

The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society
Volume 43 Number 5 February 2002

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

(will actually be in March)

Saturday March 2, 2002, 2:00 P.M.

Tower Road Branch Library, 3020 SW 75th Street



This month's program meeting will feature the famous naturalist William Bartram, author of the book which is commonly known as *The Travels of William Bartram*. Actually, our speaker will be Greg Cunningham who has been doing William Bartram re-enactments for over ten years now here in Gainesville. For his presentations, Greg dresses in clothing similar to that which Bartram might have worn and brings along equipment that a eighteenth century naturalist might have used. He'll discuss with us Bartram's life and his book.

As you might imagine, Florida was a very different place when Bartram was here. There were essentially no roads and travel was mostly by boat along the coast and down the St. John's River. Reaching places inland was quite difficult. Still, Bartram reached a number of places around here, such as the site of the present town of Micanopy, then an Indian encampment. His book has descriptions of such places as Manatee Springs and, of course, the Great Alachua Savannah, which we now call Paynes Prairie.

FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, February 2, 8:00 A.M.

Alexander Springs: Focus on plants

Dr. Dana Griffin will lead this trip to a variety of habitats rich in flora. (He also mentioned that there are some birds there for those who cannot resist bringing their binoculars along on a botany trip.) This is a great opportunity for us to learn about plants found in this area. We'll meet at the Kash 'N Karry at 2002 SW 34th St. at 8:00 AM and then carpool to Alexander Springs. There is an entry fee of about \$3.50 per car to get into Alexander Springs. Bring lunch and something to drink. We will return by mid afternoon.

Saturday, March 9, 8:00 A.M.

Camps Canal and Cones Dike

Meet in the parking lot of the Bolen Bluff Trail, on US-441 just south of the Paynes Prairie basin (4.3 miles south of SR-331). Rex Rowan will lead this walk along the canal that was dug in the late 1930's to drain Paynes Prairie. Then, by special permission, we will be allowed to continue out the Cones Dike Trail, which runs along another canal. We ought to see Wood Ducks, several species of sparrows, and a good number of hawks. Early warblers such as Northern Parulas and Yellow-throated Warblers should be singing, and with any luck we could find a Louisiana Waterthrush. We should be finished by lunchtime.

NOMINATIONS!!!

Dissatisfied with Alachua Audubon? If you don't like what AAS is doing—or not doing!—this is your chance to make a difference. Each year in February the Nominating Committee assembles to recruit volunteers to be Alachua Audubon's officers and board members. Are you interested in a position or can you suggest someone?

This year's committee consists of Howard Adams (373-4270), Griselda Forbes (371-3124), and Paul Moler (495-9419). Any of them would be glad to hear from you. Please call by March 1.

Around the county

by Mike Manetz

The first wave of really cold weather descended upon us from the north during the holidays, and with it came a flurry of bird reports. The presence of an immature Herring Gull at the Hague Dairy January 3 was an early clue that some bird movement was occurring. Herring Gulls have been pretty scarce here since the closing of the Archer Landfill, and this individual was the first one of the season. The following day at Newnans Lake, Andy Kratter found the front-runner for bird of the year: an Eared Grebe. Horned Grebes are rare enough in the county, but this was our first Eared Grebe ever reported. They have been seen with regularity in recent winters at phosphate pits in both Hamilton and Polk Counties, respectively to the north and south of us, so it was probably a matter of time until one showed up here. Still, this was a great find.

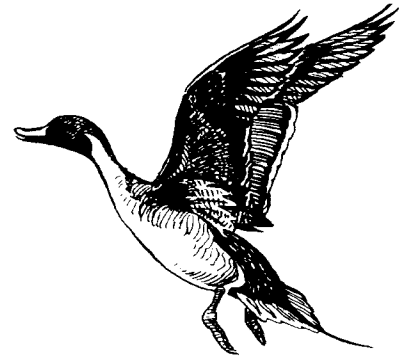
Sunny Bynum, who lives off NW 16th Boulevard, spotted an adult Black-chinned Hummingbird in her yard on January 8. The bird was still present at the time of this writing. Another good yard sighting was that of four Purple Finches seen off and on by Bob Wallace at his feeders near Alachua. It has been years since anyone reported Purple Finches in the county. Dotty Robbins and Don Kelting were visiting Chapmans Pond January 12 where they noticed some Sandhill Cranes taking flight. Among them was a Whooping Crane, possibly the same wanderer that was seen this fall with Sandhills in northern Marion County. This bird will likely be seen again before the winter is out. The following day, while scanning flocks of Sandhill Cranes in the fields along SW 23rd. St. near Williston Road (a/k/a Sandhill Station), I

managed to pick out a blue-phase Snow Goose waddling around among the cranes. This was the same field where several years ago I saw my county-lifer Snow Goose.

Since the water level came up at Newnans Lake, shorebirding has been rather dull, but John Hintermister reported a good mix January 17 at Chapmans Pond, including 30 Least Sandpipers, five Long-billed Dowitchers, and six each of Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. The same day he found a concentration of 75 Northern Pintails at Newnans. That's the largest number of Pintails seen here in several years.

There were a couple of good sightings just outside the county. On January 12 John found a Fox Sparrow at the River Rise section of O'Leno State Park. The location was about 200 yards from the Alachua County line. An even closer miss was an immature Scissor-tailed Flycatcher reported by Chuck Graham along the county-line road south of Poe Springs Park. Unfortunately the bird was on the Gilchrist County side of the road!

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through January 17, 2002.



HELP WANTED

Alachua Audubon is fielding a team for Gainesville's Third Annual Great Air Potato Roundup on February 2. Our site will be the Audubon sanctuary at Colclough Pond.

All AAS members are welcome to participate and will receive a free T-shirt and be eligible in the drawings for other prizes, including a mountain bike. To register, contact our site leader, Michael Meisenberg, at 495-1791 or by e-mail at ecomike@ufl.edu.

We will meet at the office of In the Pines Apartments at 205 SE 16th Avenue at 9:00 A.M. and walk to the infested area of the sanctuary from there. We'll work until about 11:00 A.M. and then go to Westside Park for refreshments and the drawings.

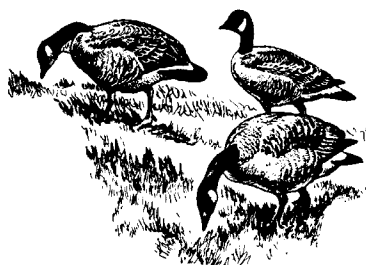
Air potato is an invasive exotic weed which threatens many of Gainesville's natural areas. The roundup is designed to not only help keep air potato under control, but to increase awareness of the problem and celebrate bio-diversity. For more information visit www.natureoperations.org.

MELROSE CBC

Although the day began with freezing temperatures, the Melrose Christmas Bird Counters warmed to the occasion and came up with 105 total species. A total of 3,814 individual birds were observed.

Highlights of the twelfth annual count included a *Selasphorus* hummingbird, a rarity for this area, but now appearing each winter in north central Florida in scattered locations. Also of interest were six Bald Eagles. Three

Canada Geese provided a first time sighting of the species on count day.



The next annual Melrose CBC (the thirteenth) is planned for Tuesday, December 17, 2002. We hope you can join us then.

—Bill and Jan Bolte

Bold-faced Species are new to the Count. Numbers in Bold Face represent a new maxima for the count.

Common Loon	29	Greater Yellowlegs	4	Sedge Wren	1
Pied-billed Grebe	34	Lesser Yellowlegs	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	18
Horned Grebe	3	Long-billed Dowitcher	6	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	7
Double-crested Cormorant	76	Common Snipe	5	Eastern Bluebird	19
Anhinga	29	American Woodcock	1	American Robin	693
American Bitterns	1	Bonaparte's Gull	57	Gray Catbird	13
Great Blue Heron	25	Ring-billed Gull	20	Northern Mockingbird	33
Great Egret	46	Herring Gull	1	Brown Thrasher	1
Snowy Egret	2	Forster's Tern	32	European Starling	53
Little Blue Heron	11	Rock Dove	2	Northern Parula	1
Tricolored Heron	2	Eurasian Collared Dove	2	Yellow-rumped Warbler	163
Green Heron	1	Mourning Dove	89	Pine Warbler	11
Black Vulture	36	Common Ground Dove	3	Palm Warbler	3
Turkey Vulture	36	Barn Owl	1	Black-&-White Warbler	1
Canada Goose	3	Great Horned Owl	1	Common Yellowthroat	5
Wood Duck	12	Barred Owl	3	Yellow-breasted Chat	2
Mallard	8	Chuck-will's-widow	1	Eastern Towhee	13
Ring-necked Duck	461	<i>Selasphorus</i> sp.	1	Chipping Sparrow	43
Lesser Scaup	2	Belted Kingfisher	30	Vesper Sparrow	3
Bufflehead	12	Red-headed Woodpecker	13	Savannah Sparrow	10
Hooded Merganser	6	Red-bellied Woodpecker	40	Grasshopper Sparrow	2
Ruddy Duck	4	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	Swamp Sparrow	3
Osprey	4	Downy Woodpecker	4	White-throated Sparrow	4
Bald Eagle	6	Northern Flicker	9	Northern Cardinal	56
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Pileated Woodpecker	12	Red-winged Blackbird	125
Cooper's Hawk	1	Eastern Phoebe	12	Eastern Meadowlark	6
Red-shouldered Hawk	16	Loggerhead Shrike	10	Common Grackle	15
Red-tailed Hawk	8	White-eyed Vireo	2	Boat-tailed Grackle	11
American Kestrel	14	Blue-headed Vireo	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	18
Northern Bobwhite	3	Blue Jay	31	Baltimore Oriole	2
Sora	2	American Crow	92	American Goldfinch	3
Sandhill Crane	794	Fish Crow	15	House Sparrow	9
Killdeer	66	Carolina Chickadee	6		
		Tufted Titmouse	21	Number of Species	105
		Carolina Wren	35	Number of Individuals	3,814
		House Wren	2		

Compilers: Bill and Jan Bolte. Other observers: Benson and Coline Cain, Nancy and Randy Dale, Rosemary Daurer, Ruth Ernsberger, Nancy Lewis, Phyllis Meek, Peggy and Tom Prevost, Dorothy Robbins, Felicity Trueblood, and John Winn

The Crane is published bimonthly throughout the year. 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 or changes of address should be mailed to Paul Moler, Membership Chairman; see back page for address. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed. Please limit each article to no more than two pages.

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CEDAR KEY CBC

Two new species and record numbers of some old favorites were the highlights of the 2001 Cedar Key Christmas Bird Count on December 28th. The continuing drought and the late arrival of winter temperatures undoubtedly contributed to an unusually low species count of 124.

The new species were a Western Tanager, seen on Hodgson Hill in the city of Cedar Key, and two Lesser Nighthawks flying over the EMT station on Rt. 347 as the eagle-eyed John Hintermister, Don Morrow, and Ron Christen watched.

The number of American Avocets, 72, eclipsed the old record by one, but the count of American Oystercatchers, 1,085, blew away the

old number (a national high in 1990) of 897. Other records were for Red Knots, 112, and Brown-headed Cowbirds, 83.

Much of our entertainment at the count-up depends on the adventures of the airboat group and this year they did not disappoint, with the loss of the "list" overboard being eclipsed by the loss of the airboat itself as it made a dash for the open gulf while its occupants answered the calls of nature. John and Don might be on Deer Island yet, if Ken Litzenberger hadn't responded fearlessly and waded waist deep into the water to retrieve the boat.

Thanks to all who have agreed to try again next year, Friday, December 27th.

—Dale C. Henderson

Bold-faced Species are new to the Count. Numbers in Bold Face represent a new maxima for the count. A T by the number indicates tie for maxima.

Common Loon	40	Lesser Yellowlegs	1	Sedge Wren	11
Pied-billed Grebe	1	Willet	464	Marsh Wren	7
Horned Grebe	39	Spotted Sandpiper	33	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	25
American White Pelican	218	Whimbrel	13	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	7
Brown Pelican	215	Long-billed Curlew	4	Eastern Bluebird	10
Double-crested Cormorant	1944	Marbled Godwit	69	Hermit Thrush	12
Great Blue Heron	81	Ruddy Turnstone	169	American Robin	10044
Great Egret	111	Red Knot	112	Gray Catbird	40
Snowy Egret	82	Sanderling	292	Northern Mockingbird	57
Little Blue Heron	7	Western Sandpiper	674	Brown Thrasher	4
Tricolored Heron	8	Least Sandpiper	246	European Starling	185
Black-cr Night-Heron	19	Peep, sp.	1630	Yellow-rumped Warbler	692
Yellow-cr Night-Heron	6	Dunlin	1255	Yellow-throated Warbler	5
Wood Stork	11T	Short-billed Dowitcher	298	Pine Warbler	12
Black Vulture	32	Common Snipe	3	Prairie Warbler	1
Turkey Vulture	87	American Woodcock	1	Palm Warbler	27
Wood Duck	1	Laughing Gull	365	Black-&-White Warbler	15
Mallard	11	Ring-billed Gull	1986	Common Yellowthroat	37
Green-winged Teal	46	Herring Gull	52	Western Tanager	1
Redhead	36	Caspian Tern	2	Eastern Towhee	56
Lesser Scaup	1282	Royal Tern	19	Chipping Sparrow	9
Long-tailed Duck	2 T	Forster's Tern	400	Vesper Sparrow	2
Bufflehead	180	Black Skimmer	391	Savannah Sparrow	7
Hooded Merganser	38	Eurasian Collared Dove	126	Nelson's Sp-tailed Sparrow	7
Red-breasted Merganser	124	Mourning Dove	69	Seaside Sparrow	4
Duck, sp.	2	Common Ground Dove	44	Song Sparrow	13
Osprey	24	Eastern Screech Owl	13	Swamp Sparrow	34
Bald Eagle	24	Great Horned Owl	11	White-throated Sparrow	9
Northern Harrier	5	Barred Owl	8	Northern Cardinal	48
Cooper's Hawk	1	Lesser Nighthawk	2	Red-winged Blackbird	386
Red-shouldered Hawk	4	Belted Kingfisher	33	Common Grackle	83
Red-tailed Hawk	3	Red-bellied Woodpecker	46	Boat-tailed Grackle	183
American Kestrel	13	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3	Brown-headed Cowbird	83
Clapper Rail	8	Downy Woodpecker	4	American Goldfinch	45
King Rail	1	Northern Flicker	4	House Sparrow	30
Sora	1	Pileated Woodpecker	9		
American Coot	1	Eastern Phoebe	22	Number of Species	124
Black-bellied Plover	176	White-eyed Vireo	2	Number of Individuals	27,527
Semipalmated Plover	91	Blue-headed Vireo	3		
Killdeer	15	Blue Jay	22		
American Oystercatcher	1085	Florida Scrub-Jay	7	Compilers: Ron Christen and Dale	
American Avocet	72	American Crow	21	Henderson. Other observers: Howard Adams,	
Greater Yellowlegs	20	Fish Crow	91	Alice Farkash, Linda Hensley, John	
		Tree Swallow	80	Hintermister, Bob Holt, Grace Kiltie, Andy	
		Carolina Chickadee	13	Kratter, Mary Landsman, Brian McNab, Don	
		Tufted Titmouse	12	Morrow, Barbara Muschlitiz, Nancy Taylor,	
		Carolina Wren	36	Terry Taylor	
		House Wren	9		

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