

The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

Volume 45 Number 1 August-September 2003

EARLY FALL FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, September 6, 8:00 AM

Palm Point and Newnans Lake

Meet at Palm Point Park; from Hawthorne Road (SR-20) go north on Lakeshore Drive (CR-329B) 1.5 miles. John Winn will lead Alachua Audubon's inaugural trip for the new season. Over the years, Palm Point has been one of area's best birding spots during fall migration, with rarities such as Cerulean Warbler turning up occasionally. As we explore the small city park and walk along the lake shore, we'll be looking for early to mid-season migrants such as American Redstarts, Ovenbirds, and Black-and-White, Yellow, Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided, Worm-eating, and Prairie Warblers. Trip difficulty: 1

Saturday, September 13, 8:00 AM

San Felasco Hammock - Main Loop

Meet at San Felasco trailhead on Millhopper Road just east of I-75. Don't forget the **\$2.00/vehicle access fee**. San Felasco's meandering streams,

sinkholes, ridges, and slopes set the stage for a very diverse bird habitat. During migration, many species of passerine bird can be found foraging for fuel throughout the hammock. We'll be expecting Ovenbirds, Veeries, Hooded and Prothonotary Warblers, Acadian Flycatchers, Northern Water-

thrushes, Red-eyed Vireos, and, if we're lucky, Kentucky, Golden-winged, and Cerulean Warblers. Trip difficulty: 2



Alachua Audubon Society opens field trip season on September 6. If you want to go birding with experts, then your next eight months have been planned. Bird enthusiasts of all skill levels are

invited to get into the field with an Audubon field trip leader to learn more about birds, natural history, Florida's beautiful places, and Alachua Audubon's activities. Field trip leaders do their best to keep participants comfortable and entertained in the field, but each participant should prepare according to the length and difficulty of each trip. Always bring water, a snack, and gear to protect you from the elements and challenges that nature presents. This field trip schedule is subject to change. Participants can obtain schedule updates by visiting Alachua Audubon's web site or by calling Wild Birds Unlimited [352-381-1997].

Sunday, September 14, 7:30 AM
Windsor

Meet at Power's Park at the southern end of Newnan's Lake on the north side of Hawthorne Road (SR-20), about 4.4 miles east of Waldo Road. Bubba Scales will lead this trip to a Water Management District

property newly opened to the public. The new Windsor trails provide access to oak hammocks and a cypress swamp along the eastern margin of Newnan's Lake and should prove to be a productive location in which to observe a variety of south-

Alachua Audubon Society Website

www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud

Add it to your list of favorites and visit us for all the latest updates and/or changes for field trips and programs, as well as information on good birding spots in the area.

Coming Events

Program Meetings

Due to scheduling conflicts at the library, this year's first program meeting won't be until December 13. All program meetings for the year will be held at the Millhopper Branch Library, 3145 Northwest 43rd Street.

bound migrants. Trip difficulty: 1

Saturday, September 20 Migratory Bird Count

Each fall, birders scour the region to get a snapshot of bird migration. Mike Manetz, the event organizer, is seeking experienced birders to help with the count but birders of most skill levels are welcome. For more details, participants should call Mike at 377-1683.

Sunday, September 21, 8:00 AM Bolen Bluff

Meet at Bolen Bluff trailhead on the east side of U.S. 441 on the south rim of Paynes Prairie (4.3 miles south of Williston Road). Michael Meisenburg will lead this trip to one of Gainesville's perennial favorite birding locations. Bolen Bluff rambles through the first patch of forested land that south-bound migrants find after crossing the prairie. Assiduous and sometimes lucky birders have found as many as 15 species of warbler here in the fall. Trip difficulty: 2

Saturday, September 27, 8:00 AM O'Leno State Park

Meet in the parking lot of the Winn-Dixie on the east side of U.S. 441 in High Springs and prepare to carpool from there. Don't forget the **\$3.25/vehicle entry fee**. John Hintermister will lead yet another quest for migrants in one of the state's most enchanting natural areas. Participants will explore several ecosystems from the mixed hardwood river banks near where the Santa Fe River sinks below the surface to the sand pine scrub of the uplands. Trip difficulty: 2

Saturday, October 4, 6:00 AM Guana River State Park

Meet trip leader John Hintermister at 6:00 A.M. in the Publix parking lot at the intersection of NW 39th Ave. and NW 13th St. or at the Vilano Boat Ramp on A-1-A at 8:00 A.M. **[Please call John at 386-462-1109 if you plan to meet at Vilano.]** This trip offers an opportunity to watch Peregrine Falcons fly along the coast on their migration route and to visit with some local birders who

maintain vigil there during falcon migration. The coastal maritime hammock along Guana River can also be very productive for migrating passerine birds. This trip officially ends at noon but some may stay to have lunch in town and to bird in the afternoon. Trip difficulty: 3

Legend for trip difficulty

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

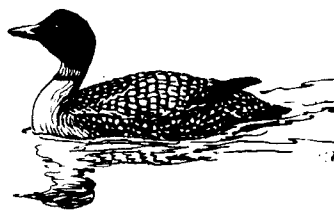
Field Trip Season Birding Contest

Alachua Audubon presents field trip participants with an opportunity to win a copy of the new *Sibley Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*. Field trip leaders will be handing out checklists of Florida birds so that participants can list the species that they see on all trips. At the end of the season, the five participants with the highest totals for numbers of species seen throughout the season will receive a prize.

AROUND THE COUNTY...

by Bubba Scales

Upon Andy Kratter's March 25 report of a northward flight of Common Loons over his southeast Gainesville home, several area birders made morning skywatch a habitual practice and succeeded at witnessing some part of loon migration. Andy's own report of 28 birds within a five minute period on April 4 was the most impressive, but Rex Rowan's diligence paid off May 12 when he observed seven



The Crane is published six times during 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.

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 them 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 grasslands, coniferous forests, nature in your neighborhood, and water, wildlife, and people.

lingering loons on Newnan's Lake, three of which were in breeding plumage.

Birders found several other winter residents lingering in the area well into the spring. Mary Landsman and others found an Eastern Phoebe and five species of sparrow, including Song Sparrow, along La Chua trail on April 9. The phoebe was a late record for the county and the sparrow ties a county record for the latest of its species in the past ten years. A Savannah Sparrow was last observed around the La Chua trail on May 21, tying a county record.

Even more remarkable was an American Pipit observed at the Post Office Pond by Rex

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 again be at the clubhouse for Mill Pond, 401 NW 48th Boulevard, across from Gainesville Health & Fitness Center on Newberry Road.

Name _____
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Classes @ \$42 _____
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You may list me as a sponsor in *The Crane*.
Yes _____ No _____

Alachua Audubon members sponsored 39 classrooms last years--with nearly 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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Rowan on May 16. Becky Enneis and Bob Carroll found the bird again on May 17 making it a late record for the county by more than two weeks and the second latest record for Florida by one day. But on the same day, Mike Manetz broke a state record for the latest Brewer's Blackbird by two days when he found one at Hague Dairy. The previous late record, from 1966, was also an Alachua County bird.

In addition to these late records, an early record was set as well. Ivan Samuels reported Yellow-breasted Chats singing in Paynes Prairie on April 7, an early county record by three days. Otherwise, spring migration left most Alachua County birders with a desire to travel outside of county. Those who went to Cedar Key on April 26 had their thirst for migratory birds slaked and flooded in a single morning. While this trip took place outside of the county, the phenomenal experience of the birders who attended it merits some attention here. They experienced a fallout and thus were treated to ample and long looks at myriad warblers, thrushes, tanagers, orioles, and more. Rex Rowan described it as Alachua

Deadline for the next Crane is September 22

The Crane 3

Audubon's best field trip ever!

Alachua County's spring migration didn't pass without a few other highlights. On April 30, Andy Kratter observed a Gray-cheeked Thrush at Boulware Springs and Mike Manetz found a Veery singing on Bolen Bluff Trail on May 5. White-rumped Sandpipers evaded area birders for most of the spring but were finally observed twice, once in Alachua on May 6 by Bob Wallace and then again on June 3 at Chapman's Pond by Pat Burns.

On April 4, Geoff Parks reported that a Broad-winged Hawk had returned to Hogtown Creek near the Loblolly Environmental Center. Last year, broad-wings reared young there. No nest was found this year, but at least one hawk was still present as of June 25. Carmine Lanciani reported the first Mississippi Kite of the season on April 13 and several birders reported Swallow-tailed Kites from various places around town throughout the spring and early summer.

Some other miscellaneous spring and summer highlights included the following: a Canada Goose first observed by Marcy Jones at the Post Office Pond on April 11 was seen regularly through April 28. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks have had a banner year in the county as evidenced by Scott Borderieux' April 29 count of 73 at the UF Horse

Teaching Unit on SW 56th Avenue. On May 5, Mike Manetz counted 928 Bobolinks flying out of the wild rice along the margin of Lake Alice. Michael Meisenburg observed a Gull-billed Tern, the county's fifth ever, foraging on the ponds near the Millhopper Road fisheries on May 15. Bachman's Sparrows have returned to a forested area along Cross Creek Road. Mike Manetz heard one there on May 15. Andy Kratter observed a small flock of Marbled Godwits flying over Newnan's Lake on July 2.

Birders should keep their eyes and ears open for Gray Catbirds each summer from here on out. For the third consecutive summer, this species has nested in Alachua County. Evidence suggests that they are expanding their range. But you should always have your eyes and ears open for the changing behavior of birds and the changing birds of the seasons, shouldn't you? In fact, it has already begun again. Bryant Roberts found a Black-and-White Warbler in San Felasco Hammock on July 7. That ties the early record for the species in Alachua County. On July 15, Ingrid and I observed the fall's first Louisiana Waterthrush, also in San Felasco Hammock.

Thank you to all whom submitted reports through July 31.

The Pond

No one needs to explain to birders the appeal of ponds. They are proven magnets for birds. But in what seems like two lifetimes of circling and traversing ponds, we've rarely encountered one like the nameless pond we stumbled upon recently at the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in south Texas.

This particular pond receives overflow from Willow Lake, but at the time of our visit it was almost dry. Thousands of small frogs had gathered in what little water remained. They were quite vulnerable to predators as we soon observed. Several western ribbon snakes were skimming the water's surface, probably mesmerized by such a banquet. Which frog to grab?

It was early morning. The Plain Chachalacas were creating quite a din from the forest canopy. The chorus soon had a second and then a third voice added: Great Kiskadees and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers. One of the Kiskadees flew down and perched on an old snag sticking up out of the water. We were sure the bird was going for one of the frogs, but, no, it had its eye on one of the snakes! With a deft swoop, the Kiskadee caught a small snake and returned to its perch. The little snake bit down on the bird's bill, but the contest wasn't at all even. The bird proceeded to beat the

snake against the snag until its meal was subdued. The snake then disappeared down the flycatcher's throat. We wished we had caught this whole drama on tape. As it is, it's only a memory. But there was no time for memories, at least not now.

From across the pond a melodious song reached us. It took a minute to pinpoint the author--a Clay-colored Robin. No, make that two robins! They were in the business of nest-building, but our hearts sank when we saw off to the side of their home site a Brown-headed Cowbird. The nest parasite was observing all this activity with interest. Why couldn't the cowbird select an English Sparrow's nest for parasitising?

Our ears then caught the low guttural call of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. We scanned until locating the bird, passing by an unusually large spherical wad of Spanish moss hanging from a limb. Later, a refuge naturalist told us this basketball size mass of moss was one of two known nests in the refuge of the Rose-throated Becard. Alas, we did not observe the bird, but complain we will not. Something needed to be saved for a second visit. And, after all, we had just come off one of the best pond birding experiences of our lifetimes!

— Dana & Nancy Griffin

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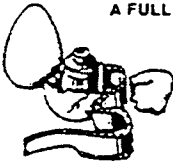
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August-September 2003

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