



# The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

Volume 42 Number 2 ❖ October 2000

## ***Grasshopper Sparrows in Florida***

***Saturday, October 21 at 2 p.m.***

***Tower Road Branch Library - 3020 SW 75th Street***

Birders keeping an annual list of Alachua County birds often have a notable gap in the sparrows column, right between two of our more common winter visitors, Savannah Sparrow and Song Sparrow. The gap is in the spot usually reserved for Grasshopper Sparrow, a rare—or at best uncommon—bird in our area. Lucky birders occasionally find a few on Paynes Prairie, but they're one of those birds which are never a Christmas Count certainty.

If you've never seen a Grasshopper Sparrow, don't give up hope, because you'll be able to see plenty of them, or at least their pictures, at the October program meeting. Mike Delaney, a biologist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will be speaking to us on "Grasshopper Sparrows in Florida."

Although the northern Grasshopper Sparrows wintering in our area are few and far between, there is a small Florida breeding population. The Florida non-migratory subspecies may never have been numerous, but nobody knows for sure as historical records are sketchy. It is now restricted to prairie and pasture areas in central Florida, mainly just north and west of Lake Okeechobee. Migrant

Grasshopper Sparrows are still considered common in the prairie states, but the Florida subspecies is on the endangered species list. Loss of habitat, of course, is the chief reason for the bird's decline, but degradation of the remaining habitat and weather-related problems are also factors.

Mike has been studying the Florida Grasshopper Sparrows throughout their central Florida range for eighteen years. He'll share his findings with us and bring us up-to-date on the prospects for this little-known little bird.



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

## Join Us on These AAS Field Trips

*For all trips it is a good idea to bring insect repellent and something to drink.*

**Sunday, October 1, 7:30 a.m.**

### **Palm Point and Lakeshore Drive**

The mix of migrants will have changed a bit since our first outing on September 9. We'll have a diminished chance of seeing some species, like Yellow and Cerulean Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrushes, and an increased chance of seeing others, such as Scarlet Tanager, Tennessee, Magnolia, and Black-throated Green Warblers, Indigo (and, rarely, Painted) Buntings, and all the thrushes. This is the peak of fall migration, and if there's pleasant fall weather it ought to be an outstanding morning. Meet trip leader Mike Manetz at Powers Park (directions above). Bring something to drink and some insect repellent. If it's raining, bring a poncho and come anyways; rainy weather often forces the migrants down in droves.

**Saturday, October 7, 6:00 a.m.**

### **Guana River State Park**

Meet trip leader John Hintermister at 6 a.m. at Power Park, on SR-20 (Hawthorne Road) about four and a half miles east of Waldo Road (at the South end of Newnan's Lake). Our first stop will be the Volano Beach boat ramp where we will look for shore birds and waders, and then we will go on to the hawk platform at Guana River State Park. We'll spend some time here with the peregrine falcon counters who maintain a vigil during a couple of weeks each fall and with any luck see some falcons ourselves as they head down the beach on their migration route. We'll then go into Guana River State Park and look for thrushes, tanagers, migrating warblers, and the like. The officially led part of this trip will end around noon, in time to go to lunch at one of the local beach communities. If it is more convenient for you to meet at the Volano Beach boat ramp at 8 a.m., it is located on A1A before you cross the bridge into Volano Beach on the right hand side of the road. Let John know you'll be meeting us there (462-1109).

**Sunday, October 8, 7:00 a.m.**

### **Ichetuknee Springs State Park**

Craig Parenteau will lead this trip to the Ichetuknee as we continue to look for migrants in this beautiful park. We'll search the headspring, the spring run, and the sandhill area so we get a variety of habitats. Meet in the Talbot's parking lot on the south side of West Newberry Road (SR-26) on top of the hill just east of I-75 at 7:00 a.m. It would probably be a good idea to bring a lunch or a snack as this trip, including travel time, could extend into the lunch hour.

**Saturday, October 14, 8:00 a.m.**

### **Bolen Bluff Trail**

Meet Andy Kratter at the trailhead for Bolen Bluff, on US-441, 4.3 miles south of SR-331 (Williston Rd.). We'll walk the trail on this half-day trip looking for migrants and wrens. The mosquitoes are often particularly fierce on this trail, so come prepared.

**Saturday, October 28, 7:30 a.m.**

### **Hague Dairy**

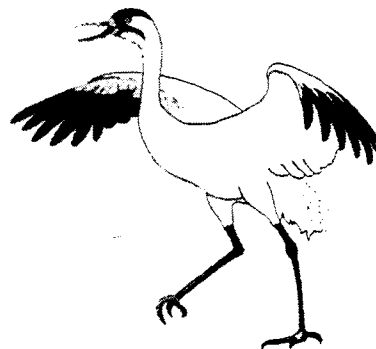
We'll search the dairy area for pipits, a variety of sparrows, and blackbirds, including the Yellow-Headed Blackbird that is usually spotted out here a time or two during the fall or winter. We also often are treated to some interesting looks at raptor behavior as well. Join leader Mike Meisenburg for this half-day trip by meeting at the tag agency on NW 34<sup>th</sup> St. just south of US-441.

**Saturday, November 4**

### **Cedar Key**

This trip has been canceled for this date and will be rescheduled for later in November.

**Deadline for  
articles for the  
November /  
December issue of  
*The Crane* is  
October 27.**



**Wednesday, October 11 6:30 p.m.**

### **Board Meeting**

The next board meeting will be at Buchholz High School. Enter at the front door and proceed to designated meeting room. Board meetings are open to all Audubon members and the public.

*The Crane* is published monthly throughout the year except 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. E-mail to [evperry@aol.com](mailto:evperry@aol.com). Or mail your disk or hard copy to Evelyn Perry, 9419 SW 67th Drive, Gainesville 32608. Telephone 371-2917.

*The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.

# Around the County...

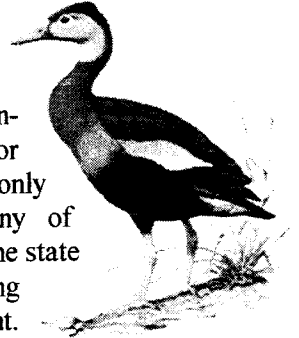
by Mike Manetz

As the first week of September concluded, many birders were asking "where are all the warblers?" Most species that normally occur here by early September had at least made an appearance, but individual migrants were indeed few and far between. On August 26 I saw my first Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers, and the following weekend I ticked-off Chestnut-sided Warbler as well. Kentucky Warblers were still findable at San Felasco and Bolen Bluff. But after several tough mornings in the woods, I still couldn't put together a list of more than ten species on any given outing. Palm Point seemed especially shy of the most common migrant species. For instance, in three visits I found only a few American Redstarts and not a single Black-and-white Warbler. Most every one I talked to had pretty much the same experience at both Newnans and Bolen Bluff. One location that defied this trend was O'Leno State Park. Pat Burns, who checks the park regularly, had by mid-September racked up Kentucky, Blue-winged, Blackburnian, Cerulean, and Canada Warblers in the vicinity of the Dogwood Campground. Pat says the trail along the river has been productive as well. As October progresses the habitat at O'Leno should be attractive to late fall migrants such as Swainson's, Gray-cheeked, and Wood Thrushes, Scarlet Tanagers, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and so should be worth a trip. Situated just above the Columbia County line, it is close enough to be considered a "local" site and can be reached by driving north on U.S. 441 to High Springs and following the signs to the park.

The shorebird concentration at the north end of Newnans remained outstanding through the first week of September. An Alachua Audubon field trip on August 19 turned up a great variety of birds including such local rarities as American Avocet, Brown Pelican, and Wilson's Phalarope, as well as large numbers of peeps, Pectoral and Stilt Sandpipers, Dowitchers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Black-necked Stilts, plus the seemingly-resident Roseate Spoonbills. I made a trip there Sept. 3 and found a similar mix of shorebirds spiced up by an invasion of normally coastal birds, including 2 Willet, 5 Ruddy Turnstones, 2 Sanderlings, and a first county record Red Knot, for a total of 16 shorebird species. Hopefully, at least some of this shorebird feast will still be on site for the Fall Migration Count.

We are happy to report one confirmed and one tentative new addition to our local list of breeding birds. The local status of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks has long been a source of speculation. Since making their first appearance here in spring of 1997, these handsome birds continued to be seen sporadically, but often enough to suggest that a flock had taken up local residence. This summer a rash of sightings of paired birds seemed to indicate that nesting was taking place. An especially interesting report came from Chapman's

Pond where John Hintermister reported seeing three Black-bellieds, and that one individual was being driven off by the other two. Such a display of territorial defense seemed to be another clue that something maternal was about to occur. Finally, while visiting Chapman's on August 26, Bryant Roberts and the Alachua Audubon Birdwatching Class found two adults attending four chicks, confirming the first breeding record for that species in the county. The only other established breeding colony of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks in the state is in the Sarasota area, so a breeding record this far north is significant. Other places where Black-bellieds have been seen this fall include the north end of Newnans Lake, Home Depot Pond, and the U. F. Equestrian Unit on Rocky Point Road.



Another tropical species, the Short-tailed Hawk, may also provide a first-ever breeding record in Alachua County. Ken Meyer, a researcher who radio-tags and monitors the movements of several raptor species, was flying into Gainesville August 11 when he picked up the signal of one of his tagged birds coming from somewhere north of Newnans Lake. On September 1, he searched for and located the bird, a dark-phase Short-tailed Hawk, along 156th Avenue about a mile east of SR 121. According to Ken, the bird was probably there all summer, which indicates at least an attempt at nesting. Perhaps by the time this issue of *The Crane* goes to print someone will have located a juvenile bird. If the species is expanding its breeding range northward as it seems, that might help explain the sporadic local sightings of Short-tails in late fall the last couple of years.

We also had some early winter visitors arrive in August. Dave Beatty, whose yard usually plays host to half the Baltimore Orioles in Florida, reported four of them at his feeders on August 31. Judy Bryan had a *selasphorus* hummingbird, presumably a Rufous, competing with the Ruby-throateds at her feeder August 26. Normally we don't get hummers from that genus until early November, and this bird may be one of the earliest ever reported in the state.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through September 15, 2000

**For 24/7 AAS information:**

***Call SunDial Bird Line***

**335-3500, ext. BIRD (2473).**

**Visit AAS Web Site:**

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

## Florida Trail Association North Region Fall Conference This Month

Join the Florida Trail Association for a weekend of outdoor fun and activities, **October 13-15, at Suwannee Valley Campground in White Springs**. Bring your tent, RV, or stay in local motels. Canoe, kayak, cycle and hike along the Suwannee River. Seminars will be held on Florida wildlife, local history, hi-tech trekking, outdoor gear and more. Live entertainment and BBQ dinner Saturday night. For more information, call Elizabeth vanMierop, 352-378-4207.

### *Welcome to New AAS Members*

Dr. Peter Ames; Orlando Bravo, Jr.; Robyn Brunson; Sonia Butts; Anne Kendall Casella; Emiliano Chappell; Ruth Conti; Randall Dees; Edward Emery; Megan English; Von Fraser; Michelle Gould; Edward Herod; Urszula Iwaniec; Linde Katritzky; Virginia Keppel; Jay Lauer; Nancy McDonald; Paul Mueller; Grace Obermeyer; Fritzi Olson; Glenn Phillips; Matthew Reetz; Lacey Shelton; Ashley Traut; Ione Williamson; Britton Wilson; William Yon; Patricia Yorton.

**VOTE!**

### *Air & Water Pollution Amendment on Ballot*

*by Kathy Cantwell*

Charter Amendment 1: It is critical that this amendment pass. It will be on the November ballot. Recommended by the charter review committee along with three others, this amendment allows Alachua County to set and enforce minimum standards for air and water pollution. This is very important in light of the cement plant controversy and the recent annexation of it by Newberry. Also, thousands of acres in the County have been annexed by different small municipalities since then.

Air and water are not confined by city boundaries, and what happens in one part of the County can affect us all. It only makes sense that the County should monitor and enforce the standards. They have an agency with 20 years of experience, 30 trained professionals and established funding to do the job. The main problems are that the proposed amendment will be at the end of the ballot, voters are not aware of it and what it means, the wording is legalistic and difficult to understand, there are a lot of items on the whole ballot creating voter fatigue and the voters may just decide not to vote. Please make your coworkers, friends and neighbors aware of this amendment and its importance. Visit the Clean Water and Air Committee webpage at [www.yesoncal.org](http://www.yesoncal.org) for information on contributions and examples of letters you can write to the editor.



## *Birds Wanted - Must Be Dead*

One of the functions of the Florida Museum of Natural History is to serve the local birding community. We can much better serve this function by having large samples of recent, well-prepared specimens of local species. Because the plumage of most species varies with season, sex, age, and wear, as well as geographical origin in many cases, large samples of each species are preferred.

You see what may have been a Hermit Warbler in October at Palm Point. You get a good photo, but from a weird angle. Maybe it's just a Black-throated Green Warbler, a regular fall migrant here. You find that your field guide doesn't show these species at the right angles for you to be sure. So you want to look at our collection to confirm this excellent record. You will need a good series of specimens of Black-throated Green Warblers, including hatching-year and adult females and males, to eliminate that possibility. I would like to be able to show you one or several immature female Black-throated Greens (there is a good deal of individual variation even within a particular sex and age class). We have none.

The major way by which we increase our holdings of local species is by having the public donate birds that have been found dead, usually as a result of car, wire, or window collisions, or from predation by pet cats. I am hoping that all of you will consider saving any specimens that you run across. Even common species are wanted (Cardinals, Mockingbirds, Red-winged Blackbirds, etc.). Generally we want to have specimens that are fresh and not crushed, but if it is a very rare or unexpected species, any scrap may be useful. Often we can at least get a useful skeleton specimen from a bird that may have soiled plumage.

The "salvaged" specimens should be placed in a ziploc or other air-tight plastic bag and put in a freezer as soon as possible. With each bird should be a slip of paper that describes the locality (state, county, city, street address or other specific location), the date that the bird was found, the name of the person who found it, and the probable cause of death. Date and locality are absolutely essential; other pertinent information may be habitat, time of day, etc.

When you get a chance, the specimens need to be brought to the museum at Dickinson Hall (the "old" museum at Museum Road and Newell Drive on the UF campus). Call us at 392-3293 beforehand to make sure someone will be here. Generally either Tom Webber or myself is present Mon.-Fri. from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Many thanks in advance for any specimens you can bring us.

*- Dr. Andrew Kratter, Collections Manager  
Florida Museum of Natural History*



by Michael  
Meisenburg,  
Conservation  
Chairman

Voting ballots this November will be important to all Alachua County residents for several reasons. We get to vote on a new president for our country, a successor to Senator George Kirkpatrick (I'm sure some of you were beginning to doubt whether or not you'd live to see the day that came true), and a land-buying program. This program, called Alachua County Forever, will be our county's equivalent of the state's Florida Forever. It is designed to purchase lands for conservation purposes and will be funded through property taxes. At least 21 other Florida counties or municipalities already have similar programs in place, and more are in the works.

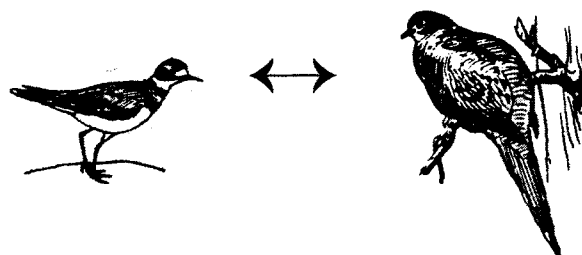
If approved, about \$29 million will be borrowed from financial markets through bond funds and repaid with a 0.25 millage property tax over the next 20 years. This means that a house valued at \$100,000 will be taxed (before homestead exemption) \$25 more per year. However, there will be no net increase in homeowner taxes from previous years because the tax will be offset by a scheduled reduction in the Alachua County Library District's capital millage of the same amount.

A nine member board called the Land Conservation Advisory Committee will make recommendations about which lands will be purchased, and following this, the county commission must approve the purchase. There will also be a public hearing and notification of adjacent landowners for every purchase. When possible, Alachua County Forever will pool its money with Florida Forever to purchase larger tracts that could not otherwise be purchased with the more limited local funds.

Alachua County Forever is part of an important long-term conservation program. By conserving land in its natural state, we can do our part for the larger picture that is Florida's vision. Florida, since its passage of P2000 over a decade ago, has been one of this country's most progressive states in land preservation. It is a proactive way of addressing conservation needs, especially when the properties fit into the larger picture of greenways and corridors. For example, since Alachua County lies between two of the state's largest black bear populations (Ocala and Osceola National Forests), we are an important link for a corridor that would provide for genetic interchange between the two groups. Similarly, Florida is an integral component of the Atlantic flyway and is utilized by millions of migrating birds annually on their way to and

from wintering grounds here and further south. This fact was made obvious to me the other morning when I arrived at Mike Manetz's house at 5:30 a.m. for the fall migration count. Standing in his driveway, Mike pointed out the flight notes of migrating birds overhead. Most were veeries, but an occasional Swainson's Thrush or warbler increased the diversity. As day breaks, the birds drop out of the sky into the nearest patch of woods to feed, sleep, and be counted by birders. What makes it most amazing is that this occurs annually, and the vast majority of Alachua County residents have no idea this immense migration involving millions of birds is occurring over their houses and yards as they sleep. If they get into their cars for their morning drive while it is still dark, they may hear a few chips, but they won't realize how important Florida is to migrating birds. Migration takes a huge annual toll on birds, but having large tracts of natural lands is important to offsetting the loss. **Alachua Audubon Society strongly supports Alachua County Forever.**

On another (but related) note, I remember a story about one of the presidential candidates that I heard a few years ago. Since it involves a bird, I thought I'd relay it to the readers of *The Crane* in case anyone is not yet committed to a candidate. A few years ago, when George W. Bush was running against then-governor Ann Richards for the Governor's seat in Texas, he went on a Mourning Dove hunt. As the story goes, George W. was a neophyte to dove hunting, but didn't want to appear that he couldn't hang out with the good ol' boys. So, he went. And he shot a bird. If I remember correctly (and I may not be), he only got one bird. However, the bird wasn't a Mourning Dove, but a Killdeer. Although they are a protected species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declined to press charges against him. Since AAS is a 501(c)(3) organization and therefore prohibited from directly endorsing any candidate, I cannot tell you who to vote for. But, you may want to remember which candidate has not proven to be very bird-friendly. Perhaps George W. could have benefitted from going on a few Audubon Society field trips.



# Audubon Assembly to Set Conservation Priorities for 2001

November 2-5 ♦ Fernandina Beach

Just days before voters set the political direction for the nation and state, Audubon's Florida members, leaders and staff will convene to set priorities for Florida's future. Those attending the event will enjoy good birding trips, great company, valuable programs and workshops and the opportunity to help set conservation priorities for Florida's future.

Expert naturalists will lead trips to Northeast Florida's hotspots. Destinations include Cumberland Island, Fort Clinch and Guana River. Many birders will want to catch the hawk and pelagic bird migrations!

Valuable workshops on bird watching, field trips, chapter membership, grassroots advocacy, conservation education centers, and citizen science will be offered. Displays will feature the best work of local Audubon chapters. Evening programs anchored by some of the nation's most respected ornithological leaders, such as John Fitzpatrick, will make the 2000 Audubon Assembly a rewarding experience.

Best of all, the Audubon Assembly will allow conservationists, scientists, birders and educators from all over Florida to gather, share their issues, dreams and concerns, and help focus each other on the important work ahead.

Over the past several months, leaders of Audubon's forty-four chapters have been setting their sights on the most important issues and places. Examples include taking action to:

✓ Improve Florida's growth management laws to increase oversight of development in environmentally sensitive areas and increase public participation.

✓ Limit the terrible impacts on birds, wildlife and habitats from over-pumping groundwater in Southwest Florida.

✓ Preserve one million acres of North Florida forests.

✓ Stop the rapid destruction of the Lake Wales Ridge scrub ecosystem.

✓ Restore the Everglades ecosystem through land protection, water storage, and water quality improvements proposed in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

✓ Save wildlife habitat on privately owned land in rural Florida. Create incentives for landowners to preserve natural areas.

✓ Educate citizens and children to create a culture of conservation throughout Florida and encourage the state to

put significant new funds into conservation education.

The Audubon Assembly will be much more than earnest and exciting conservation priority setting. Expert birders will lead trips to Northeast Florida's birding hotspots. Binoculars will be trained on Cumberland Island, Fort Clinch and Guana River wildlife. Many birders will catch the hawk and pelagic migration. In addition, valuable workshops on birdwatching field trips, chapter membership, conservation education centers and citizen science will be offered. Evening programs anchored by some of the nation's most respected ornithological leaders, such as John Fitzpatrick, will make the 2000 Audubon Assembly a "can't miss" event.

Register before October 6 to receive the special rate of \$75, which includes four meals. The beautiful Inn at Fernandina Beach will be the location for meetings, meals and programs. The Inn is offering a very reasonable rate and provides a complimentary hot breakfast.

Best of all, the Audubon Assembly will allow conservationists, scientist, birders and educators from all over Florida to gather, share their issues, dreams and concerns, and help focus each other on the important work ahead.

## Audubon Assembly 2000 Registration Form

To register for the Assembly, call 850-224-7546, e-mail [edraper@audubon.org](mailto:edraper@audubon.org), or fill out the form below and mail to: Audubon of Florida, Conservation Center, 2507 Callaway Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32303.

Sign me up for the Audubon Assembly 2000 and charge me the early-bird registration fee of only \$75 when I register before October 6. (Registration fee is \$100 if received after October 6) Registration fee includes four meals. Send me more information on the Audubon Assembly.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number (home/work/fax) \_\_\_\_\_

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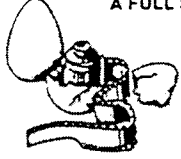
Room Rate: \$54.00 per night for single or double

## Alachua Audubon Society Officers and Chairpersons of Standing Committees - 2000-2001

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## *The Crane*

October 2000



### 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*

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. \_\_\_\_\_

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Please check level of membership.

\_\_\_\_ Basic \$35      \_\_\_\_ Senior \$15      \_\_\_\_ Student \$15

\_\_\_\_ **INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP \$20**

\_\_\_\_ **TWO YEARS \$30**