

# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 45 Number 2 October-November 2003*

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## FALL FIELD TRIPS

**Saturday, October 4, 6:00 AM**

**Guana River State Park**

Meet trip leader Howard Adams at 6:00 A.M. in the Publix parking lot at the intersection of NW 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue and NW 13<sup>th</sup> Street or at the Vilano Boat Ramp on A-1-A at 8:00 A.M. **[please call Howard at 352-373-4270 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 thrushes, tanagers, warblers, and other 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

**Sunday, October 5, 7:30 AM**

**Hatchet Creek**

Meet trip leader Bubba Scales in the Publix parking lot at the intersection of NW 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue and NW 13<sup>th</sup> Street. The Hatchet Creek tract is a newly acquired Water Management District property that has recently been opened to the public. The Hatchet Creek floodplain can be a refuge for migratory songbirds and the adjacent uplands shelter a healthy population of Brown-headed Nuthatches. Trip difficulty: 3

**Sunday, October 12, 8:00 AM**

**Palm Point**

Meet at Palm Point Park (From SR-20 north on

Lakeshore Drive 1.5 miles). Trip leader Mike Manetz and participants will explore this migrant hot-spot for a push of late warblers, tanagers, thrushes, and more. The lake margins can often be good spots to find early arriving winter residents such as Eastern Phoebe and sparrow species. Trip difficulty: 1

### Program Meetings

Mark your calendar now for the year's first program on December 13. All program meetings for the year will be held at the Millhopper Branch Library, 3145 Northwest 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, on Saturdays at 2:00 P.M. Please plan to join us for the informative programs, refreshments, and good company.

**Saturday, October 18, 8:00 AM**

**Bolen Bluff**

Meet trip leader Ivan Samuel 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). With quick access to the open prairie basin and a forested refuge for birds having just flown across it, Bolen Bluff offers an opportunity to view early sparrows and late warblers. Trip difficulty: 2

**Saturday, October 25, 6:30 AM**

**Cedar Key**

Meet trip leader Rex Rowan in the parking lot of

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*Alachua Audubon Society Website*

**[www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud](http://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.

the Target store on Archer Road just east of I-75. Cedar Key is a quintessential Florida birding destination where birders can often view flocks of shorebirds over one shoulder and flocks of songbirds over the other. A diversity of habitat and the timing of this trip make for a great opportunity to see migration across many families and orders of birds. Participants may want to stay in Cedar Key for lunch. Trip difficulty: 2

**Saturday, November 1, 8:00 AM**

**Cone's Dike via Camp Canal**

**Limited to 12 participants** - Please call Wild Birds Unlimited [352-381-1997] to make a reservation. 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). Trip leader Mike Manetz will escort the group to a restricted access which we will use by special permission. There we will bird a resource-rich section of Cone's Dike Trail. Among other exciting finds, birders observed Clay-colored and Fox Sparrows and Least Flycatchers in this area last year. Trip difficulty: 3

**Sunday, November 8, 7:30 AM**

**Orange Creek**

Explore one of Alachua County's newly discovered birding locations. Field trip leader, Rex Rowan, says that Orange Creek has some of best sparrow habitat he has seen in this area. Meet Rex at Powers Park and then follow him to Orange Creek for some early sparrow season exploration. Early November also tends to be a good time for flycatchers and wrens. Trip difficulty: 2

**Saturday, November 15, 6:30 AM**

**Hamilton County Mines**

Meet trip leader Jerry Krummrich at the Tag Agency on NW 34<sup>th</sup> Street just south of US-441 (across from ABC Liquors) or call Wild Birds Unlimited [352-381-1997] to arrange to meet closer to the destination. These flooded phosphate mines attract many species of waterfowl, rails, shorebirds, and more. In recent years, field trip participants have also found Horned and Eared grebes and a Peregrine Falcon. The brush along the pond margins usually holds a good variety of sparrows and other passerines. Bring a lunch and plan to stay into the afternoon. Trip difficulty: 3

**Saturday, November 22, 8:00 AM**

**La Chua Trail**

Meet at DEP District HQ: going east on University Avenue, cross Waldo Road, turn right onto SE 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and proceed about two 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.** La Chua Trail may be Alachua County's premier perennial winter hotspot for passerines and raptors. From the diverse forest of the prairie margin to the grassy and often wet prairie flatland, this hike offers an opportunity to see it all. Meet park ranger and Audubon guide Howard Adams at the trailhead. Trip difficulty: 2

**Sunday, November 30, 8:00 AM**

**Chapman's Pond**

There are few better places in the area to make very careful observations of ducks and wading birds than Chapman's Pond. Spotting scope views of birds are the norm from the observation area. Shorebirds are often spotted along the edge of the pond and warblers and sparrows are usually a bonus. Chapman's Pond has been one of Ron Robinson's special projects! Meet him near the pond at Home Depot on Tower Road about 0.3 miles south of Newberry Road and enjoy an informative trip. Trip difficulty: 1

**Sunday, December 7, 7:00 AM**

**Ocklawaha Prairie and Sunnyhill Farms**

Explore vestigial meanders of the Ocklawaha River in two little-known but resource rich Water Management District lands in Marion County. With special access privileges, we'll drive parts of the levee at Ocklawaha scanning for ducks, raptors, and sparrows. In the afternoon, we'll canvas an enormous and often extremely productive sparrow field at Sunnyhill Farms. Meet trip leader Bubba Scales at Kash 'n' Karry at 2002 SW 34<sup>th</sup> Street. Bring a lunch or some money for lunch at the Dam Diner. Trip difficulty: 3

**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.

*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.

## ***AROUND THE COUNTY...***

*by Bubba Scales*

If you've ever cursed fall warblers when your eyes water under the strain in your stiffening neck or when you can't tell bill from tail because your binoculars shake like a violin, then look for warblers on the ground. Warbler neck may have been the reason that John Hintermister spent so much time looking for warblers in the ground cover at San Felasco Hammock on August 26. Or, maybe it was because his attention was drawn there by the chip notes of Kentucky Warblers—five of them, in fact. On that morning, John's five Kentuckies were more of that species than anyone has ever reported seeing in Alachua County, and it gets better. In the same spot back on August 6, John and Mike Manetz saw one Kentucky Warbler, breaking the early county record by two days. Had they not seen that bird on the 6<sup>th</sup>, then Pat Burns would have broken the early record with the bird that she saw in Alachua on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

Since then, many other birders have observed Kentucky Warblers, especially in San Felasco Hammock where Kentuckies were seen regularly until mid-September. Pat Burns kept working the warblers (and, presumably, still is) to produce some first fall observations of other species: Ovenbird in O'Leno State Park on August 11; two Worm-eating Warblers north of Alachua on August 12. Rex Rowan reported a Yellow Warbler on August 10 while scouting the Orange Lake Restoration Area with Mike Manetz. With Rex Rowan, Lee and Ben Gordon observed the fall's first Cerulean Warbler on August 16 in the John S. Winnie Grant near Hogtown Creek in NW Gainesville. Several other birders have reported Ceruleans since then, including one in Chastain-Seay Park near LaCrosse on September 1 and another in San Felasco Hammock on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Rex saw two Golden-winged Warblers in the same park on September 1. Judy Bryan reported the fall's first Blue-winged Warbler on August 25 along Bolen Bluff Trail which has been the spot for Blue-wings this fall. Mike Manetz saw four there on September 14.

### **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.

Mary Landsman and several other birders were rewarded for their regular small-group birding discipline on August 27 with fantastic views of a locally rare Canada Warbler. The fall's only Canada so far, this bird was seen on the Cottontail Loop of San Felasco's Progress Park unit.

Warblers weren't the only birds making big news in Alachua County this fall. Last year's wintering hummingbirds were hardly old news when Greg Hart reported a male Rufous Hummingbird at his feeder in Alachua on August 25, the earliest record ever for the county and the first of its species reported in the state this season. Andy Kratter shattered the county's early record for Chipping Sparrow with his August 29 observation of a juvenile bird in SW Gainesville. The previous early record was set just two years ago on September 15. Last year, a Chipping Sparrow was observed on September 17. All three birds were juveniles.

Swallow migration may have peaked on August 18 when John Hintermister observed several hundred birds on Paynes Prairie, mostly Barn Swallows but at least 20 Bank Swallows and one Cliff Swallow. Several birders who picked through flocks of swallows on the prairie and along U.S. 441 south of Gainesville reported smaller numbers of swallows in similar specific proportions.

Veeries, ten or more, graced a throng of some 40 Alachua Audubon Society field trip attendees at San Felasco Hammock on September 13. Ivan Samuels and others had seen the fall's first Veery there on August 30 but the numbers seemed to peak just in time for the AAS trip. While most field trip attendees have enjoyed lukewarm results in the county's birding hotspots this season, Audubon field trips should be an excellent way to observe what fall migration still holds for us. So, look into the field trip schedule or call a friend and get out into the field. The sparrows are coming!

Thank you to all who submitted reports through September 17.

### ***Native Plant Sale***

The annual Fall Native Plant Sale at Morningside Nature Center, 3540 East University Avenue, will be Saturday, October 11, from 8:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. Fourteen vendors will offer thousands of plants. There will be a wildflower walk led by a staff naturalist. 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. On Friday, October 10, there is a private sale of plants

**Deadline for the next *Crane* is November 20**

only for members of the sponsoring organizations from 5:00 to 6:30 P.M., but non-members may join at the gate.

## AUDUBON ADVENTURES

This year 38 Alachua County classrooms will be receiving *Audubon Adventures*, thanks to the generosity of our sponsors. Thanks for their support goes to these sponsors:

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Special recognition goes to Karen Ahlers for her work in Putnam County Schools. Karen has contacted 10 schools and found 73 teachers who will use *Audubon Adventures* in their classrooms and she has raised funds from individuals and businesses to provide these educational materials for the teachers. 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 inform. The subjects this year will be grasslands, coniferous forests, nature in your neighborhood, and water, wildlife, and people.

## Digging Up Nuts

Please forgive a dubious metaphor, but it seems to me that birders, fly fishers and squirrels share something in common. They all spend some part of their lives burying nuts. Now, in the case of the first two, it's not acorns or hazels, sweetmeats for winter enjoyment, that get interred. It's sweet memories. Memories of a perfect cast that lured a wary fish to the angler's fly or a perfect birding moment—however you might choose to define that.

Of late, I've been digging up some nuts. Most of these involve feathered coinhabitants of the planet. Here are a few I'd like to share.



Mid-winter on the frozen marshes spreading out from the Canadian River (Texas Panhandle): I watch as a large flock of geese and ducks are harassed unmercifully by a Golden Eagle. The predator makes repeated passes over the panicked birds. I remind myself that what's going on here is okay. Mother Nature, as a kindly soul, is a deeply embedded bit of fiction. The eagle, the one with the talons, has every right to a meal. He's probing for an injured bird, one whose survival chances are already diminished.

Springtime at Fort Morgan, a major migrant trap along Alabama's coast: Several of us march up the old assembly field, scoping ahead and in the trees bordering the field. A movement of wings draws my attention. The 10X binoculars focus on the movement. It's an extraordinary vision in blue. Two Indigo Buntings pose on a limb and on the very next limb down the tree sits a male Blue Grosbeak. Where is Claude Monet when we need him!

Late May on the short-grass prairie west of Pueblo, Colorado: The motel looks out on the front range, some peaks of which are still white with snow. Under the sagebrush beyond the parking lot coveys of Scaled Quail rummage for seeds, forcing a Curve-billed Thrasher from cover. A thin population of early flowering sunflowers attracts a mixed band of seedeaters: house finches, American and Lesser Goldfinches, even a Western Tanager. The tanager likely is probing the heads for insects. But then a flash of bright orange enters my field of view off to the left. It's a beautiful male Bullock's Oriole, gleaning breakfast from the gray-green leaves of the sage. A memory in the making.

Early summer on Colorado's Antero River: Gold medal water this, offering the fly fisher a decent chance of hooking a three-pound rainbow. But if the angler is also a birder, trouble awaits. Violet-green and Barn Swallows troll constantly back and forth across the stream. The air is heavy with flying insects. Horned Larks step about in the dry grasslands that border the water. Vesper Sparrows call from the taller grass. I try to keep one eye on my elk hair caddis, the other trained on the birds. Suddenly, the birding eye glimpses a darkish form moving up river, moving very fast. It's a Prairie Falcon on course to grab a swallow. At the last second its intended prey realizes its plight and performs a quick, life-saving maneuver. The falcon, now no more than 300 feet from me, breaks off the attack, executing a high-G, 90 degree turn and tears up into the blue. This incredible change of direction slices the air moving over the falcon's wings, producing a whooshing roar that freezes me in place. A wonderful nut for burying.

—Dana Griffin, III

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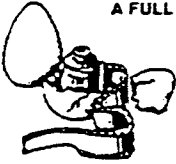
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