



The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

Volume 42 Number 5 ❖ February 2001

Owls in Florida

Saturday, February 24 at 2 p.m.

Tower Road Branch Library - 3020 SW 75th Street

Tina Brannen, a rehabilitator with Florida Wildlife Care, will be our speaker for this month's program. Please note that this is a different meeting place than usual.



Tina has worked for several years with Florida Wildlife Care, an organization which cares for injured wildlife of all sorts in hopes that when an animal is recovered it may be released back into the wild. Tina's specialty is raptors, and for the program she'll be bringing three owls with her. These three—a Barred Owl, a Screech Owl, and a Great Horned Owl—due to their injuries are non-releasable, but will give us a chance to see some owls close-up.

Tina will tell us about the owls she has in her care, as well as the other owls which are resident in Florida, Burrowing Owls and Barn Owls. She'll discuss their habitat requirements, food preferences, and nesting, as well as the evolutionary features which make owls unique among birds. The impact people have upon owls, especially here in Florida, will also be noted.

As owls are often more frequently heard than seen, Tina will provide us with some recordings of owl sounds. The Barred Owl's familiar "*Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?*" probably needs no introduction, nor does the tremolo of the Screech Owl often used by birders on tape recorders, but there are some other less well-known calls.

Our programs about birds are always popular, but we don't often get a chance to have one with live birds present. Please join us for this unusual and informative program. As always, there will be refreshments and a chance to exchange birding stories with other Audubon members.

Note: Change in field trip

The trip originally scheduled for February 3 to The Refuge at Ocklawaha has been changed to the following Saturday, February 10. Please see trip details on the next page.

Saturday, February 10, 6:30 a.m.
Ocklawaha Prairie Restoration Area
(aka The Refuge at Ocklawaha)

Meet at Westgate Publix (University and W 34th Street) to carpool. This enormous marsh is part of the St. Johns River Water Management District's effort to restore wetlands along the Ocklawaha River. We'll explore it via a network of dikes – by car, if the SJRWMD permits, otherwise on foot (call the SunDial for an update on this). We can expect to see ducks, hawks, sparrows, and waders; interesting birds seen here over the past year include Groove-billed Ani, Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, Roseate Spoonbills, and LeConte's and Clay-colored Sparrows. Our trip leader will be Earl Scales, naturalist for The Refuge when it was operated as a resort by Audubon of Florida. The trip should last till about midday, so bring your lunch and something to drink. This will be February's only field trip, so take advantage of it.

Board Meeting

Wednesday, February 14 at 6:30 p.m

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



**Deadline for
articles for the
March issue of
The Crane is
February 23.**

Via e-mail: evperry@aol.com. Via
mail: disk or hard copy to Evelyn
Perry, 9419 SW 67th Drive,
Gainesville 32608. Phone 371-2917.

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.**

*"I never for a day gave up listening to the songs of
birds, or watching their peculiar habits, or delineating
them in the best way I could."*

- John James Audubon

Highlights of St. Marks Trip

by John Hintermister

Eleven of us met at the visitors center for the start of what was to be two days of great weather, great company and great birds. We started by birding the pond behind the visitors center where we had great looks at an immature Wilson's Warbler and 4 Golden-crowned Kinglets, one of which was a male marking the first male I have ever seen in Florida. We then went to the East River Pool Boat Ramp where we had great looks at an immature male Vermilion Flycatcher.

Altogether we listed 19 species of waterfowl, but the target species—American Black Duck and Greater White-fronted Goose—eluded us on the first day. We were especially struck by the beauty of the male Mallard with their electric green heads. We managed to get a Virginia Rail in the scopes at 20 yards. What a sight!

After we finished birding St. Marks, we headed for Alligator Point and Ball Point. The highlights there included 3 distant Red-throated Loons at Alligator Point. At Ball Point we were treated to a raft of 200 Common Loons coming together for the evening. Also there we saw Common Goldeneye and Northern Gannets.

The next day we decided to try for a Lark Bunting that was seen a week earlier at St. Joe Peninsula State Park. We were not successful with the bunting, but we saw a Grasshopper Sparrow, had great looks at several Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, and arrived at the park just as a flock of 5000 Tree Swallows were coming off the roost.

Then on to the Apalachicola Airport where we saw 3 Sprague's Pipits. The group then decided to split up with some going to the Spring Hill Sewage Treatment Plant where they saw Canada Goose, American Avocet, American Pipit and Spotted Sandpiper.

The rest of us went back to St. Marks where we got great looks at the elusive Greater White-fronted Goose. There were 2 adults and 2 immature. We saw them flying and on the water at close range.

The American Black Ducks were seen flying at a distance thanks to a harrier that put them up.

Altogether the group recorded 132 species in two days.

For 24/7 AAS information

Call SunDial Bird Line 335-3500,

ext. BIRD (2473).

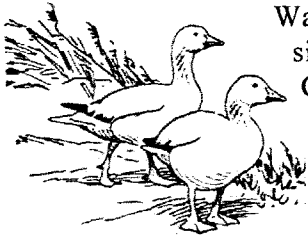
AAS Web Site:

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

Around the County...

by Mike Manetz

The period between the Christmas Count and the beginning of spring seems to be one of the slower times for local birding. It may be that so much energy is put into the Count and the holidays immediately following that some folks just kick back and wait for spring. Perhaps there is a general feeling that all the interesting winter birds have already been discovered. Whatever the reason, usually only a handful of the most hardcore birders are still rooting around with scopes and binoculars through January.



Waterfowl provided the most notable sightings through the month. Snow Geese were reported before the year 2000 was over. Linda Hensley found two December 30 at "Sandhill Station," that is, the UF experimental fields on SW 23rd Street off

Williston Road. The pair were seen again by Adam Kent and Alfredo Begazo two weeks later in the small pond across from Bivens Arm Lake on Hwy. 441. A few immature Black-bellied Whistling Ducks lingered along LaChua Trail but were only seen sporadically. Bob Simons visits Chapman's Pond periodically and noted a buildup of ducks around the end of December. Typically present were 300-plus Teal of both species, plus over a dozen Gadwall, with a handful of American Wigeon, Northern Shovelers, Northern Pintails, and Ring-necked Ducks. A Common Goldeneye was seen intermittently, first by Scott Flamand at the small pond behind K-Mart off Newberry Road, and days later by Linda Hensley at the pond across from Mr. Hans. Orange Lake experienced a severe draw down as the result of a sink hole, creating a huge expanse of mud at the south end, as viewed from Heagy-Burry Park south of McIntosh; however, while checking the lake January 15, John Hintermister and I found at least a layer of water looking east and north from Boardman. There we saw plenty of gulls and terns, a smattering of ducks including several Ruddies, and over two hundred White Pelicans that had probably relocated from Newnans Lake. Bivens Arm Lake, which had been fairly clear of ducks through the Christmas Count, at least started attracting Hooded Mergansers, and by a report from Mary Landsman, a Horned Grebe as well. Mary also found a bonus bird, a Brown Pelican, which stayed around for at least a few days. There was only one report from Newnans in early January. Adam and Alfredo checked the north end on the 15th and found a whopping two-thousand Green-winged Teal.

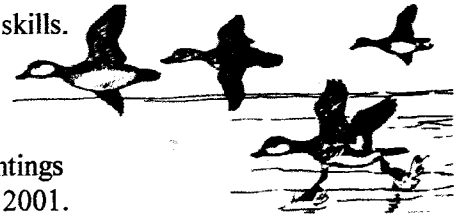
An Alachua Audubon field trip to Persimmon Point overcame gusty winds January 20 to record most of the rare sparrows that have been present there. The group had

eye-popping looks at three LeConte's and several Grasshopper Sparrows, but only a fleeting glimpse of a Henslow's. While checking out the north side of San Felasco Hammock January 7, Eric Thomas and I found a Fox Sparrow on the edge of a pond along the Blue Trail. This is the same spot where Fox Sparrows were found a couple of winters ago.

The cold-snap at the beginning of January brought some invasions of sorts. Just when you thought you might not see any at all this year, hordes of Robins and Cedar Waxwings suddenly appeared on lawns and in trees sporting anything remotely resembling berries. You may have noticed a huge build-up of gulls as well. A check of the lakes in the first week of the month showed Bivens Arm Lake with several hundred Ring-bills, and Newnans attracting plenty as well, including Bonaparte's and the previously absent Herring Gull. These birds were probably also attracted by the large fish kills in the area that were a result of increasingly low water levels.

Spring comes early to Alachua County. A few species of trees start putting out buds as early as January, and we usually get our first report of returning Purple Martins at the end of the month. By the middle of February the little Northern Parula will make its presence known by singing and setting up territories, as will our common resident birds such as Cardinal and Carolina Wren. Now is the time to start brushing up on your bird song identification skills. The chorus is about to commence.

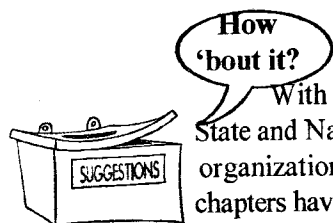
Thanks to those who shared their sightings through January 25, 2001.



Welcome to New Sponsor!

The Crane welcomes a new sponsor: Wild Florida Adventures kayak tours. Please take note of their announcement on Page 7.

Will and Joni Ellis of Wild Florida Adventures invite you to explore Florida's scenic Gulf coast over glistening shallow bays among coastal islands often rimmed by white sandy beaches. Knowledgeable guides will introduce you to the estuaries at a leisurely pace with time to explore beaches and tidal creeks. View birds and other wildlife that are abundant throughout the Big Bend area. Half-day tours include a gourmet picnic. No prior experience is necessary. Destinations include: Steinhatchee, Suwannee, Cedar Key, Withlacoochee. Overnight and special event trips are also available. See more at www.wild-florida.com.



With the recent changes made at State and National levels in the Audubon organization, grassroots efforts of local chapters have never been more important.

The Alachua Audubon Society Nominating Committee has begun its search for officers and board members to serve beginning in April 2001. The qualifications for service don't say you must be able to identify any and all birds you see within 20 seconds! You don't need a degree or two in ornithology. You don't need to be rich. So now that it's narrowed down to 99.9% of AAS membership, give some thought to who you think would make a good officer or board member. It might be YOU.

Help is needed in many areas—recruiting and maintaining members, conservation efforts, web site maintenance—to name a few. Heck, we could probably even use a new newsletter editor!

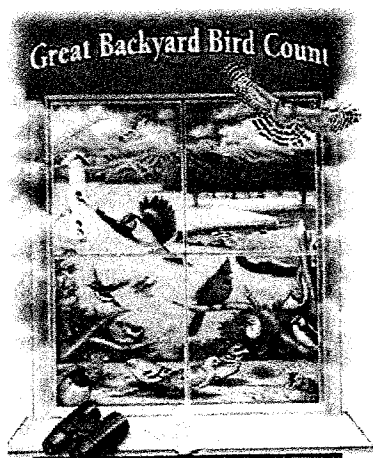
What is AAS and what is our commitment? The last revision of purpose and goals was made in August 1995 and is printed below. If reading this, you are even a little bit persuaded to do what you can to help and would like to discuss the possibilities, call Paul Moler, Nominating Chairman, at 955-2230 (work) or 495-9419 (home).

AAS Purpose and Goals

Alachua Audubon Society is a public service organization that seeks to advance appreciation of nature, to protect wild-life and wild places, and to promote the prudent, sustainable use of natural resources. We do this by the following means:

1. Presentation of authentic natural history information at regularly scheduled public meetings and on expertly led field trips.
2. A program of youth education that will develop knowledge and a sense of responsibility toward nature.
3. Maintenance and interpretation of sanctuaries.
4. Distribution of authoritative and timely information on conservation issues through our newsletter, electronic media, and other means.

- Evelyn Perry, Editor



4 The Crane

Participate in the 4th annual Great Backyard Bird Count February 16-19. Go to web site www.birdsource.org for details. The GBBC is a joint project of Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Welcome to New AAS Members

Larry Brown
Donald Derber
Laurel Freeman
Erin Hughes
Mr & Mrs Michael Lee
Michele Nisi
Mrs. Thomas Ward

Pat Cushing
Carolyn Freeman
Eleanor Glick
Jay & Nina Kaharl
Ron Marr
Robert Vandergrind

(McClanahan 1937)

by Rex Rowan

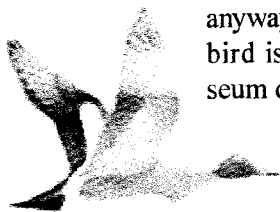
Grave-robbers aren't necessarily bad, just indiscriminate. Most of us, having been planted in the ground, should probably stay there. But there are a few of us who deserve to be unearthed, and one of these is Robert McClanahan.

I had often stumbled across his name in my research: some assertion about the birds of Alachua County would be attributed to "(McClanahan 1937)." I ignored this for a time. Such citations litter bird books, and you can't be bothered to track them all down. But eventually something clicked, and I turned to the bibliography of whatever I was reading and found this: "McClanahan, R.C. 1937. An annotated list of the birds of Alachua County, Florida. *Q. J. Fla. Acad. Sci.* 1:91-102."

I was working on just such an annotated list, so I poked around in the basement of the Marston Science Library until I found what I was looking for in the *Proceedings of the Florida Academy of Sciences* for 1937.

It actually wasn't the first such survey of our local birds. In fact Alachua County was rather old hat by then. Frank Chapman had commenced his highly distinguished career by publishing "A list of birds observed at Gainesville, Florida" in the *Auk* in 1888; and in 1913 that same journal had printed Oscar Baynard's sometimes rather dubious catalog of "Breeding birds of Alachua County, Florida." But Chapman's paper confined itself to birds seen between November and May, missing fall migration entirely, and of course Baynard concerned himself solely with species that nested here. McClanahan's was the first checklist of *all* our birds: winter birds, summer birds, migrants, and even unexpected strays ("Kirtland's Warbler—*Dendroica kirtlandi*. Rare migrant. One record, a bird observed at Bivan's Arm, April 26, 1934").

Who was he? I turned back to the bibliography. There were seven additional citations, the first in 1935, the last in 1941. Some were interesting. In April 1934 he had tracked down the only Eurasian Wigeon ever recorded in the county. It had been shot two years previously on Orange Lake, and stuffed. He heard about it through the local duck hunters, located it with their help, and obtained it for the museum. Most of it



anyway: "Although the head is missing, the bird is easily identifiable." (Alas, the museum discarded the specimen in 1962.)

But why had he stopped publishing? Had he simply moved elsewhere? Had he lost interest? It was

ominous that he had last published in 1941, the year the United States entered World War II. Had he died in the war? The authorial line under the title read "Robert C. McClanahan. Pensacola High School." I wondered if I might learn something from Bob Duncan, who has been watching birds in Pensacola for thirty years.

So I called. No, he'd never heard of McClanahan. But he thought Francis Weston might have. Weston, a Grand Old Man of Florida ornithology, had watched the birds come and go around Pensacola and its environs from 1916 to 1968. In 1965 he had published *A Survey of the Birdlife of Northwestern Florida*, and in the pages of that book Bob found my answer: "Robert C. McClanahan, a native of Pensacola, received his introduction to bird study as a Boy Scout under my instruction. From the time of his graduation from the University of Florida in May 1934, until his untimely death in the Armed Services in 1943, he made many worthwhile contributions to the ornithology of the Region, the principal one of which was his addition of the Rufous Hummingbird to the Florida list."

I was almost satisfied, but not quite. I visited the National Archives on the Internet, and found the casualty lists for World War II. He was there, but the information was minimal: he had been a First Lieutenant, and his casualty status was "death, non-battle." I checked the home page of the Escambia County genealogical society for an index of obituaries, and found that they went back only as far as 1957. A contact person was listed, so I wrote him a letter. He replied that older obituaries were housed at the University of West Florida, and were difficult of access. It looked as though I would have to visit Pensacola myself if I wanted more information.

One morning last fall I was searching the bird collection's library for information on T. Gilbert Pearson, another ex-resident of Alachua County. It struck me that his obituary might contain the facts I was looking for. I pulled down the *Auk* for 1944 and looked in the index for "Pearson, T. Gilbert." As my eyes ran down the column, they fell on "McClanahan, Robert C., obituary." I was astonished and elated. It had never occurred to me that a non-academic would be remembered in the journal of the American Ornithologists' Union. But there he was.

It turns out that Weston, in addition to interesting him in birds in the first place, had actually given him Chapman's paper, planting the seed that grew into the annotated list. McClanahan had written, "Feeling that a comparison of

observations from the same area after a lapse of a number of years might be of importance to conservationists and form interesting reading to other bird students, upon entering the University of Florida in September, 1930, I kept accurate notes and spent much time in the field with such a comparison in view. During the winter of 1933-34 fully as much time was devoted to this task as was devoted to my studies at school."

After returning home in 1934, he taught at Pensacola High School for three years. In 1937 he joined the Biological Survey, where his work was "chiefly connected with bird banding in the section of Distribution and Migration of Birds. In the summer of 1940, and again in 1941, he was detailed to field work in southern Canada and traveled some thousands of miles in the Prairie Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta."

He entered the military shortly after Pearl Harbor, and was commissioned a Lieutenant in January 1942. In May 1943, while stationed at Camp Butner, North Carolina, "he died of pneumonia followed by a cerebral hemorrhage, at the early age of thirty."

The citation says nothing but "(McClanahan 1937)."

It's scientific shorthand, of course, but it's an awful and a terrible thing the way a life can come and go and leave such scant remains. Seventy years ago he was a 17-year-old boy, roaming across the University grounds with a copy of Chapman's list in his hand. He visited places we visit today – "Payne's Prairie and its arms, Lake Wauberg, Orange Lake, Lake Newman [sic], Sugarfoot Prairie, and the grounds of the Agricultural Experiment Station, which adjoins the University of Florida campus." He had then a little more than thirteen years to live.

But those thirteen years appear to have been full. I imagine him in Canada – the frost crunching on the ground in the early mornings, the hundreds of prairie sunrises, the spectacle of the birds. I can't help but wonder what was in his mind as he went about his duties at Camp Butner. I see him pausing in his daily routine to watch a Red-tailed Hawk, anticipating his return to the work he loved.

Sentimental, I know, maybe even mawkish. Here was someone who loved birds as we do, who lived in Gainesville as we do. He left us a record of our local bird life in the early 1930s. I admire him, I wish him well across the years, but I'm conscious as I do that his career is long over, that he never did return to Canada or anywhere else, that after another year he died and was forgotten, leaving nothing behind but "(McClanahan 1937)."



Cedar Key Christmas Bird Count – 29 December 2000

The “endless winter” that we experienced created some hardship for the participants in the 2000 Cedar Key Christmas Bird Count. The area always presents problems; so much water, and such difficulties with time and tide, but this year there was the cold, made worse by overcast skies and a fierce north wind that blew the water away from the islands. Those who ventured out on the Gulf, or spent the day on foot, had a hard time getting over the chill.

Good sightings, however, made it all worthwhile. The causeway group, comprised of Ron Christen, Don Morrow, and John Hintermister, found a wintering Yellow-breasted Chat by the EMS Station on SR 347 and a Fox Sparrow further along on the same road. The same group also had a Baltimore Oriole, a bird seldom seen on the count. The “Boat People,” Bryan McNab, Roan McNab, Terry Taylor, and David Steadman, spotted rarely seen Surf and White-winged Scoters on their trip to Seahorse Key, and John Hintermister, Don Morrow, and Ken Litzenberger’s wild ride on the FWS airboat was rewarded with a count record (by far; the previous record being 1!) 6 Long-billed Curlews.

Other new count highs were recorded for Willet, 1069 (prev. 737), Marbled Godwit 78 (20), Bonaparte’s Gull 8 (7), Sedge Wren 29 (27), Vesper Sparrow 6 (5), and Swamp Sparrow 66 (60). In all, 135 Species were counted. The 2001 tally was scheduled for Friday, December 28.

- Dale C. Henderson

Compilers: Ron Christen and Dale Henderson. Other observers: Howard Adams, Alice Farkash, John Hintermister, Grace Kiltie, Carmine Lanciani, Brian McNab, Roan McNab, Don Morrow, Barbara Muschlitz, Bryant Roberts, Dave Steadman, Nancy Taylor, Terry Taylor.

Numbers in Bold Face represent a new maxima for the count.

Common Loon	62	American Avocet	61	Carolina Wren	26
Pied-billed Grebe	4	Greater Yellowlegs	9	House Wren	43
Horned Grebe	76	Willet	1069	Sedge Wren	29
Am White Pelican	148	Spotted Sandpiper	10	Marsh Wren	50
Brown Pelican	286	Whimbrel	2	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	64
Dbl-cr Cormorant	1512	Long-billed Curlew	6	Bl-gray Gnatcatcher	20
Anhinga	2	Marbled Godwit	78	Eastern Bluebird	12
Great Blue Heron	77	Ruddy Turnstone	27	Hermit Thrush	11
Great Egret	114	Red Knot	23	American Robin	3151
Snowy Egret	21	Sanderling	57	Gray Catbird	47
Little Blue Heron	10	Western Sandpiper	182	Northern Mockingbird	70
Tricolored Heron	16	Least Sandpiper	272	Brown Thrasher	10
Green Heron	1	Peep, sp.	200	European Starling	84
Blk-cr Night-Heron	9	Dunlin	1083	Cedar Waxwing	38
Ylw-cr Night-Heron	23	Short-bld Dowitcher	595	Orange-cr Warbler	7
White Ibis	1	Common Snipe	3	Ylw-rumped Warbler	1664
Wood Stork	8	American Woodcock	1	Ylw-throated Warbler	2
Black Vulture	32	Laughing Gull	484	Pine Warbler	35
Turkey Vulture	145	Bonaparte's Gull	8	Prairie Warbler	1
Blue-winged Teal	1	Ring-billed Gull	1457	Palm Warbler	101
Green-winged Teal	63	Herring Gull	46	Blk-&-White Warbler	8
Lesser Scaup	1430	Caspian Tern	4	Common Yellowthroat	88
Surf Scoter	1	Royal Tern	12	Yellow-breasted Chat	1
White-winged Scoter	1	Forster's Tern	214	Eastern Towhee	45
Bufflehead	211	Black Skimmer	856	Chipping Sparrow	49
Common Goldeneye	1	Eur. Collared Dove	209	Field Sparrow	4
Hooded Merganser	62	Mourning Dove	204	Vesper Sparrow	6
Red-brstd Merganser	141	Common Ground Dove	28	Savannah Sparrow	10
Ruddy Duck	1	Rose-Ringed Parakeet	2	Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sp	8
Duck, sp.	200	Eastern Screech Owl	6	Seaside Sparrow	5
Osprey	24	Great Horned Owl	4	Fox Sparrow	1
Bald Eagle	28	Barred Owl	2	Song Sparrow	25
Northern Harrier	2	Belted Kingfisher	33	Swamp Sparrow	66
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Red-bell. Woodpecker	43	White-thr Sparrow	20
Cooper's Hawk	2	Ylw-bell. Sapsucker	11	Northern Cardinal	60
Red-shouldered Hawk	6	Downy Woodpecker	7	Red-winged Blackbird	239
Red-tailed Hawk	7	Northern Flicker	11	Rusty Blackbird	1
American Kestrel	7	Pileated Woodpecker	11	Common Grackle	37
Merlin	1	Eastern Phoebe	44	Boat-tailed Grackle	84
Northern Bobwhite	9	White-eyed Vireo	11	Brown-headed Cowbird	25
Clapper Rail	8	Blue-headed Vireo	10	Baltimore Oriole	1
Sora	12	Blue Jay	13	American Goldfinch	23
Black-bellied Plover	49	Florida Scrub-Jay	2	House Sparrow	45
Wilson's Plover	2	American Crow	15		
Semipalmated Plover	28	Carolina Chickadee	27	Number of species	135
Killdeer	33	Tufted Titmouse	24	Number of Individuals	18946
Am. Oystercatcher	250	Brn-headed Nuthatch	1		

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

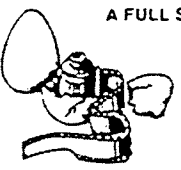
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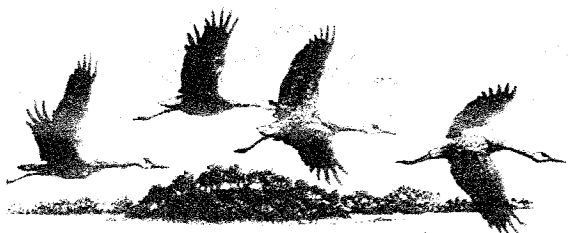
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Kayak Tours

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The Crane

February 2001



Join Audubon

To join Audubon on 3 levels (National, Florida, and Alachua County), fill in this application and mail to:
Paul Moler, 7818 Highway 346, Archer, Florida 32618.

Check the type 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 type of membership:

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

_____ **INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP \$20**

_____ **TWO YEARS \$30**