

The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

Volume 44 Number 1 August-September 2002

EARLY FALL FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, September 7, 8:00 A.M.

Palm Point and Newnans Lake

We'll start off the season with our annual trip to Palm Point. As we explore the small city park and walk along the lake shore, we'll be looking for the early to mid-season migrants such as American Redstarts, Ovenbirds, and Black-and-White, Yellow, Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided, Worm-eating, Prairie, and if we're especially lucky, Cerulean Warblers. We may also find southbound Bobolinks and Black Terns. Depending on the water level of the lake, there may also be shorebirds; Roseate Spoonbills were present this summer. John Winn will lead this trip, and it is one we recommend highly for beginning birders. This trip will last until late morning and will be over in time for participants to have lunch before the program meeting. (See next item and article inside.) Meet at Palm Point Park; from Hawthorne Road (SR-20) go north on Lakeshore Drive (CR-329B) 1.5 miles.

Saturday, September 7, 2:00 P.M.

Program Meeting: Birdwatching in Gainesville Millhopper Branch Library, 3145 NW 43rd St.

Rex Rowan will present this fall's first program. See article inside for details.

Saturday, September 14, 8:00 A.M.

San Felasco Hammock State Preserve, Main Trail

Meet leader Rex Rowan at the Tag Agency (5801 NW 34th Street, just south of US-441) and carpool to the hammock. We'll be expecting Ovenbirds, Veeries, Hooded and Prothonotary Warblers, Acadian Flycatchers, Northern Waterthrushes, Red-eyed Vireos, and, if we're lucky, Kentucky, Golden-winged, and Cerulean Warblers. If you drive your car to the trailhead of San Felasco,

there is a \$2 entrance fee. The walk is a mile or so.

Saturday, September 21, 8:00 A.M.

Palm Point and Newnans Lake

Rex Rowan will lead this second trip to Palm Point. As fall migration nears its peak, we'll be looking for a greater variety of migrant warblers, including Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Tennessee, Blackburnian, and Black-throated Blue, not to mention cuckoos, swallows, and thrushes. Meet at Palm Point Park.

Saturday, September 28, 8:00 A.M.

San Felasco Hammock State Preserve, Cotton-tail Loop (the Progress Park unit)

Later migrants such as Scarlet Tanager, Tennessee, Magnolia, and Black-throated Blue Warblers, as well as Veeries and Swainson's Thrushes will be among our targets for this trip. Rex Rowan will lead us on this mile-long trail along a heavily wooded fence line that surrounds an open field. This is the peak of fall migration and it should be an outstanding morning. Rainy weather may bring the migrants down to our level, so come no matter what the weather. Meet in the parking lot for the Tag Agency (5801 NW 34th Street, just south of US-441).

Saturday, October 5, 6:00 A.M.

Guana River State Park

Meet trip leader John Hintermister at Powers Park, on the north side of Hawthorne Road (SR-20), about 4.4 miles east of Waldo Road. Our first stop will be the Volano Beach boat ramp where we will look for shorebirds and waders, and then we will go on to the hawk platform at Guana River State Park's



North Beach area. We'll spend some time here with the Peregrine Falcon counters who maintain a vigil each fall. With any luck we'll see some falcons ourselves as they head down the beach on their migration route. We'll then go into the forested area of 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 8:00 A.M., it is located on A-1-A on the right hand (south) side of the road before you cross the bridge into Volano Beach. Let John know you'll be meeting us there (462-1109).

Sunday, October 6, 8:00 A.M.

Palm Point and Newnans Lake

Meet Rex Rowan at Palm Point for this final fall visit to Alachua County's premier migrant trap. We'll be hitting the peak of fall migration, looking for such late-season birds as Magnolia, Tennessee, and Black-throated Green Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, Swainson's Thrushes, Indigo Buntings (with the occasional Painted thrown in to keep us awake), and maybe a migrating raptor or two. You just never know what may show up at Palm Point.

FIELD TRIPS: These trips are also described on the SunDial birding line 335-3500, ext. 2473 (BIRD). Call for last minute changes of meeting times and places. It is a good idea to bring water, sunscreen, and mosquito repellent on all trips.

IN THE COUNTY

By Mike Manetz

Summer is considered by many birders to be a time of birding doldrums. The season is not without it's charms. With nesting activity in full swing it's as good a time as any to observe behaviors such as courtship, nest building, and fledging young. But if what excites you is the rare and unusual, summer can be admittedly dull. This wasn't exactly the case this summer.

There were several reports of extraterritorial appearances and even nesting attempts. On May 31 Andy Kratter found a Shiny Cowbird in his yard. This, I believe, was only the third sighting of that species in our area; however, all three sightings have occurred within the last two years, possibly indicating the northward expansion of Shiny's. Gray Catbirds are often reported in our area during summer but, until last year when Dave Leonard reported a nest with eggs, we had no proof

Program Meeting *Birdwatching in Gainesville*

This talk is aimed at three groups of people: (1) those who are only now discovering the pleasures of birdwatching, (2) those experienced birders who are new to the area, and (3) those of you who simply enjoy the outdoors (if you're not in any of those groups, maybe you shouldn't bother to come!). After a brief orientation to birdwatching's "hardware"—the latest in binoculars, books, and other resources (including computer software and websites)—we'll learn about some of our more interesting local birds (did you know that northern Sandhill Cranes have been migrating to Gainesville for only about 50 years?), the very best places to go birdwatching in the Gainesville region, when and how to look for birds, and how to bring birds to your own back yard. Birdwatching is guaranteed to enhance your life—to increase your enjoyment of everything from taking a walk to taking a vacation, from fishing to looking out the kitchen window. What are you waiting for? Please join us at the Millhopper Branch Library, 3145 Northwest 43rd Street on Saturday, September 7th at 2:00 P.M. There will be handouts aplenty. Please carry away anything you find helpful.

of successful breeding. This year Dave's birds returned, along with a pair that produced one nestling at the home of Ned and Kingsli Phillips. Another species that seems determined to establish itself here is the White-winged Dove. There has been a string of reported White-wings for the last three years, the latest being July 15 at John Hintermister's place along 156th. Ave. This species is probably the best candidate for next new breeding bird in the County. Rex Rowan had a surprise visitor at his birdbath on the Fourth of July...a patriotic American Robin. While Robins

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The Crane is printed on recycled paper.

AUDUBON ADVENTURES



The start of the school year means it's time for sponsors of *Audubon Adventures* to send in their checks for this year. If you've been a sponsor in past years, you know how rewarding sponsorship is to you and how important this program is to Alachua County students. For some, it's the first exposure they have to learning about the environment and wild birds and animals. Who know? In one of the classrooms you sponsor there may be a future ornithologist who one day can say, "I became interested in birds back in elementary school from a publication we got called *Audubon Adventures*."

Teachers who have used the materials request it year after year, and students really seem to like every issue, judging from the letters of appreciation they send their sponsors.

The *Audubon Adventures* program is aimed at third, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms. Each sponsored class receives four sets of newsletters, one for each student, crammed with information and activities. There is also a video and a teacher manual with additional information and activities on the topics. The subjects this year will be biomes, with a different focus each time: wetlands, temperate deciduous forests, coastal environ-

can be ubiquitous here in winter, they are rarely seen during summer months.

Newnans Lake continues to be a soupy wild-card in the bird life of the county. If you have been following the saga of Newnans over the past few years you are familiar with the wild fluctuations of water levels that produced some really unbelievable concentrations of birds, some never or rarely recorded here before. This summer water levels have come up a little, but not enough to discourage large numbers of Black-bellied Whistling ducks from taking up residence. A pair of rarer Fulvous Whistling Ducks has been seen,

Monthly Board Meetings

The Alachua Audubon Society Board of Directors meets at 6:30 P.M. on the second Wednesday of each month. All members are welcome to attend. Meetings this year will be at the clubhouse for Mill Pond, 401 NW 48th Boulevard, across from Gainesville Health & Fitness Center on Newberry Road.

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ments, and deserts.

Alachua Audubon members sponsored 45 classrooms last years—with over 1,000 students receiving high-quality environmental education. We hope to reach at least that number this year with your help! This is a tax-deductible contribution on your part.

Please complete this form (or reproduce it) and mail it with your check for \$42 payable to Alachua Audubon for each classroom you wish to sponsor. We'd like to receive it by September 28, as our order needs to go in to National Audubon right after that so that there is no delay in getting the materials into their classrooms. Thanks for your support.

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along with the return of scores of White Pelicans. All these species would have been considered incredible just a few years ago. Roseate Spoonbills have been a visitors to the lake in small numbers the past couple of summers, but this year they appeared to be unusually numerous. Geoff Parks reported 20 of them July 27. Also of interest was the reappearance of a Great White Heron spotted by John Hintermister during a death-defying canoe excursion on the lake.

Fall migration has begun. Several warblers have checked in as of this writing. We had an early record for Louisiana Waterthrush, plus a very early Black and White Warbler. Prairie Warbler and American Redstart have been recorded. By the time you receive this issue of *The Crane* Yellow, Cerulean, and Kentucky Warblers will all be possibilities. While Palm Point, Bolen Bluff, and San Felasco Hammock will be the best places to check, don't neglect Gum Root Swamp, Camp



Canal, and the new portion of San Felasco accessed behind the Progress Center off Highway 441.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through August 1, 2002.

Bob and Erika's Honduras Adventure

When our friends Kay and Sara Eoff invited us to join them for a trip to Honduras to go white-water rafting in a virgin tropical rain forest biosphere preserve, how could we say no? We didn't. Along with Donna Strickland, we drove to Miami and flew to San Pedro Sula where we rented a car. Even before leaving the airport, I saw two life birds: two Clay-colored Robins and two Boat-billed Flycatchers (not to mention a White-tailed Hawk hovering over the open space of the airfield).

The next day we drove to Copan, a major Mayan ruin and interesting small town where we saw lots of interesting people, ruins, and birds. The following day, after spending the morning at the Mayan ruins, we drove off toward the capital city of Tegucigalpa. There, we met up with the rest of our group--Josh and Sally Dickinson and Celinda Villeda. Celinda invited us to a grand supper, where we met the outfitters--river rafting guides--supermen who would be taking us on a 10 day rafting adventure in the wilderness. Their names are Jorge Salaverri, Rosendo Mejia, Luis Andrade, and the naturalist Robert Gallardo.

The next morning was the start of day one. We loaded everything in three 4-wheel drive vehicles and headed out toward the wild eastern part of Honduras. It took all day to drive to the end of the paved road system and then the end of the dirt road system and then the end of the jeep trail that ends at Bonanza, the last tiny little outpost of "civilization" on the outer fringes of the Rio Platano Biosphere Preserve.

We camped in tents in the schoolyard at Bonanza, and began day two with an early breakfast. At 9 A.M. we set out on the long hike into the preserve. The trail begins as a jeep trail, but soon narrows to a mule trail that goes up and down the gentle mountain slopes. (There are no roads within about 15 miles of the Rio Platano anywhere along its entire length.) We had to cross a low range of mountains to get into the watershed of the Rio Platano. There, we entered virgin rain forest. It was glorious. Among the big trees were mahogany, a species of podocarpus, and sweetgum--all up to 150 feet tall and often over four feet in trunk diameter. There were bromeli-

ads and orchids everywhere, and, of course, lots of new and interesting birds. At noon, we stopped for lunch at a mountain stream, where we washed the mud out of our wet, slimy shoes and soaked our already tired feet. After a rest of perhaps an hour, we continued on, reaching our final destination on the Rio Platano at about 8 P.M. A team of mules led in by Rosendo had brought all the heavy equipment like the rafts, tents, food, etc. They had left after us, passed us on the trail, and had begun to set up camp before we arrived.

On day three, we set out in three inflated rubber rafts with all the equipment, food, etc. lashed in the middle of the rafts, and four people, one at each corner, in each raft. For Jorge, our leader, this was his twenty-first long rafting trip on the Rio Platano. For Rosendo, a Pech Indian who has lived his entire life of perhaps 50 some years on this river, this was home. For the rest of us, this was a very new and exciting adventure. We spent the next six days running rapids, scrambling over rocky portages, paddling rafts, looking at birds, monkeys, deer, peccaries, butterflies, orchids, etc., fishing, bathing in the river, and camping by the river--all in virgin tropical rainforest wilderness. It was hard and it was glorious. We got jungle rot on our feet, redbugs and ticks on our skin, blisters on our hands, ant bites, and more life birds than I could count until I got back home. No one got diarrhea or had any serious injuries.

On the eighth day, we reached Las Marias, a small Pech and Mosquito Indian village on the lower Rio Platano. There, we said goodbye to our rafts and to Rosendo, whom we had quickly come to like and admire. On day nine, we loaded up into dugout canoes equipped with outboard motors, and headed down to the mouth of the Rio Platano and then, by intracoastal waterway, along the coast to the small town of Palacios. Even on this day, there were many new birds to see and interesting people to meet. On day ten we traveled by single engine airplane to La Ceiba and then on back to San Pedro Sula. The next day we flew back to Miami. Total cost of the trip was about \$1600 per person plus bites and bruises. The food was good, the people were wonderful, and the experience was a once in a lifetime adventure. If you'd like to find out more about taking a rafting trip, visit www.honduras.com/moskitia.

So, what birds did we see? A lot. Robert Gallardo saw 175 species. I saw 153, mostly with Robert's aid in pointing them out and almost always relying on his identification. If you'd like to see the bird list, you can e-mail me at rwsimons@bellsouth.net.

--Bob Simons

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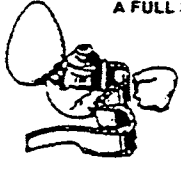
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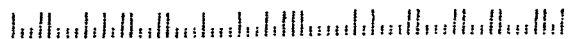
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