



# The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

Volume 42 Number 8 ❖ May 2001

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## Winners Selected at Picnic

Linda Donaldson and Barbara Mollison are the winners of the two copies of Kenn Kaufman's *Birds of North America*. Entries for the special drawing were from new members who joined using form in the special issue of *The Crane* given to people visiting the AAS booth at the Kanapaha Spring Garden Festival last month. Evelyn Perry was asked to do the drawing. Neither of the winners were present; the guide books will be mailed to them. Thanks to all new members who recently joined - and to all of you who, year after year, renew your memberships in AAS!

**Flamand  
elected  
President**

In spite of the rainy weather, the turn-out for the picnic was good, and the food was maybe the best ever. During the brief business meeting, the nominating slate was presented. There being no nominations from the floor, a motion was made and seconded to accept the slate of officers (for one-year terms) and board members (for three-year terms). Scott Flamand was elected AAS President, the Vice-President position remains TBA, David Wahl continues as Secretary, and Alice Tyler is the new Treasurer. Board members elected are Karen Johnson, Marcy Jones, Maralee Romfh, Susan Sommerville, and Alice Tyler.

Wednesday, May 11

6:30 p.m.

Board Meeting

Meeting place is Room 2-001 at Buchholz High School. Board meetings are open to all Audubon members and the public.

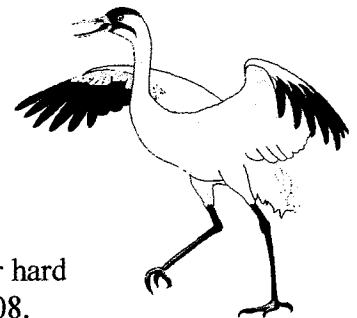
This is the first Board Meeting of the new club year and the last one before the summer break.

Please plan to attend.

*The Crane* traditionally takes the summer months off. The next issue will be the August/September issue. Please send your articles/comments/ideas to me any time over the summer.

- Evelyn Perry, Editor

Via e-mail: [evperry@aol.com](mailto:evperry@aol.com). Via mail: disk or hard copy to 9419 SW 67th Drive, Gainesville 32608. Telephone 371-2917.



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## Around the County. . .

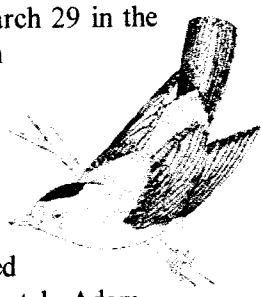
by Mike Manetz

Alachua County can't quite compete with coastal locations such as Fort DeSoto and Cedar Key when it comes to spring birding. As cross-gulf migrants reach Florida's shores, they often ditch into the first trees they can find to feed for a day; then they're off again, with their next stop possibly the Catskills or even Michigan's upper peninsula. You can see scattered migrants here in spring, especially after a cold front passes through, but the generous amount of good habitat in the county tends to disperse larger concentrations of these birds. Still, local spring birding can be rewarding, and even offers some surprises for those who give it the effort.




I concentrated my effort in early April at Lake Alice. I never saw large numbers of migrants there, but regularly saw the likes of Northern Waterthrush, Redstart, Prairie, and Black-and-White Warblers and, by the last week of April, Cape May and Blackpoll Warblers as well. In addition, I was treated one evening to the sight of a Peregrine Falcon feasting on its prey high up a pine tree in University Gardens. Another spot I checked several times was the south loop of San Felasco Hammock and was rewarded there April 12 with a Nashville Warbler, only my second ever in the county.

There were some good warbler days just north of the county line at O'leno State Park. Pat Burns found a locally rare Swainson's Warbler March 29 in the Dogwood Campground area, and John Hintermister, Adam Kent and I had a fourteen-species day April 15 at the River Rise section of the park. This list included a very late Wilson's Warbler and a Kentucky Warbler that I hurriedly passed off as a Common Yellowthroat. Fortunately Adam stuck with the bird longer and was rewarded with this rare spring *oporonis* treat.



The early shorebird migration seemed promising by the end of the month. On April 26 I did a quick check of Newnans Lake shore around Palm Point and found four species, including Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, two Spotted Sandpipers, and four Black-necked Stilts. The same day Mary Landsman found an even better assortment at Chapman's Pond and adjacent ponds at Veterans Park that included both species of Yellowlegs, Dunlin, Least, Spotted, and Solitary Sandpipers. (Mary also reported a pair of Royal Terns over Biven's Arm lake the

day before). As the drought lingers, remember how attractive Newnans lakeshore was for an astonishing array of shorebirds last year. The north end of the lake, accessed through Gum Root Swamp, and the area south of the Windsor boat ramp may well prove to be migrant magnets again. Also recall that several species of non-breeding salt-water species favored the lake last summer. These included Roseate Spoonbills, American Avocet, White Pelican, Royal and Caspian Terns, Laughing Gull, and, for about a week, two Great White Herons.



In the backyard department, Rex Rowan found a female Painted Bunting in his yard near the end of March. The bird lingered there at his feeder for several days. Marcy Jones had a male Painted Bunting visiting her yard April 8. We also had another sighting of White-winged Dove in the county. Lloyd Davis found one April 2 just north of Newberry. While this was the sixth sighting of that species in our area, all of those have been within the last few years. Recall how quickly Eurasian Collared-Doves colonized the county during the 1990's.

Thanks to those who shared their sighting through April 27, 2001.

*"Every human being looks to the birds. They suit the fancy of us all. What they feel they can voice, as we try to; they court and nest, they battle with the elements, they are torn by two opposing impulses, a love of home and a passion for far places. Only with birds do we share so much emotion."*

- Donald Culross Peattie (1898-1964)  
American Naturalist

*The Crane* is published monthly throughout the year except during the summer months. 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 should be mailed to Membership Chairman; see back page for name and address. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed. Please limit each article to no more than two pages.

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

# The Advantages of a Slow Start

by Rex Rowan



For someone at my time of life, the great danger isn't heart disease or high blood pressure, the great danger is: turning into a bore. *Music? You call that music? Why, when I was comin' up ... etc.*

Sadly, I begin this piece by doing just that.

I started birding in 1974 with Tasco 8x30 binoculars so far out of alignment that I had to shut one eye to use them. I struggled along cyclops-like for four months,

and then one afternoon my mother came home from a shopping expedition and handed me a brand new pair of Yashica 7x50s she'd bought for \$30. I dashed into the back yard and trained my new glasses on trees, the fence, the house, the dog, anything. It was all so bright! It was all so clear! And what a fine sensation to keep both eyes open! I carried them everywhere. I trudged to university classes with my three-ring binder, a stack of textbooks, and my binoculars, all in one tottering pile.

I did not know a single birder. I had to puzzle things out on my own, and often didn't do a very good job, confusing Northern Parula with Connecticut Warbler, and Black Tern with Wilson's Storm-Petrel. I didn't even know a single birding *place*; I just wandered around in whatever woods I could find. I kept a life list, but I wasn't competitive – there was no one to be competitive *with* – so at the end of the first year, when I'd amassed 123 species, a number I've since exceeded in a single *day*, there was no one to inform me that 123 was actually a pretty small number.

I finally found the Audubon Society in 1986. I met other birders who told me about the best birding spots and shared a wealth of information about equipment, books, and natural history. After that, I was just a snowball rolling downhill.

Beginners do it differently now. I got a friend interested in birding about ten years ago. He went right out and bought himself a pair of Bausch and Lomb Elite binoculars for \$700, then spent an equal sum for a Kowa spotting scope. This was *before* he could recognize a Chipping Sparrow.

Another beginner called to ask if I knew anyone he could go birding with. Well, I said, how about me? Mike

Manetz and I met him at the Bolen Bluff Trail the next morning, and he had such a good time that he went right home and ordered a Kowa spotting scope, which he proudly displayed to us the following Saturday. This was hard to swallow: I had only a borrowed scope, old and battered, while Mike didn't have one at all. It was galling to think this *beginner* had bought a dream scope on a whim! Well, that particular day turned out to be ferociously cold and windy. Our fingers, ears, and noses were numb. But Mike and I were in thrall to the birding bug. We kept this guy out all morning long. The next time I called him, he said he was busy. We never laid eyes on him again.

Common to both stories is an attempt to rush things: the beginner is not permitted to *mature* into an expert, he is *transformed instantly* into one, or at least the image of one. He is outfitted like an expert, with pricey equipment, and he's expected to share an expert's preoccupation with proficiency and achievement.

The American Birding Association frets about the dearth of new birders, and wonders nervously how to recruit more. I wonder if this emphasis on expertise is precisely what keeps potential initiates away. The first thing any bird enthusiast notices is the beauty of birds. When he tries to find someone who shares his fascination, he ends up in a world of expensive equipment, complicated identification articles, and touchy egos. I have no doubt that this tendency to treat birding as a serious business, all tangled up with status and competition, discourages many beginners. Once inside the birding community, they find that the very thing that attracted them to birds in the first place matters little to their new companions. Values are topsy-turvy: a Snowy Egret isn't worth a second look, while a modest little Clay-colored Sparrow merits a bottle of champagne.

Imagine being hurried through your childhood and youth so you could get as quickly as possible to your thirties. It's the same thing. There will come a time when visiting Texas is the right thing to do. But don't rush it. When you're still learning to tell one duck from another, when the sight of a Black-and-white Warbler is a *thrill*, when you're still preening yourself on having figured out that the brown streaky bird and the red-headed bird are both House Finches, you should not be booking a birding tour to Costa Rica. Yet that's just what many beginners are urged to do. They should refuse. They should boldly declare, "I will see no bird before its time."

(continued on next page)

Recently a woman asked me to take her 11-year-old son birding. She'd driven him over to Paynes Prairie a few times, but didn't really know what else to do with him. He was really enthusiastic, she told me – "He's memorized his Peterson guide." When I rang the doorbell he came out with a big grin on his face and a little plastic pair of Tasco 8x20s around his neck. We visited Chapmans Pond, Lake Alice, and Palm Point, and he must have said, "Cool!" about a thousand times. Eastern Bluebirds, American Coots, an Indigo Bunting – for him, this was The Big Time. And when he saw the flock of sixty American White Pelicans in the cove at Palm Point, he was just completely beside himself. He did not want to go home.

What's to be gained, I wonder, by leapfrogging over that kind of simple pleasure? What could the American Birding Association provide that would make him happier with those pelicans? Admittedly he could stand a nicer pair of binoculars, but maybe it would be better if he struggled long with the Tascos for a while longer. Maybe I shouldn't suggest any books or tapes or web sites. Maybe I should just keep my mouth shut and limit my involvement to driving him around and pointing at birds. Maybe I should let him be a birdwatcher for a while, instead of a birder.

Ironically, the men and women who created today's aggressive culture of birding were once very much like him. They used cheap binoculars slung around their necks with twine. Their copies of Peterson were worn out from frequent consultation in the field, not to mention all that browsing and daydreaming back home. And that was all they needed. There was a perfect simplicity to it. One birder, one book, one pair of binoculars. You can still do it that way, but it's not easy. There's a strong pressure to conform within the birding community. There are certain hoops you're required to jump through, certain priorities you're expected to share. Since birding is very much a social activity, most beginners are quick to get with the program. But I believe they lose something by doing so. It would be healthier, I think, if novices were urged to keep it simple and allow their interest to develop at its own pace. After all, birding is not a business or a contest, it's a pleasure, and it should be allowed to stay one. So don't rush yourself. Stop and smell the warblers.



The annual North American Migration Count will be Saturday, May 12. Experienced AAS birders will be participating. For information, call Barbara Muschlitz at 372-4638. Results of the count will be in the next issue of *The Crane*.

## New AAS Members

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Mollie Adams         | Nancy Asherl         |
| Bill Bishop          | Kevin Claney         |
| Lori Clayton         | Angie Clifford       |
| Frontier Contracting | Karen Cramer         |
| Nancy Deren          | George Dillard       |
| Linda Donaldson      | N.O. Folland         |
| Justine Fry          | Roy Kemper           |
| Margaret Korb        | Bradley Kyes         |
| Terry Medrano        | Barbara Mollison     |
| Donna Nelson         | Dan/Molly Pearson    |
| Joseph Phillips      | Virginia Pitcher     |
| Richard Pohlman      | Carolyn Retey        |
| Aisha Rickli-Rahman  | Marcia/Don Scumacher |
| Jodi Slapcinsky      | Jeff Taylor          |



## What's in the Name?

by Karen Brown

Having recently seen my first pair of Prothonotary Warblers at Palm Point Park on Newnan's Lake, I wondered about the derivation of both their common and scientific name, *Protonotaria citrea*. I knew that *citrea* referred to the deep yellow color of these beautiful birds, but no one in our group knew what Prothonotary referred to. Always intrigued by words, I decided to find out. My dictionary provided one definition of prothonotary (proto=first; notary=secretary or scribe or clerk) as "one of the seven members of the College of Protonotaries Apostolic of the curia of the Roman Catholic Church whose chief duties are to keep the records of consistories and canonizations and to sign papal bulls." According to Eliot Porter's lovely book, "Vanishing Songbirds: the Sixth Order: Wood Warblers and Other Passerine Birds" (Bulfinch Press, 1996), "Its unusual name comes from a group of official scribes in the Roman Catholic Church, men who wore bright golden-yellow cloth, suggesting this bird's rich color." An impressive name quite fitting of these vivid warblers.

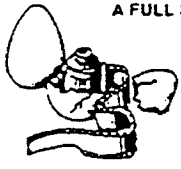
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| President Ex Officio.....Rex Rowan 371-9296 | Field Trips.....Karen Johnson 376-9090       | <i>The Crane</i> Editor.....Evelyn Perry 371-2917    |
| Vice-President.....TBA                      | Education.....Susan Sommerville 378-2808     | <i>Crane</i> Circulation.....Margaret Green 378-3314 |
| Secretary.....David Wahl 336-6206           | Conservation.....Michael Meisenburg 495-1791 | Assisting in <i>The Crane</i> circulation duties:    |
| Treasurer.....Alice Tyler 528-3968          | Birding Classes.....Kathy Haines 372-8942    | Alice Tyler, Pat Burns, Nancy Oaks.                  |
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# The Crane

May 2001



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