

# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*  
Volume 45 Number 5 March 2004

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Saturday, March 6, 8:00 AM**

**Lake Alice**

With a hardwood swamp, a wading bird rookery, open water, and densely vegetated lake margins, Lake Alice is a favorite destination for many campus-bound birders. Meet trip leader Michael Mciscenburg in the Lake Alice parking lot on Museum Road on UF campus and explore one of the urban area's natural jewels. Trip difficulty: 1

**Saturday, March 13, 2:00 PM**

**Program Meeting**

**"Butterflies and Blooms--Serendipity"**

Millhopper Branch Library, 3145 NW 43<sup>rd</sup> Street  
See details elsewhere in this *Crane*.

**Sunday, March 14, 9:00 AM**

**Butterflies and Blooms - SPECIAL EVENT**

This special event field trip is a complement to

### NOMINATIONS

It's time once again for nominations for Alachua Audubon board and officers. If you're willing to serve—or know someone who would be—please call one of the nominating committee members. They are Howard Adams (373-4270), Paul Moler (495-9419), and Grisleda Forbes (371-3124). All suggestions are welcome. Officers serve one-year terms and board members are elected for three years. The election will be at the Annual Meeting and Picnic in April.

the Saturday, March 13, Program Meeting. But come even if you missed the program! Buck and Linda Cooper, two of Florida's foremost butterfly experts, will lead us on this special program of discovery. Participants will learn how experts census an area for butterfly diversity and how they find and identify butterflies from the biggest and most obvious to the most elusive tiny species. Meet the Coopers in the lower parking lot of the Boulevard Springs Park on Southeast 15<sup>th</sup> Street near the entrance to the District II Ranger Headquarters. Trip difficulty: 2

**Saturday, March 20, 8:00 AM**

**River Rise**

NOTE: \$4.00 per vehicle entrance fee required, but a carpool effort will be made. Meet the trip leader 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. River Rise is the seldom birded state preserve in which the subterranean Santa Fe River emerges from its cavernous pathway. Explore a rich hardwood hammock and maple bluff above a magnificent cypress strand. This habitat should be a great location to observe the early push of spring migration. Trip difficulty: 3

**Saturday & Sunday, March 20 & March 21**

**Kanapaha Gardens Festival**

Want to learn more about Audubon? Then visit the Alachua Audubon booth. Even if you're already a member, stop by for a few moments; you can sit down for a while and

*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.

## To Our March 20 and 21 Visitors at KANAPAHA GARDENS FESTIVAL:

Thanks for stopping by the Alachua Audubon Society display and visiting with us. We'd be glad to have you join us on one of our spring field trips. With spring migration reaching its height, there ought to be plenty of birds to see. But we look at other things, too—plants, insects, just about anything connected with our natural world. If you'd like to join Alachua Audubon—and membership also includes a subscription to the National Audubon Society magazine—send us the form on the back of this *Crane*. We look forward to seeing you again!

take over, giving the other volunteers a break!

### Saturday, April 3, 7:00 AM Ocala National Forest

Meet trip leader Bob Simons for this locally legendary field trip to the Ocala National Forest. Bob presents the natural features of the Ocala National Forest from a broad ecological perspective. Expect to learn as much about plants and mammals as you do about birds. Avian highlights in the Ocala National Forest include Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Bachman's Sparrow, and the Florida Scrub-Jay. Pack water, a snack, and dress for exposure. 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.

## AROUND THE COUNTY...

by *Bubba Scales*

Permit me to diverge from the format, please. In this issue, I will take advantage of the fact that 'around' can be used in at least six senses according to Merriam-Webster's online dictionary. Around the County summarizes reports of birds observed within the county limits. In that sense, we go around the county looking for birds. But, since the last edition of Around the County, the most exciting birding in the area has occurred *around* the boundaries of the county. If that doesn't make sense, consider this:

On the January 17 Alachua Audubon field trip, a group of birders went just north of the Alachua County line to Alligator Lake, a municipal nature park in Lake City. While most of the rest of us were counting Killdeer, John Hintermister was carefully picking through a flock of Glossy Ibis. He found one with a red iris, a feature that counter-indicates Glossy Ibis and is actually di-

agnostic of a White-faced Ibis, a rare winter visitor to the Panhandle.

Dotty Robbins went looking for the White-faced Ibis at Alligator Park on the 18<sup>th</sup>. She found the ibis and she also found a male Vermilion Flycatcher. John Hintermister went back to see the White-faced Ibis and the Vermilion Flycatcher and found a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. This almost comic sequence of rarities ended with John's Scissor-tailed but many birders have been privy to views of the ibis and the Vermilion Flycatcher. John Ault reports that the Vermilion Flycatcher is still being seen at Alligator Lake as of February 14. The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher has not been seen again.

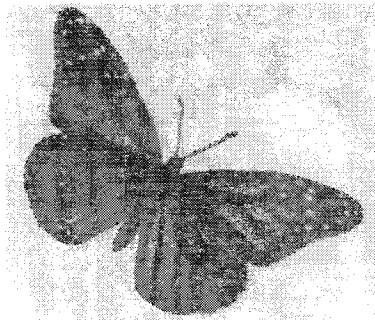
Carolyn Retey lives just south of Alachua County near a Marion County horse farm where some 120 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks reside. Carolyn has kept tabs on a pair of Canvasbacks that have been visible from County Road 318 in Marion County all winter long. The Canvasbacks were still there as of February 15.

Patty Orr has witnessed the pairing of a sub-adult female and an adult male Bald Eagle in her Ocala yard. In January, they built a nest in one of her loblolly pines. As of February 14, the female appears to be incubating eggs. We can't wait to hear how this turns out, Patty!

Meanwhile, our apparently wintering Whooping Crane continues to thrill area residents with frequent appearances at the UF Animal Science fields on Southwest 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Howard Adams and Barbara Mollison were birding the La Chua Trail on January 25 with hopes of seeing a group of Snow Geese that Steve Nesbitt reported

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*The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.



# MARCH PROGRAM

This month's program meeting on Saturday, March 13, will be presented by Buck and Linda Cooper. Entitled "Butterflies and Blooms - Serendipity," the program will focus on Florida butterflies. The Coopers are seasoned butterfly experts from Haines City and will tell us how to become Sherlock Holmes of the fields and forests in finding Florida's butterflies, from the most common to the most elusive. The Coopers are lifelong birders who have turned their attention toward lepidoptera and surveying Florida for butterfly species. The program meeting will

be followed by a field trip the next morning (see field trip descriptions). The program meeting begins at 2:00 P.M. in the meeting room of the Millhopper Branch Library, 3145 NW 43<sup>rd</sup> Street.

on January 20. Instead, they saw the Whooping Crane, a flock of 29 American White Pelicans, and some 50 Northern Pintails.

Barbara and Howard also saw good number of shorebirds near the end of the La Chua Trail including both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpipers, and Wilson's Snipe. More exciting shorebird news came from a less auspicious birding spot, the Home Depot pond where many birders were able to observe flocks of Long-billed Dowitchers and a Stilt Sandpiper into late January. The Home Depot shorebirds have not been seen since rains brought the water level up in early February.

San Felasco Hammock's Brown Creeper, first reported on December 28 by Dave Steadman, continues to make occasional appearances near the bridge at the bottom of the short loop. Pat Burns, Scarlett Howell, and Judy Bryan have all seen it on different dates with Judy's February 7 observation being the latest.

Our first northbound migrants were reported on January 22 when Michael Meisenburg observed a flock of six Purple Martins at the USGS complex on Millhopper Road. Since then, Purple Martins have been seen perched on and flying around established nesting boxes at the intersection of University Avenue and Southwest 6<sup>th</sup> Street and at George's Hardware on West University Avenue near Northwest 34<sup>th</sup> Street. The bolus of northbound migrants are still fueling up for molt and migration on their wintering grounds but at least one species of warbler has made an early appearance. Grace Kiltie reports having seen a Northern Parula Warbler in her birdbath on February 4.

Thanks to all who submitted reports

## ***Early Spring Birding on***

## ***Kennesaw Mountain***

The Falcon guide, *Birding Georgia*, rates Kennesaw Mountain as the Peach State's premier site for neotropical migrants coming through either in

spring or fall. Though not our intention to plug a particular publication, we'd have to say the writer, Giff Beaton, got it about right. Early May found us in the parking lot of the Kennesaw Mountain National Park waiting on our group leader to show up. Chuck Saleeby, a talented north Georgia birder, and our leader for the day, pulled in around 7:30 AM and was calling his flock together but interrupted the gathering call to say, "I've got three, no four, Scarlet Tanagers and a Baltimore Oriole in that sycamore." At least fifty pairs of binoculars focused on these beautiful birds that could easily compete in the glamour department with anything flitting about in a Costa Rican cloud forest. I thought to myself if this is how today's trip is going to go, we've got a whale of a lot to be excited about. And that, as it turned out, was not an exaggeration.

We began the stroll to the top of the mountain, but soon began burning shoe leather as Chuck would find one, then another, band of migrants feverously gleaning insects from the high canopied forest. Fortunately, the birds stayed in the trees near the road, so all we had to do was keep abreast of them and try to identify as many as we could. Our first warbler, a male Blackburnian, was breath-taking. Then a small flock of Chestnut-sided and Black-throated Green Warblers came along. Red-eyed Vireos were everywhere. A pair of Ovenbirds started a song duel down along the forest floor.

It was impossible to check these off the list Chuck had handed out and not miss the next specialty. Here is where the old British aristocratic

### **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.

system would have paid off--have a field secretary to jot down the details as the Master of the Manor continues to look skyward. Chuck was whispering in a loud voice, "Female Cerulean, in that chestnut oak. Look quick, she's on the move." "Got it, we chorused!"

Indigo Buntings came out to perch on limbs canopying the road. Up around the first bend someone spotted an Eastern Wood Pewee, arguably the plainest bird in the book, but no matter. They all count. Then a participant shouts, "What in the world is that!" Chuck came to the rescue. It was a male Summer Tanager, a young male, half way through his molt to mature plumage. He looked for all the world like a lively piece of candied corn--red above, yellow below. All of this, and we had barely made it to the second bend in the road.

A Gainesville birder is approximately seven hours from Kennesaw Mountain by I-75. The exit number is 269. Any Georgia map will direct you to the spot. According to Chuck Saleeby, July is when the return of the migrants begins in earnest. The number of birds will be much greater than those that come through in the spring. Maybe we'll see you on the trail!

--Dana & Nancy Griffin

## **WEB SITES TO VISIT**

### ***Ballot Initiative***

#### **Hometown Democracy**

There is a ballot initiative in the state that is gathering signatures, and it would place all changes to County Comprehensive Land Use Plans into the hands of the voters. Its called the Florida Hometown Democracy Amendment, and was started in Palm Beach County when frustrated voters there felt powerless with their elected pro-development county officials.

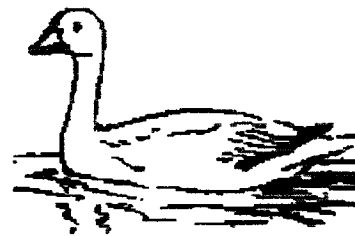
Several conservation organizations have endorsed their cause, including the Florida Sierra Club, Floridians for a Sustainable Florida, and the Florida League of Conservation Voters. Also endorsing it are several surfing organizations. These untraditional allies have joined our ranks to help with conservation causes in coastal states in recent years.

The Florida Farm Bureau has spoken out against this movement, stating that we already have a system in place for making local land-use decisions, and that we should just leave that system alone because it works. I find their perspective somewhat ironic, because when our

## **Melrose**

### **CBC 2003**

The Melrose Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 18 was a lovely day for Snow Geese. In spite of near freezing temperatures at dawn and a persistent northwest wind, 14 observers in five parties took to the out-of-doors by foot, car, and boat to tally 109 species and 6,600 individuals. For the first time in its 15-year history, the Melrose CBC included Snow Geese. A flock of 18 birds was sighted resting near the middle of Lake Santa Fe. The lake also yielded higher than usual numbers of Common Loons (50), Horned Grebes (105), and Buffleheads (28).



Joining compliers Jan and Bill Bolte were observers Rosemary Daurer, Jean and Ted Giesel, Grace and Richard Kiltie, Phyllis Meeks, Jill and Mike McGuire, Peggy and Tom Prevost, Scott Robinson, and Felicity Trueblood.

--Jan Bolte

Board of County Commissioners decided to limit development in certain parts of the county, it was local ranchers and farmers that threatened to sue Alachua County unless county officials backed away from their plans. The website for the initiative is [www.floridahometowndemocracy.com](http://www.floridahometowndemocracy.com).

--Michael Meisenberg

### ***Audubon of Florida***

#### **Advocacy Center**

Communicating to public policy makers is an integral part of democracy. Audubon of Florida has created a web site that makes it easy to fax, email, or download letters (to print and mail) on important issues you care about. Want to personalize the letters? No problem, you can edit letters to fit your own perspective. Sound good? Visit [audubonofflorida.org](http://audubonofflorida.org) and click on the 'Advocacy Center' or 'Take Action' links to participate in one of Audubon of Florida's citizen advocacy networks (Florida Conservation Network or the Everglades Conservation Network). The Advocacy Center keeps track of issues you can take action on, issues updates, and allows you to receive one or both of Audubon of Florida's e-newsletters, *Restore* and *Audubon Advocate*. Questions? Email [advocacy@audubonofflorida.org](mailto:advocacy@audubonofflorida.org).

## **Deadline for the next Crane is March 19**

***The Crane 4***

**Alachua Audubon Society Officers and Chairpersons of Standing Committees - 2003-2004**

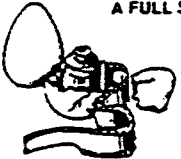
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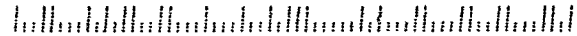
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**National Audubon Society**

If you have any questions, call Paul at 495-9419



Chapter E-18

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

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