



The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

FALL FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, October 9, 8:00 AM

River Rise State Park

NOTE: \$4.00/vehicle entrance fee required but carpool effort will be made. Meet trip leader Michael Meisenburg in the parking lot of the Winn-Dixie on the east side of Hwy 441 in High Springs and carpool from there. River Rise is the seldom birded state preserve where the subterranean Santa Fe River emerges from its cavernous course. Explore a rich hardwood hammock and maple bluff above a magnificent cypress strand. The low canopy of hardwoods should contain a diversity of migrant songbirds and ground-loving species like Louisiana Waterthrush, Ovenbird, and Kentucky Warbler may be lurking in the low cypress strand. Trip difficulty: 3

Sunday, October 10, 8:00 AM

Bolen Bluff Trail

Meet at Bolen Bluff trailhead on the east side of Hwy 441 on the south rim of Paynes Prairie (4.3 miles south of Williston Road). Bubba Scales will lead this trip to one of Gainesville's perennial favorite birding locations. Bolen Bluff rambles through the first patch of forested land that southbound migrants find after crossing the prairie. Assiduous and sometimes lucky birders have found

as many as 15 species of warbler here in the fall. We'll also take head out into the prairie where Clay-colored Sparrows were found last fall. Trip difficulty: 2

Saturday, October 16, 8:00 AM

Chastain-Seay Park

Meet trip leader Becky Enneis at the tag agency on NW 34th Street just south of US-441 (across from the old ABC Liquors) and carpool to Chastain-Seay near Worthington Springs from there. Chastain-Seay is a riparian woodland park with boardwalks and trails on the upper Santa Fe river and is a relatively new birding spot for Gainesville area birders. Becky, who knows this park better than most area birders, likes Chastain-Seay's hardwood diversity for a late push of warblers, thrushes, tanagers, and other migratory songbirds. Trip difficulty: 1

Saturday, October 23, 7:00 AM

Cedar Key

Meet trip leader Rex Rowan in the parking lot (SW corner) of the Target on Archer Road just east of I-75. Cedar Key is a quintessential Florida birding destination where birders can often view flocks

(Continued on page 3)



Alachua Audubon Society Website

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*Around
The County...
By Bubba Scales*

If passerine migration around the county hasn't done it for you this September, there is always pelagic birding at Newnan's Lake. Well, maybe not always, but certainly when the winds of major tropical cyclonic storms are pushing ocean-bound birds over the freshwater lakes of inland Florida.

On August 13, Ingrid and I met Rex Rowan at Powers Park where the three of us observed a light-morph Short-tailed Hawk kiting in the southwest winds of Hurricane Charley. On the morning of the 14th, Rex went back to Newnan's Lake where he and a small group of local birders found several other species of storm-driven birds including one Sandwich Tern, one Sooty Tern, one Common Tern, and a Ruddy Turnstone. The only other county records for turnstones occurred during the drought of 2000-01.

On September 7, local birders gathered at points around Newnan's Lake to search for storm-driven birds, this time in the wake of Hurricane Frances. A recap of the species observed on that day includes nine species of tern including (with total individuals in parentheses) Black (55+), Caspian (1), Gull-billed (1), Royal (4), Sandwich (1), Common (3),

Forster's (15+), Least (4), and Sooty (3). Also on the 7th, Bob Wallace, John Hintermister, and Mike Manetz observed the county's first-ever Parasitic Jaeger over Newnan's Lake from Palm Point. Mary Landsman and Bob Simons saw the jaeger again from Palm Point on the next morning. Frances also blew in at least two Magnificent Frigatebirds, probably three. Howard Adams reported one perched in a tree on the margin of Alachua Sink on September 6 and Marcy Jones and Becky Enneis independently reported one over NW Gainesville on September 7.

While adverse weather conditions add a dimension of excitement for birders at ground level, it adds a dimension of treachery for most migratory birds yet passerine migration is progressing with several excellent highlights. Most notably are three reports of Canada Warbler; the first from Michael Drummond in his NE Gainesville yard on September 12, the second from Geoff Parks and Michael Drummond at Split Rock Park on September 20, and the third from Andy Kratter on Bolen Bluff trail on the 22nd. Also quite notable are two Swainson's Warblers observed independently on September 11; the first by Justyn Stahl at San Felasco Hammock and the other by Bruce Christensen near Chapman's Pond.

Ruth Palenik reported an exceptionally early American Goldfinch at her birdfeeder on August 17. Another half-dozen or so have been reported from around the county since. Hilda Bellot had a very early Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird on August 24. Mike Manetz observed a Northern Waterthrush at Bivens

(Continued on page 3)

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 per issue. *The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.

North American Migration Count-Alachua County 2004

By Rex Rowan

I've finished compiling the results of Saturday's (9/18) fall migration count, which are shown below. We had 134 species, including 21 species of warblers (for comparison, species totals for 1995-99 were 129, 137, 125, 125, and 134, and warbler species were 26, 25, 23, 23, and 24). The number of individual warblers was quite low. From 1995-99 there were 752, 980, 788, 912, and 950, respectively; this year there were 557. The usual fall hotspots - Bolen Bluff, Newnans Lake, San Felasco, and O'Leno - were all pretty unproductive. Andy Kratter only found one American Redstart on the Bolen Bluff Trail, and if you know anything about local birding that's akin to walking the streets of Los Angeles and seeing three people. Surprising misses this year included Golden-winged, Tennessee, Magnolia, and Blackburnian Warblers. Several out-of-the-ordinary birds were seen in the course of the count: Mike Manetz found a Swainson's Warbler at the Horse Retirement Farm in Alachua. Geoff Parks and Michael Drummond found a Canada Warbler at Split Rock Park and saw a group of fifteen Mississippi Kites, undoubtedly migrants and by three days the latest ever recorded in the county. At Newnans Lake my team found two Brown Pelicans, a Sandwich Tern, at least three Royal Terns, and a Broad-winged Hawk. Justyn Stahl and Chris Burney found two Bachman's Sparrows at UF's Natural Areas Teaching Lab, while Tom Webber found a very early Blue-headed Vireo at the University Gardens adjoining Lake Alice. Along the north rim of Paynes Prairie and the La Chua Trail, Katie Sieving's team found three Barn Owls, a locally rare Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and an early Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Lloyd Davis, Bob Carroll, and Becky Enneis found a Virginia Rail at San Felasco's Progress Center area. Anyway, here's the list:

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 52	Cooper's Hawk 7	Common Ground-Dove 5
Wood Duck 7	Red-shouldered Hawk 70	Yellow-billed Cuckoo 18
Mottled Duck 3	Broad-winged Hawk 1	Barn Owl 3
Blue-winged Teal 17	Red-tailed Hawk 7	Eastern Screech-Owl 2
Pied-billed Grebe 3	American Kestrel 2	Great Horned Owl 10
Brown Pelican 2	Wild Turkey 7	Barred Owl 16
Double-crested Cormorant 30	Northern Bobwhite 2	Common Nighthawk 3
Anhinga 62	King Rail 3	Chuck-will's-widow 1
American Bittern 2	Virginia Rail 1	Chimney Swift 124
Great Blue Heron 32	Sora 1	Rufous Hummingbird 1
Great Egret 58	Common Moorhen 79	Ruby-throated Hummingbird 22
Snowy Egret 32	Sandhill Crane 18	hummingbird, sp. 1
Little Blue Heron 51	Killdeer 16	Belted Kingfisher 12
Tricolored Heron 16	Greater Yellowlegs 1	Red-headed Woodpecker 55
Cattle Egret 908	Solitary Sandpiper 1	Red-bellied Woodpecker 250
Green Heron 17	Spotted Sandpiper 3	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1
Black-crowned Night-Heron 8	Wilson's Snipe 1	Downy Woodpecker 142
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron 1	Laughing Gull 8	Northern Flicker 14
White Ibis 235	Ring-billed Gull 1	Pileated Woodpecker 58
Glossy Ibis 8	Royal Tern 3	Eastern Wood-Pewee 15
Wood Stork 108	Sandwich Tern 1	Acadian Flycatcher 33
Black Vulture 176	Forster's Tern 3	Empidonax, sp. 15
Turkey Vulture 116	Black Tern 129	Great Crested Flycatcher 2
Osprey 14	Rock Pigeon 52	Eastern Kingbird 1
Mississippi Kite 15	Eurasian Collared-Dove 16	Loggerhead Shrike 22
Bald Eagle 9	White-winged Dove 37	White-eyed Vireo 236
Northern Harrier 2	Mourning Dove 173	

(Continued on page 6)

Colorado: Lekking Grouse With Friends

By Mary Landsman



On my very first birding trip, way back in 1994, I was fortunate to meet a British birder named Sue Cooper. I met her in the elevator of our hotel in Miami, where I was to join the tour. She looked like a birder, so I introduced myself and she took me under her wing, introducing me to our leader, Richard Schofield, and

the other members of the group. At several points during the trip we shared a room, one of which was the worst accommodation I have ever had on a trip and we still laugh about it today. That Belize trip was the first of many trips we have done together and this article is about our most recent one.

This past spring Sue, her daughter, Kim Tarsey, and I met up in Houston for two weeks of birding in Texas, then flew to Denver to join a Colorado Grouse tour organized by WINGS and led by Chris Wood. Pat Burns met us in Denver. It had taken us two years to actually get on the tour because so many birders signed up to see the Gunnison Sage Grouse, recently split from the Greater Sage Grouse. It was well worth the wait.

Birding in Colorado is always interesting, but birding in Colorado with our leader, Chris Wood, was truly exceptional. He has lived there his entire life and has been birding since he was about five years old. He knows every nook and cranny of the state like our John Hintermister knows North Florida. He had done a lot of scouting for this trip and recruited the help and advice of several local birders.

It was not an easy trip. All our mornings were either early or very early, with visits to the leks beginning as early as 4 AM. Every day we drove many miles and every night slept in a different motel. We did a complete counterclockwise circle of the state of Colorado, crossing the Rocky Mountains twice, once in a snow-storm. There was magnificent scenery in the mountains and miles and miles of flat, dusty brown plains elsewhere. Everywhere there were birds.

The snow that greeted us on our arrival in Denver closed a road that kept us from looking for White-tailed Ptarmigan in the high mountains, but Chris told us that the snow might give us a chance at Rosy Finches. It was true. The snow pushed all the Rosy Finches down to the

feeders at the Loveland Basin Ski Area, where we saw over a hundred Brown-capped, a pair of Gray-crowned and two Black Rosy-Finches (one of my most wanted birds). One was a dazzlingly beautiful male. Another rare sighting at that spot was Gainesville birder Dottie Robbins, who was with another tour group. After many long looks at the finches we had lunch in the Ski Basin restaurant. Many of the skiers stopped to talk to us about what we were doing. I guess they were puzzled about why we would be out in the cold and snow but not skiing.

Our long drives were broken up by frequent surprises along the way, and there always seemed to be time to stop. Once we watched a pair of Sandhill Cranes doing a delicate mating dance beside the road, transfixed by their gracefulness. They seemed undisturbed by our nearness. We passed many ponds and it seemed that every pond had ducks (we saw a total of 20 species, often numbering in the 100s) and sometimes geese (including Ross's and Snow); One small pond contained both Common and Barrow's Goldeneyes, giving us a chance to compare the two as Chris pointed out the distinctive field marks of each. Another stop provided the same opportunity with Lesser and Greater Scaup. There was a lot more than ducks and cranes along the roads. There were stretches in the planes where every other utility pole seemed to be hosting a Golden Eagle, a Ferruginous Hawk, a Red-tailed Hawk or a Rough-legged Hawk. At one place we stopped to look for a Sage Thrasher and as a bonus we were treated to a lengthy aerial show by a Prairie Falcon; it was dive-bombing a Red-tailed Hawk. This amazing display of their flying skills lasted for almost a half-hour because of the sheer perseverance of the Prairie Falcon.

Then, of course, there were the grouse. Sometimes we observed a lek from the vans, parked on the side of a road or in the middle of a field. Other times we watched from inside trailers that served as blinds. They were equipped with seats and the side opened up like large windows. It was always cold and dark when we arrived and took our places, but as the sky lightened there were the birds, with the males strutting, booming, dancing, and stomping and the females appearing to ignore them. One male Sharp-tailed Grouse came so close to the van that we could hear the sound of its stomping feet and easily see the purple neck sacs. The Greater Sage Grouse lek had over fifty birds and they were close enough for us to see their distinctive tail feathers and crests. This was important because when we saw the Gunnison Sage Grouse later in the trip we were able to detect the differences in the two species even though they were quite far away. We had a late evening look at Lesser Prairie Chickens on a lek, staying until they flew

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

off into the darkening skies. At Wray, Colorado, we observed Greater Prairie Chickens as part of the best community project I have ever encountered. It began with an evening meeting with a Ranger at the local museum. The ranger told us about how the community decided that they wanted to preserve the Greater Prairie Chickens and their leks. To do this they enlisted the help of the state, the ranchers, the wildlife officials and even the hunters. With all this cooperation they have managed to maintain the active leks, re-establish old abandoned leks and greatly increase the numbers of the prairie chickens. They support the project by running the tours, which also provide business for the community. The next morning we were up early at our motel, where we were picked up by a school bus and were driven to the blind for our early morning view of the Greater Prairie Chickens from a HEATED blind followed by breakfast at the ranch house, prepared by volunteers and hosted by the owner and his wife. It was very impressive.

The biggest surprise for me were the special birds that we saw because Chris knew where to look. There was the nesting pair of American Dippers under a bridge (one of Pat's most wanted birds), giving everyone prolonged looks as they were feeding their young. In the magnificent uninhabited expanses of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park we stared down on a soaring Peregrine Falcon far below (Chris knew that it nested there) and were completely amazed by prolonged up close views of a hooting male Blue Grouse which Chris had seen on a scouting trip. He was able to relocate it a week later for us. In the vast empty

expanses of the eastern prairie we found a single Mountain Plover (one of Sue and Kim's most wanted birds) right where Chris said it should be in a fallow field. In the suburbs of Pueblo we saw Scaled Quail scurrying around in the weedy fields between the houses and a Curve-billed Thrasher that lived in the back yard of one of Chris's friends.

We had some very special looks at owls, thanks to another of Chris's friends. He censuses nesting owls and took us on a half-day owl hunt. We began with Burrowing Owls in the high prairie, where they occupied abandoned prairie dog tunnels. Then we hiked into a brushy dry riverbed for scope views of a Long-eared Owl sitting on the nest. A very cooperative Western Screech-Owl posed endlessly outside its nest hole and Great-horned Owl with two downy chicks seemed unperturbed that we were wandering around taking pictures almost directly under her nest. The day ended with a drive up onto Grand Mesa, which was very a cold and frosty area where with great patience we were finally rewarded with an all too brief view of a Boreal Owl. On another day in eastern Colorado a long row of bushy trees produced several roosting Long-eared Owls as well as a like number of Barn Owls. Eastern Colorado also produced two species rare for Colorado. During our evening visit to one of the leks we saw a "Lillian's" Eastern Meadowlark, which sang in response to a tape, and at the Bonny Reservoir we had distant looks at a Hudsonian Godwit.

All too soon it was over. We returned to Denver, where the tour ended. Sue and Kim flew home to England and Pat and I returned to Florida, all contentedly happy with our Spring 2004 Colorado Grouse Trip.

NAMC

Blue-headed Vireo 1
Yellow-throated Vireo 8
Red-eyed Vireo 204
Tree Swallow 1
Northern Rough-winged Swallow 2
Barn Swallow 97
Blue Jay 248
American Crow 150
Fish Crow 47
crow, sp. 26
Carolina Chickadee 79
Tufted Titmouse 233
Brown-headed Nuthatch 7
Carolina Wren 343
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 234
Eastern Bluebird 23
Veery 36
thrush, sp. 1
Gray Catbird 6

Northern Mockingbird 160
Brown Thrasher 26
European Starling 116
Blue-winged Warbler 8
Northern Parula 101
Yellow Warbler 30
Chestnut-sided Warbler 8
Black-throated Blue Warbler 3
Yellow-throated Warbler 51
Pine Warbler 50
Prairie Warbler 30
Palm Warbler 4
Cerulean Warbler 3
Black-and-white Warbler 17
American Redstart 27
Prothonotary Warbler 3
Worm-eating Warbler 11
Swainson's Warbler 1
Ovenbird 90
Northern Waterthrush 17

Kentucky Warbler 4
Common Yellowthroat 79
Hooded Warbler 19
Canada Warbler 1
Summer Tanager 27
Scarlet Tanager 3
Northern Cardinal 377
Blue Grosbeak 4
Indigo Bunting 37
Eastern Towhee 66
Bachman's Sparrow 2
Red-winged Blackbird 3,484
Eastern Meadowlark 1
Boat-tailed Grackle 197
Common Grackle 318
Brown-headed Cowbird 210
Baltimore Oriole 13
House Finch 89
House Sparrow 42

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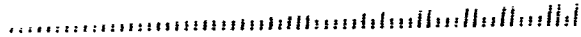
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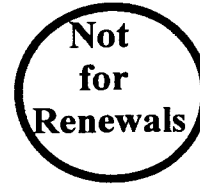
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