in astronomical numbers, and more rarities per square foot than any place south of Attu? If you have been following the story, you know that, sadly, toxins in the soil there resulted in the death of numerous birds, mostly White Pelicans, and so the fields will remain dry until further notice. Of the many questions that remain, one is: where will all those wintering birds go, if not to Zellwood? It may be too early to tell, but a partial answer seems to be Paynes Prairie. Andy Kratter checked LaChua trail at the north rim on Oct. 24 and was astonished to find what he described as "Zellwood-like conditions"! Massed on the basin he

reported birds almost never reported here, and numbers of individuals that seem extraordinary - 65 White Pelicans, 1500 Blue-winged Teal, plus 9 other duck species, locally rare shorebirds such as Dunlin and Short-billed Dowitcher, plus large numbers of the usual Yellowlegs, Snipe, and waders. If the numbers continue to build, keep an eye out for Snow and Greater White-fronted Geese and Cinnamon Teal. These species showed up at Zellwood last winter and remained for an extended period. The only problem seems to be viewing the birds, as most of this activity seems to be out on Alachua Lake and a good distance out from the observation tower. If you go, you should take a spotting scope.

Thanks to those who share their sightings through October 26, 1999.

New AAS members as of October 24

Yvette Anderson; Ronald Angell; Tatiana Barr; Metta Baxter; R.M. Christenson; Kathleen Colverson; Marilyn Cornwell; Adele Gauvin; Debora Greger; Karen Hamilton; Lisa Huey; Peter Johnson; Allen Kloke; Sarah Little; S. Meyer; Edith Orozco; Frances Patton; L.H. Purdy; Michelle Rau; Cherry Sassaman; Debra Segal; Aileen Singletary; Connie Spitznagel; Patricia Starnes; Rua Stob; George Turner; Noah Valenstein; Anna Velez; Tim Ward; Aase Zori.

Water Low, Birders High

by Rex Rowan

"Incredible. The Serengeti of birds."

Tom Webber was describing his visit to Paynes Prairie during the last week of October. His description, though tongue-in-cheek, gives some sense of the amazement that comes over an observer taking in the sheer mass of bird life there.

Heavy rains flooded the Prairie during the winter of 1997-98—many of you remember that the outside lanes of US-441 were underwater—and after January 1998, the La Chua and Bolen Bluff Trails were impassible. The water receded very slowly over the next year and a half, and it wasn't until this summer that an adventurous walker could make it even halfway out either trail. But by September 3, things had dried out enough to allow Howard Adams to clear the La Chua Trail—after three days' work with tree-cutter, batwing mower, and garden mower—all the way to the observation platform overlooking Alachua Lake. By the end of the month, mud flats had begun to attract ibises and shorebirds.

Howard Adams noted on the 10th of September the first remarkably large congregations of waders—154 Wood Storks and 219 Great Egrets. But since it was fall migration, most of us were spending our birding time at Palm Point, the Bolen Bluff uplands, and San Felasco—the good warbler spots. It wasn't till October 23 that Andy Kratter took a walk out La Chua and discovered that the falling water had created "near Zellwood-like conditions.

Foremost were 65 American White Pelicans, along with the most ducks, Great Blue Herons, and Wood Storks I have seen in the county." This was only the eleventh incidence of American White Pelican in Alachua County, and the largest flock yet recorded here.

Andy went back on the 26th, and again on the 28th, and found even more birds. Some of the numbers are worth recording: Anhinga 250, Great Blue Heron 300, Great Egret 100, Snowy Egret 125, Little Blue Heron 150, White Ibis 400, Wood Stork 550, Blue-winged Teal 1500, Green-winged Teal 200, American Coot 700, Boat-tailed Grackle 1000. He saw 10 species of ducks and 8 species of shorebirds (including the fourth Black-bellied Plover ever recorded in the county, as well as locally-rare Dunlin and Short-billed Dowitcher). He counted 20 Ospreys hunting live fish, and 100 Turkey Vultures and 25 Bald Eagles sitting on the mud eating dead ones. He saw 73 species of birds on one walk!

I've been out there twice myself since Andy's first report (only a week ago as I write this), and Tom Webber's comment is apt. As I panned across the far shore of Alachua Lake with my spotting scope, Wood Storks stood shoulder-to-shoulder for a hundred yards, with dozens and dozens of Great Blue Herons scattered among them. The ducks, which from a distance looked like brown cobbles, were so thick in places that stretches of marsh vegetation appeared to be dying and turning brown. Alligators basked everywhere—some on the trail itself, lunging panic-stricken for the water at my approach. Half of Alachua Lake appeared to be mud flats.

If the water continues to drop, it may get even better. But eventually the bonanza of stranded fish will give out and the birds will drift away. So now's the time to take that walk!

Happy Thanksgiving...Merry Christmas...Happy New Year



This year we are combining the November and December issues of *The Crane* into one issue. This is being done to give editor Perry a one-issue break and also to save AAS funds (printing costs and postage—editor doesn't get paid nor do the ladies who do the mailing nor do any of you who are kind enough to contribute articles!)

National Audubon mandates that each chapter print at least issues per year. We've been topping that by doing 10 per year for ages. Costs of duplicating and mailing go up, and other media methods are so available that we begin to feel a little old-fashioned with these monthly issues.

You have available to you the AAS Web site and the SunDial to keep up with events. Please use those during our break, go on the field trips listed on Page 2, write articles for *The Crane*, and have a nice Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve celebration!

Evelyn Perry



Alachua Audubon Society Officers and Chairpersons of Standing Committees, 1999-2000

President.....Rex Rowan 371-9296
 Vice-President.....Tom Webber 392-1721
 Secretary.....David Wahl 336-6206
 Treasurer.....John Winn 468-1669
 Membership.....Paul Moler 495-9419
 Programs.....John Winn 468-1669

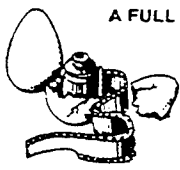
Field Trips.....TBA
 Education.....Susan Sommerville 378-2808
 Conservation Chair.....Michael Meisenburg
 Birding Classes.....Kathy Haines 372-8942
 Festival Coordr.....Scott Flamand 331-0035
 Publicity.....Karl Miller 377-5940

The Crane Editor...Evelyn Perry 331-2223
Crane Circulation...Margaret Green 378-3314
 Assisting in *The Crane* circulation duties:
 John & Jean Dorney, Alice Tyler,
 Pat Burns, Nancy Oakes.

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>

S P O N S O R S

LIGHTWORK LABS
 A FULL SERVICE PHOTOGRAPHIC LAB



376-9745
 509 N.W. 10th Avenue
 Corner of NW 6th Street & NW 10th Avenue

WHEN QUALITY IS IMPORTANT

CHICAGO STYLE
Leonardo's
 PIZZA
 IN A PAN

\$1.00 OFF ANY PIZZA
 (Worth \$2.00 Off on Sat. & Sun.)

4131 N.W. 16th Blvd. (Millhopper Square) 376-2001

We hope to become a Saturday & Sunday morning institution.

A good book, a magazine, the *New York Times*, the *Gainesville Sun*, and a good bagel!

GOERINGS BOOK STORE
 at Bageland

1717 NW 1st Avenue 337-3703
 OPEN SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS FROM 9:00 TO 1:00

IN THE LAND OF WATERFALLS! EARLY RESERVATION DISCOUNT!

Secluded North Carolina Blue Ridge Mt. vacation house, 50 acres, waterfalls

RESERVE EARLY FOR NEXT SPRING, SUMMER OR FALL
 Heavily wooded mountaintop, many kinds of wildflowers (dogwood blossoms start the spring in April), birds (some counts over 60), stream, waterfalls, close to canoeing, 40 min. SW of Asheville, 30 min. to Scenic Parkway, Pisgah National Forest, horseback riding, fishing, hiking (including wilderness), 1,500 sq. ft. home, modern kitchen, cathedral ceiling, wood stove. No smoking, no pets. Limit 6 people. Photos available. April, May, June \$350 weekly. July-November \$390 weekly.

(407) 951-1741
 e-mail: mondocmd@aol.com

you can hear our waterfalls through the woods from the front porch

Visit
FREE!! LEAFS

A longleaf pine restoration project open to the public.
 2 miles south of Waldo on CR 1471.
 Call 468-1669 for detailed directions.

Longleaf Ecology and Forestry Society



FLORA & FAUNA BOOKS

Saturdays 10 AM - 1 PM Since 1987 NATURE WORLD
 4460 SW 35th Terrace, #305, Gainesville, FL 32608 (352) 335-5011

Yes, right in Gainesville is one of the largest selections of natural history books in America! 100s of books on birds, mammals, insects, plants, gardening, travel - 100 categories in total - plus maps, space posters, astronomy books; history books now, too! Worldwide selection! Visit us Saturdays or send order message!

Always 10% off! On-line catalog: www.flbooks.com
 (take 34th St. south, right on 42nd Ave., to 35th Terr., left to circle & 305)

\$1 donated to AAS for each box sold!

Karen and Jim's
Bird Nesting Boxes

*Titmouse *Bluebird
 *Flycatcher *Flicker/Woodpecker

*Screech Owl/Kestrel *Special orders welcome

Karen Ausley and Jim Ahlers
 124 Vause Lake Road, Hawthorne, FL 32640
 (352) 372-2571 days (352) 546-3560 nights

Give something back - create a little habitat!



13% OFF

Our Regularly Low Prices

Offer good with coupon only. Offer not valid with any other coupons, offers or specials. Not applicable toward existing charge account balances.



RENAISSANCE PRINTING

CAMPUS WEST MILLHOPPER
 1702 W. University Ave. 3741 W. University Ave. 4130 N.W. 16th Blvd.
 Gainesville, FL 32603 Gainesville, FL 32607 Gainesville, FL 32605
 (352) 372-4669 (352) 377-5441 (352) 372-2233
 FAX 375-4071 FAX 371-9748 FAX 372-3435



Alachua Audubon Society
P. O. Box 140464
Gainesville, FL 32614-0464

Nonprofit Organization
U. S. Postage Paid
Gainesville, FL 32601
Permit No. 18

The Crane

November/December 1999



Join Audubon

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

Paul Moler, 7818 Highway 346, Archer, Florida 32618

Check the level of membership desired and enclose your check payable to:

National Audubon Society

If you have any questions, call Paul at 495-9419.

NEW MEMBERS ONLY

NOT FOR RENEWALS

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please print.

Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Please check level of membership.

_____ Basic \$35 _____ Senior \$15 _____ Student \$15

_____ **INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP \$20**

_____ **TWO YEARS \$30**