

The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

Volume 44 Number 2 October-November 2002

FALL FIELD TRIPS

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

Guana River State Park

Meet trip leader John Hintermeister at 6:00 A.M. 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 Vilano Beach boat ramp where we'll look for shorebirds and waders, and then we'll go on to the hawk platform at the state park's North Beach area. We'll spend some time here with the 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 to the forested south end of the park and look for thrushes, tanagers, and migrating warblers. The trip will end around noon, in time to go to lunch at one of the local beach communities. If it's more convenient for you to meet at the Vilano Beach boat ramp at 8:00 A.M., it's located on A-1-A on the right hand (south) side of the road before you cross the bridge into Vilano Beach. Let John know you'll be meeting us there (462-1109). Trip difficulty: 2

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

Palm Point and Newnans Lake

This trip is our final visit this fall 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. Meet Rex Rowan at Palm Point Park; from Hawthorne Road (SR-20) go north on Lakeshore Drive (CR-329B) 1.5 miles. Trip difficulty: 1

Saturday, October 12, 7:00 A.M.

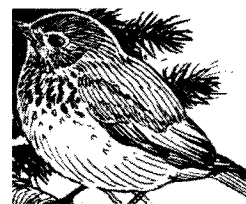
Ravine State Gardens (Palatka)

Meet leader Ron Robinson at Powers Park on the north side of Hawthorne Road (SR-20), about 4.4 miles east of Waldo Road. We'll carpool from there to Ravine Gardens. This park is situated beside the St. Johns River, a natural migration corridor. Its two-mile trail traverses a variety of habitats—wet areas, steep embankments, thick undergrowth, developed understory, and a tall climax canopy that is visible from tree top level from a paved walking trail—and should provide excellent birding. We'll be finished by noon. Bring a lunch. Trip difficulty: 2

Saturday, October 19, 8:00 A.M.

Paynes Prairie, Bolen Bluff Trail

This will be a half-day trip through the uplands on the south rim of Paynes Prairie. We'll be looking for wrens, early sparrows, and such later migrants as Bay-breasted and Black-throated Green Warblers, Indigo Buntings, Gray-cheeked and Wood Thrushes, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. We may even be there when fall migration comes to an end—at the precise moment when the winter's first Yellow-rumped Warbler flutters into view! Meet at the Bolen Bluff trailhead on US-441 4.3 miles south of SR-331 (Williston Road). Bring some water and dress appropriately to ward off the mosquitoes, which can be fierce. Trip difficulty: 2



Saturday, October 26, 7:30 A.M.

Hague Dairy

In addition to the huge flocks of Brown-headed

Cowbirds—which may include a Yellow-headed Blackbird or two—we can expect to see such open-country species as Eastern Phoebe, Killdeer, Eastern Bluebirds, Palm Warblers, Eastern Meadowlarks, Marsh and Sedge Wrens, perhaps some sparrows and pipits, and such raptors as American Kestrels, Cooper's Hawks, Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks, and occasionally Merlins. Join trip leader Michael Meisenberg for this half-day trip by meeting at the Tag Agency, 5801 NW 34th Street, just south of US-441. Trip difficulty: 2

Saturday, November 9, 7:00 A.M.
Plants of the Okefenokee

Dr. Dana Griffin will lead this trip to Stephen Foster State Park on the SW edge of the Okefenokee Swamp. Dr. Griffin's trips are always educational and entertaining, in terms of both the plants and his stories. Bring your lunch. There's an inexpensive canoe concession in the park, so you may want to take an afternoon paddle out on Billy's Lake if the water levels cooperate. Meet at the Tag Agency, 5801 NW 34th Street, just south of US-441. Trip difficulty: 1

Saturday, November 24, 8:00 A.M.
Paynes Prairie, La Chua Trail

Meet at DEP District HQ: going east on University Avenue, cross Waldo Road, turn right onto SE 15th Street, and proceed 2.5 miles. When the road turns left, keep going straight across the 3-way intersection, through the gate, and down the road to the parking lot. *Be on time; when the ranger shuts the gate, there's no way in.* Howard Adams will lead this half-day walk onto the Paynes Prairie basin. The water levels have changed so much in the past few years that we never know quite what will appear. Northern Harriers, Sedge Wrens, Palm Warblers, and Swamp, Song, and Savannah Sparrows are likely, but there's no telling what we'll find. The fun is in the looking, and there's nearly always a surprise at La Chua. Trip difficulty: 2

TRIP DIFFICULTY

- 1=Most of trip is within easy access to the car and/or walking on level ground of one mile or less.
- 2=Trip may involve walking on uneven ground over distances of 1-2 miles.
- 3=Trip may involve elevation change, uneven ground, and/or distances of greater than 2 miles

FIELD TRIPS: These trips are also listed at the Sun Dial 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 something to drink.

Audubon Assembly 2002

By Katie Gill, Audubon of Florida
Assembly Coordinator

Last year's Audubon Assembly was totally awesome—ask any of the 400 of us who were there. We promise this year it will be as good, or better, in every regard!

This year's assembly will be held October 24-26 at the Orlando Airport Marriott and will emphasize the importance of Florida's Water and Audubon's mission of connecting our communities and nature. There will be two full days of work sessions and activities focused on setting this year's conservation goals throughout the state. So, join hundreds of Audubon members, volunteers, leaders, allies, scientists, community leaders, conservationists, fellow birders and your friends for the largest conference in Florida dedicated to connecting our communities with nature. Enjoy a variety of interactive workshops, plenary sessions and renowned speakers. Learn how to engage your communities with Florida's conservation issues, and help us plan Audubon's future course to conserve, protect and restore Florida's natural heritage. And get connected with nature on our myriad of field trips.

Registration for the conference is \$125, which includes all meals, receptions, a Friday evening visit and dinner at Disney's Animal Kingdom, and Saturday night banquet dinner. There is a registration package inserted in the August *Florida Naturalist*. In addition, there is complete up-to-date information about fieldtrips, workshops, volunteer opportunities and other exciting activities on our website: audubonofflorida.org. See you there!

For room reservations, call 800-766-5752 or 407-851-9000 and be sure to ask for the Audubon of Florida Rate of just \$99 per night.

Around the County

By Mike Manetz

Fall migration was very good to Alachua County birders in the weeks leading up to the fall North American Migration Count. By Late August there were already reports of ten-warbler-

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The Crane is printed on recycled paper.

species days, often including the normally rare Kentucky Warbler. Kentuckys have been regularly reported from several locations since then. The best spot in early fall was Bolen Bluff, where Rex Rowan found the first of several prized Cerulean Warblers reported from the Bluff in succeeding days. Other good sightings there included two Golden-winged Warblers by Geoff Parks on Sept. 11, and a great haul by Andy Kratter, Ivan Samuels, and Stefanie Krantz that included an early Tennessee Warbler, four Blackburnians, eight Chestnut-sided, a Kentucky, and the fall's first Scarlet Tanager. But the most interesting birds at Bolen Bluff this early fall were the Black Rails, at least two, discovered Sept. 1 on the prairie basin by Howard Adams. Howard didn't actually see these birds, (because of their diminutive size and secretiveness no one ever does) but rather heard them calling "Kee-kee-do" from the platform at the end of the trail. In the ten years I have been birding here, this is only the fourth report of a species that is possibly present every winter and may even occasionally breed here!

Other good warbler spots included the bike trails at San Felasco Hammock, accessed from the Progress Center on Hwy. 441, where Kentucky Warblers have been seen repeatedly, the Millhopper Road entrance to San Felasco Hammock, where an Alachua Audubon field trip Sept. 15 recorded twelve warbler species, (including a very cooperative Kentucky), the north rim of Paynes Prairie where Ivan Samuels found yet another Cerulean Warbler, and Camp Canal where Jerry Krummerich discovered a locally rare fall Swainson's Warbler.

Shorebirds have been hard to come by since Newnans resumed the status of Lakehood, the only viable local spot being the Hague Dairy. I checked the small pond across from the large concrete compost bins south of the main buildings several times in September and found that during short spells of no rain the pond subsided enough to attract shorebirds, which included small numbers of Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpipers, and a high of 40 Least Sandpipers, with an added bonus of five Semipalmated Sandpipers.

The agricultural fields at the north end of the Dairy property are often good for swallows in spring and fall. This fall on two occasions I found enough Barn Swallows to attract my attention and was able to pick out small numbers of both Cliff and Bank Swallows among them.

Ruth Palinek had a real treat the last week of August. An adult male Rufous Hummingbird appeared at her feeders near Newberry Road west

of I-75. It may well have been the return of an old friend, as she played host to an immature male Rufous all last winter. Since then another male Rufous has made an appearance at the property of Greg Hart in Alachua.

Another interesting story this fall was the continuing build up of White-winged Doves, often noted in past columns. White wings have been seen with increasing frequency here over the last year, but only in small numbers. Nothing could have prepared us for the report of no less than 36 of them at the property of Peter and Regina Reti in the Farms of Kanapaha subdivision. Exactly where these birds came from and how long they intend to stay is not yet clear, but the continuing presence of a flock this size and the aggressive colonial expansion of other dove species suggests an air of permanence.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through Sept. 18.

ORV Damage

The Suwannee-St. Johns Group of the Sierra Club is sponsoring an outing in the Ocala National Forest on Saturday, November 2, to examine damage in the forest caused by Off Road Vehicle (ORV) use. Guy Marwick, Marion Audubon, will talk about the damage in the pavilion at Silver River State Park beginning at 10 A.M. After a picnic lunch in the park, a limited number (10 people) will take a six-mile hike on the Florida Trail near the Lake Delancey area where some significant damage has occurred. There is a good chance of seeing Florida Scrub Jay in the scrub habitat. Others not going on the hike may just enjoy the beautiful Lake Delancey area on their own. Space is limited to 30 people for the talk and 10 people for the hike. Call Julie Thaler at 331-8834 to reserve a spot.

NATIVE PLANT SALE

The annual Fall Native Plant Sale at Morningside Nature Center, 3540 East University Avenue, will be Saturday, October 5, from 8:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. There will be a wildflower walk, educational displays, and children's activities. For sale, in addition to plants, are birdhouses, birdseed, discounted University Press books, coffee, snacks, and lunches. Plants are provided by local native plant growers. Payment is by check or cash only, no credit cards. The sale is cosponsored by the Friends of Morningside, the Paynes Prairie Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, and the Gainesville Division of Nature Operations, and 25% of the proceeds will benefit educational pro-

grams at Gainesville's nature parks. On Friday, October 4, there is a private sale of plants only for members of the sponsoring organizations from 5:30-7:00 P.M., but non-members may join at the gate.

BIRDSEED OPTIONS

In years past, this issue of *The Crane* would contain an insert for the Friends of Morningside Birdseed Savings Day sale. But this year the Friends are not having the sale. Still, the next time you go to refill the birdfeeder and find that you're out of seed, you have many options on where to go for restocking your stores.

Most supermarkets, home and garden centers, hardware stores, and even some department stores, carry some birdseed, both sunflower seeds and mixes. However, for the most part the mixes contain a lot of "filler" type seeds, ones that aren't especially attractive to many of the birds which visit feeders. Fortunately, some other choices are available.

Bubba Scales' Wild Birds Unlimited store in the Millhopper Shopping Center is now open and carries a variety of seeds. There are several mixes, some for general use and some to attract specific birds, as well as sunflower seeds in pure form or mixed. Bubba offers a discount to birders who buy large amounts and leave seed with him for storage and pick up as needed. He will be selling seed at the Native Plant Sale (see article elsewhere) at Morningside on October 5th.

And for those of you that live in the western part of the county, Archer Farm Supply now carries the new line of Purina birdseed, Wild Bird Chow, and are offering Alachua Audubon members 10% off retail prices. This birdseed comes in nearly a dozen varieties. If you want more information about it, there is an advertisement in the latest *Audubon* magazine at page 13 or visit Purina's website at www.wildbirdchow.com.

—Michael Meisenburg

Members' Trips

FIREHOLE WINTER BIRDS

Editor's Note: Dana Griffin, who will be leading our field trip to the Okefenokee on November 9th, and his wife Nancy visited Yellowstone National Park last winter. Their report follows. You'll note not a single reference to any of the park's plants, so be sure to bring your botanical questions to the field trip.

Yielding to a whim, nurtured by a cheap internet package tour, we took off recently for Yellowstone National Park. We wanted to see the place in winter and, while there, sample her bird

life. Our base of operations was the Old Faithful Snow Lodge.

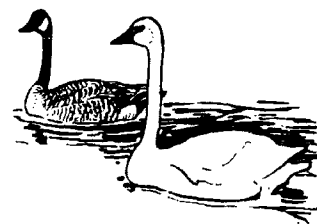
Birding around the lodge was neat but not what one would call electric—lots of Common Ravens and Clark's Nutcrackers, a few Black Billed Magpies, Gray Jays, and Mountain Chickadees. It was the birds of Yellowstone's rivers that really got us excited.

The park's larger rivers run free in winter. This is particularly true of the Firehole, a world famous trout fishery that courses through a geyser basin. Mineral rich thermal inputs insure a plentiful food chain starting with a robust population of aquatic plants. The Firehole has no lack of groceries for animals, feathered and otherwise, throughout the year. And if you visit the river in winter, the bird that will be hardest to overlook is the Trumpeter Swan. We saw a dozen or more. At one stop the Trumpeters were taking a rest along the riverbank while a small, pewter gray bird, an American Dipper, actively searched for aquatic insects, maneuvering between and around the swans. This gray mite gave the much larger birds little or no notice.

Canada Geese are the most abundant bird species on the river in winter, but they are obliged to share space with a bevy of ducks: Common Mergansers, Mallards, Ring-necks, American Wigeons, Buffleheads, and both species of Goldeneyes. The Common Goldeneye was less common than Barrow's Goldeneye (the Firehole played host to all three species of *Bucephala* known from North America, a neat bit of birding trivia!). The Goldeneye drakes are perhaps most easily distinguished by the shape of the white head patch - oval to roundish in the Common and, to go by the field guides, crescent or "comma-shaped" in Barrow's. Actually, some western birders say the Barrow's Goldeneye has a head patch that is the shape of a bear claw. Supposedly, when you grow up in grizzly country, a lot gets defined in terms of the great bear.

We defined our winter tour of Yellowstone as pure fun. If you'd like to get in on this form of outdoor adventure, here is a contact:

Yellowstone National Park Lodges
P. O. Box 165
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190
(307) 344-7311
www.TravelYellowstone.com



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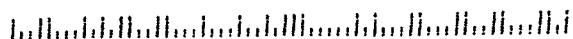
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