



The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

Volume 48 Number 5 April – May 2007

April & May Field Trips

Saturday, April 7, 8:00 AM **Bolen Bluff Trail**

Meet Bruce Christensen at the Bolen Bluff trailhead. Early season passerine migration and late-season sparrows on the prairie spur. Trip difficulty: 1

Sunday, April 8, 8:00 AM **Longleaf Flatwoods Reserve**

Join Rex Rowan at Powers Park to caravan to Longleaf. Pinewoods specialties such as Bachman's Sparrows and Brown-headed Nuthatches. Trip difficulty: 3

Saturday, April 14, 8:00 AM
San Felasco Hammock Progress Park
Meet Bubba Scales at the Progress Park entrance to San Felasco. **\$2.00/vehicle access fee.** Early passerine migration and late season sparrows. Trip difficulty: 2

Sunday, April 15, 7:00 AM
Ocala National Forest
Meet Bob Simons at UF Bookstore II (SW 34th St. and SW 20th Ave). General ecology interest. Avian highlights include Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Bachman's Sparrow, and the Florida Scrub-Jay. Pack water, a snack, and dress for exposure. Trip diff: 3

Saturday, April 21, 8:00 AM
Ft. Desoto County Park
One of Florida's best known migrant traps.

Meet John Hintermister in the parking lot of Ft. Desoto County Park Visitor Center. Ft. Desoto trips have produced over 20 species of warbler. Trip difficulty: 2

Sunday, April 22, 8:00 AM
San Felasco Hammock Millhopper Rd
Meet Steve Hofstetter at San Felasco trailhead on Millhopper Road. **\$2.00/vehicle access fee.** Migratory birding in one of the area's best hot spots. Trip difficulty: 2

Saturday, April 28, 6:00 AM
Cedar Key with optional boat trip
Meet Rex Rowan and Bob Carroll in the parking lot of the Archer Rd. Target. Those who wish to take the boat trip with Capt. Doug must call WBU [352-381-1997] for a **reservation.** Quintessential Florida birding destination where birders can view shorebirds over one shoulder and songbirds over the other. You may want to stay in Cedar Key for lunch. Trip difficulty: 2

Sunday, April 29, 8:00 AM
Lake Alice
Join Adam Kent in the parking lot just west of the Bat House on Museum Road on UF campus. Nesting wading birds along the lake. Stroll through the swampy lowlands looking for passerine migrants. Trip difficulty: 1

More field trips!

Descriptions continued on page 3

Trip Difficulty 1: Trip within easy access to the vehicle and/or level terrain one mile or less **2:** May involve uneven terrain one to two miles **3:** May involve elevation change, uneven terrain, and/or greater than two miles

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AAS Website www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud

The Alachua Audubon Society's mission is to foster appreciation and knowledge of birds and other native wildlife, to protect and restore wildlife populations and their habitats, and to promote sustainable use of natural resources.

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. *The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.

**Deadline for
Jun-July Crane:
Apr. 15th**



Typically, late winter turns out to be rather dull for birding in our area, with most of the more interesting birds discovered by the time of the Christmas Count. When the first returning **Purple Martins** are reported in late January, most birders start looking toward spring. This winter turned out to be a little different. For instance, numbers and diversity of ducks normally peak around late November through December. This year the peak didn't occur until February, when birders visiting Newnans Lake and the Prairie basin started reporting an unusual buildup of ducks. From the basin, **Ring-necked Ducks** were numbering in the thousands, with large counts of **Blue** and **Green-winged Teal**. Locally uncommon species such as **Pintail**, **Shoveler**, and **Wigeon** appeared in at least double-digits, and a locally rare **Black Duck** was reported from a group of wild **Mallards**. A flock of **Ruddy Ducks** numbering between one and two thousand, easily a county record, settled in at Newnans Lake. What accounts for such a late buildup of duck numbers and species? It is possible that extraordinarily late winter storms drove them south. Perhaps relatively dry conditions made some wetlands untenable for ducks, forcing them to seek wetter digs here. Like so many aspects of avian behavior, we can only speculate.

More expected in late winter is a buildup of **Robins** and **Cedar Waxwings**. Especially when fruiting trees such as laurel cherry and East Palatka holly begin to ripen, both bird species become more numerous in town and backyards as they concentrate to feast on the newly available fruit. This winter, birders and casual observers alike seemed to feel these species, especially Robins, were much more numerous than usual. Birders in the southern part of the state reported similar anecdotal impressions.

Conversely, much to the disappointment of feeder watchers, **Goldfinches** seemed to be in short supply. Likewise, black-birds were pretty much no-shows at the Hague Dairy, which is usually a reliable place to find flocks numbering in the thousands. **Sandhill Cranes** were present in their usual numbers but they were hard to find, as they chose to ignore the UF

Continued on page 3

Beef Teaching fields along Williston Road where, during most winters, they are easily seen and widely enjoyed by the public.

There were several other interesting sightings in February. Helen Warren found another **Brown Creeper** February 12 at Dudley Farm, and Tom Holt reported a **White-breasted Nuthatch** in his yard January 27. While this was the second creeper reported this year, there have been only a few sightings of White-breasted Nuthatches over the last thirty years or so. In addition to the several reports of **Le-Conte's Sparrows** at LaChua trail, another showed up along the dike at Bolen Bluff in February and was noted by several birders. Also at La Chua, on February 21st Rex Rowan and Phil Laipis found a locally rare **Rusty Blackbird**. Ron Robinson had a **Purple Finch** intermittently visiting his yard throughout the month, while at the same time Debra Werner had a male **Painted Bunting** at her feeders. We had sporadic sightings of **Whooping Cranes** from Payne's Prairie basin and Kanapaha Prairie. Despite the tragedy that felled this year's fledgling flock of Whooping Cranes wintering at Chassahowitzka Wildlife Refuge, Whoopers should continue to be an expanding addition to our regular winter visitors.

Several retuning species were extremely early this year. An **Orchard Oriole** was reported February 14 by Grace Kiltie from the university campus. On February 25th Linda Terry spotted a **Swallow-tailed Kite**, which was also the same day Grace Kiltie had a singing **Yellow-throated Vireo** in her yard, and Josh Watson noted our first **Great-crested Flycatcher** of the season.

By the time you receive this copy of the Crane, most of our breeding birds will be on territory and singing lustily. One of my favorite places to hear the dawn chorus is San Felasco Hammock (Millhopper Road entrance). By early April, the woods there will be full of the songs of breeding **Hooded Warblers, Northern Parulas, Summer Tanagers, Red-eyed, White-eyed, and Yellow-throated Vireos**, mixed with the voices of winter visitors still

present, such as **Hermit Thrushes, Black and White Warblers, and Blue-headed Vireos**. What a joyful noise!

Thanks to those who share their sightings through March 3, 2007

More field trips

Saturday, May 5, 8:00 AM Butterflies at Palm Point

Meet at Power Park on Hawthorne Rd/SR 20. Cross disciplines with AAS president and keen butterfly enthusiast Mike Meisenburg. Comb the margins of Newnan's Lake for a variety of butterflies with a little birding on the side. Trip difficulty: 1.

Saturday, May 12, 3:30 PM Cross Creek paddle with Lars Andersen

Cross Creek is a charming thread of water connecting two of North Florida's most beautiful and storied lakes, Orange and Lochloosa. On its brief, mile-long run the slow-flowing creek meanders lazily under a canopy of oak, maple, and moss draped cypress. In order to enjoy the many roosting and nesting birds that freckle the trees at the end of the day and also because of the beautiful, wide open vistas that make the perfect backdrop for sunsets, this trip is held in the late afternoon. Expect to see waterfowl, waders, and aquatic herps. Lars Andersen and Bruce Christensen lead and will provide information about the cultural, geological, and natural history of the river. A trip fee applies: \$35 to rent a canoe; \$22 with your own. A portion of the proceeds benefits AAS. Meet at Bolen Bluff parking lot at 3:30 PM and carpool to Cross Creek. Call Adventure Outpost at 386.454.0611 to reserve your spot.

Election of Officers and Board of Directors for 2007-2008

Spring has arrived with the settling of pollen all around us, birds singing from the tree tops, nesting activities well underway and your Alachua Audubon chapter preparing the way for the next round of officers and members to the **Board of Directors elections on April 18, 2007.**

The slate of officers for this next year includes the following: President- Michael Meisenburg; VP- Bob Carroll; Secretary- Susan Sommerville and Treasurer- Dotty Robbins.

Members of the Board of Directors hold a three year term with five slots open each year for nominees. Members serving through the 2010 rotation are Marcy Jones, Phil Laipis, Cecelia Lockwood, Rex Rowan, and Alice Tyler. Members continuing through 2008 are Kathy Haines, Bob Simons, Leslie Straub and Helen Warren. Members continuing through 2009 are Peter Ames, Craig Parenteau, Stacy Porvasnik and Emily Schwartz.

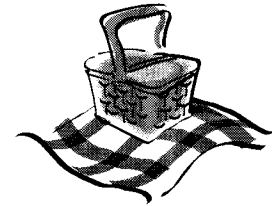
There are three **new candidates** for our Board of Directors and they are: Adam Kent for 2009 slot, Michael Drummond and Geoff Parks for 2008. Each of these individuals are already active in this county in ways that will greatly benefit your chapter during the next few years.

We have grown so much with Bruce Christensen's inspirational leadership as VP. Not only did he have great ideas about increasing our visibility as a chapter, but he followed through and took action, with the development of classes for local boy scout troops, relationships with businesses for advertising, special events for social activities and fund raising. His energy and enthusiasm will be sorely missed here at AAS.

Election of these officers and members to the BOD will be held at our annual picnic. See annual picnic article for date, time and location.

Don't miss the Annual Picnic!

Mark your calendars for the AAS Annual Picnic and Board of Directors Election. The picnic will be on **Wednesday, April 18, 6pm at The Little House on the Prairie** (Howard Adams residence). Please bring a dish to pass.



Directions: **4104 SE 35th Street.**

From downtown Gainesville, travel east on University Avenue (SR 24). Turn right (SE) onto Hawthorne Road (SR 20) and proceed past the Alachua County Sheriffs Office until you reach SE 35th Street. Turn right (S) at the Kangaroo convenience store and follow the road 1.5 miles until it dead ends at Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. Go through the gate and follow the lime rock road for 0.5 miles. The house will be on the right.

**Interested in Ideas?
Looking for good information?
Finding the Internet disappointing?**

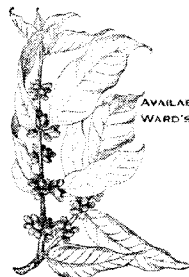
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**Florida Native Plant Society
27th Annual Florida Native
Plant Conference
“Conservation Cures by Yards
and Miles”**

The Paynes Prairie chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society is hosting the 2007 Annual Conference on April 19-22. Conference programs will explore how installing native landscapes in urban areas and conserving natural areas across the state can enhance our lives and protect this rare and unique place, Florida. The Friday session will be opened by Janisse Ray who is a naturalist, environmental activist and author of *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* and *Wild Card Quilt*. The keynote speaker on Saturday will be William Cullina, Nursery Director for the New England Wildflower Society. The NEWFS offers the largest public native plant education program in America and also owns and manages 8 sanctuaries in 4 New England states.

Attendees will have a choice of field trips, and can choose to listen to speakers who focus on a scientific theme, a backyard landscape theme or a conservation areas theme. The general public can participate in the Native Plant Sale, which brings to one location native plants from nurseries throughout the state. Educational exhibits and vendors of horticultural products, books and artwork are also open to the general public on Friday and Saturday.

The FNPS Annual Conference will be held at the Hilton, University of Florida Conference Center, 1714 SW 34 St, Gainesville, FL. Registration is available for single day attendance or the whole event. For more information visit the Conference Web page at www.fnps.org (or contact Claudia Larsen at 352.846.1070, calarsen@ufl.edu)

The members of Florida Native Plant Society invite all persons interested in learning about the conservation of Florida's fragile ecosystems against current natural and developmental pressures to join us for this conference.

Community Calendar

March 31 – Santa Fe Lakefest and Cleanup, Lake Santa Fe, Melrose, www.lakesantafe.org

April 6-7 – Native Plant Sale, Morningside Nature Center, Gainesville
www.fnps.org/pages/chapters/chapterpg.php?keyword=PaynesPrairie (see calendar)

April 12-15 – Florida First Coast Birding Festival, St. Augustine
getaway4florida.com/bird_festival_2007

April 13-15 – Pinewoods Bird Festival, Thomasville, Georgia (north of Tallahassee)
www.pinewoodsbirdfestival.com

April 19-22 – Florida Native Plant Society Annual Conference, Gainesville
www.fnps.org/committees/conference/pdfs/FNPSconference2007.pdf

April 19-21 – Wakulla Wildlife Festival, Wakulla Springs (south of Tallahassee)
www.wakullawildlifefestival.org

April 21 - Great American Cleanup, Westside Park, Gainesville
www.currentproblems.org/howtohelp.htm

April 28-29 – Morningside Farm and Forest Festival, Morningside Nature Center, Gainesville, cityofgainesville.org/no

May 8 – Florida Native Plant Society program meeting
www.fnps.org/pages/chapters/chapterpg.php?keyword=PaynesPrairie (see calendar)

May 12 – International Migratory Bird Day
More information can be found at birdday.org.

Book Review: Comparison of Three Recent Shorebird Field Guides

The Shorebird Guide

By Michael O'Brien, Richard Crossley, and Kevin Karlson
Houghton Mifflin, 2006, 477 pp, \$24.95

Shorebirds of North America, Europe, and Asia
Stephen Message and Don Taylor
Princeton University Press, 2005, 224 pp,
\$35.00

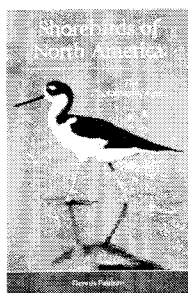
Shorebirds of North America: The Photographic Guide

By Dennis Paulson
Princeton University Press, 2005, 361 pp,
\$29.95

Reviewed by Bruce Christensen

Let's get the air cleared first: I am no shorebird expert. In fact, shorebirds and sparrows aggressively vie for the distinction of most-difficult-birds-for-me-to-identify. I *can* tell a shorebird from a sparrow; it's the narrowing-it-down part after that I have trouble with. In the last two years, three new shorebird field guides have been published. If you, like me, leave many of your identifications of 'peeps' as 'peeps,' this review should be useful to you.

Shorebirds of North America: The Photographic Guide contains descriptions of 94 species that occur from Panama to Canada, including vagrants and even an extinct species (Eskimo Curlew). A great deal of detail is provided to differentiate birds to the subspecies level, relying heavily on plumage description. In the author's words, "it is important, if not imperative, to be able to distinguish plumages in each species to master identification skills." Briefer treatment is given to behavior, flight patterns, and vocalizations. Range maps are not included. The 534 pictures are clear, close, and beautiful. Most of the birds are standing in pro-



file and most plumages are represented once. At least one flight picture is included, representing only one of the plumages. Most flight pictures focus on the upper wing patterns.

Shorebirds of North America, Europe, and Asia, using illustrations, describes 124 species. The illustrations are clear and offer the advantage over photographs of showing a "generic" representation of the species. The book is divided into 2 sections. The first shows each species at rest and is arranged taxonomically. The second section shows the birds in flight and has morphologically similar species grouped together. Habitat descriptions are included in the first section only. Range maps, distribution, and voice descriptions are included in the second section only. Both sections have information on key identification features, behavior, racial variations, and similar species, although the information contained is not identical between sections (i.e., you need to read both sections to get the whole story). This dichotomous format seems to be the authors' attempt at pleasing both those birders that like birds grouped scientifically and those that like birds grouped according to similarity. The result is awkward, forcing the reader to flip between front and back parts of the book to learn about a species. It would have been cleaner to have picked one style or the other and included each species' information and illustrations in the same place. Most of the descriptive information is similar to what is found in *The Photographic Guide*, but in a more abbreviated format.



The newest shorebird field guide is immodestly titled *The Shorebird Guide* and covers 87 North American species, including vagrants and the extinct Eskimo Curlew. Unlike the other guides, it does not rely primarily on plumage differences, but rather focuses on GISS, pronounced "jizz," birding (General Impression of Size and Shape). The philosophy is based on the



fact that plumages are variable and confusing, whereas relative size, structure, behavior, and voice have less variability. The book contains many photographs, some of them up-close and beautiful, others at a distance or in variable lighting, intending to mimic field conditions. Even though plumage is not the main focus of the book, it is not ignored. Each account contains photographs of each plumage stage for that species. Interspersed with these photographs are ones comparing relative size and structural differences with other species. Quiz photos are also interspersed, with answers in the appendix. The photos are divided into two sections: species common to the lower 48 states and then vagrants and regional specialties (e.g., Alaska). Species accounts include range maps and text about species status, taxonomy, behavior, migration, molt, and vocalizations. Most of the photos are every bit as good as (or better than) *The Photographic Guide* and there are more of them. More information about each species is also included, compared with both of the other two guides. If you are looking for just one good shorebird guide, then *The Shorebird Guide* is the one you should buy. It has more (and in many cases better) pictures, more text, and costs less than the other two. Even if you are not yet a convert to GISS birding, the quality of the photos and the textual descriptions of plumage are every bit as (if not more) comprehensive as in other guides. The focus on GISS birding results in more overall information being shared.

Volunteers Wanted

We are looking for some volunteers to assist with various community events when Alachua Audubon Society sets up our information table. Maybe you have joined us for a field trip or attended one of our programs at the library. This can be a fun time to talk with others in the area and a great time to talk about birds and conservation. If you would like more information, call Helen Warren at 352-214-7755.

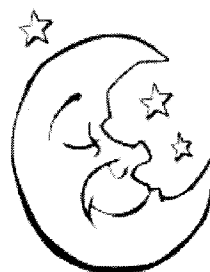
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BACK TO ALASKA

In 2002, I took my first trip to Alaska--birding, of course. It was with Field Guides, a company I've used many times, within and beyond North America. Unfortunately, that year I could only do Part 1, which visited Denali and the Pribilofs (St. Paul Island).

Since then I've been to Gambell on St. Lawrence Island, and Adak, part of the Aleutian chain. I even did a wonderful 3-day Owl trip with Wilderness Birding Adventures to get Boreal, Great Gray, and Northern Saw-whet Owls.

But something was lacking. To earn my stripes as a birder, I felt I must experience Barrow, the furthest point north in North America. I knew it was cold, tough, and desolate. I had to go!

So this June, I embarked on Part 2 of the Field Guides trip: ten days covering Anchorage, Nome, Seward/Kenai Fjords, and Barrow.



About air flights, I'll only say that going is easier than returning. With a 4-hour time differential, and a couple long flights, there's no slick way to get back to Florida. I opted to take a red-eye out of Anchorage, returning to JAX late afternoon. (No photos please.) I will brag that, by scheduling early, I scored a free ticket on American Airlines. If you play the game, Alaska is the Holy Grail of frequent-flyer programs.

Anchorage is a lot like any other small US city, except you can see wondrous mountains all around. And they've got "Urban Moose", which I've seen grazing on traffic islands. I'm told they also have Urban Bear, a bit less welcome.

I had three target birds going into the trip, and got them all. (Oh, did I forget to mention I'm a compulsive lister?) First was the Bristle-thighed Curlew at Nome. This requires a notoriously difficult hike, and I thought I had blown it when I chased the hotel shuttle van at the airport, got tangled up in my two roller bags, and did a 3-point landing on the concrete. One of those points was my problem knee. As soon as I hit the ground, I said goodbye Curlew. But fortunately Tylenol did the trick, and I was able to hike the tundra at Coffeepot Dome two days later. This experience has been described as walking on bowling balls balanced on springs. Most of it wasn't that bad, but some was.

It's not always smooth sailing on the Kenai Fjords trip out of Seward. I learned that my #2 target, Kittlitz's Murrelets (a less than 10-inch bird, amazingly making a living on the high seas) are out in more open water, so if it's rough, some boat trips turn back before they get to them. We had a perfect day, with very calm seas. The trip itself is amazing, with mountains on all sides and rumbling glaciers. We saw 10 species of alcids and lots more. Orcas, too!

Continued on page 9

 <p>Blue Highway a pizzeria</p> <p>Eat Well, Live Well...</p> <p>Check us out. A short ride down Highway 441, just south of the yellow flashing light, in Micanopy. For some of the finest food you'll find anywhere.</p> <p>Open Tue-Sat 11:30-9:00, Sun 12-8:00 / (352) 466-0062</p> <div><p>"The calzones will make all of your wildest dreams come true!" -Rex Rowan</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hand-crafted brick-oven pizza & calzones• Gorgeous salads• Gourmet sandwiches• Home-made desserts• A fine selection of beers, wines & sodas</div>	 <p>Harmony Gardens</p> <p>Nursery and Garden Center</p> <p>10100 NW 13th St. Gainesville, FL (352) 378-3808</p> <p>Providing for living exterior environments Specializing in Native Plants Hummingbird and Butterfly Garden Specialists</p>
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Spectacled Eider, my third target, is said to be a species in decline, but, luckily, there were more than a dozen at Barrow. Like Churchill, Adak, St. Pauls, and Gambell, Barrow is one of those quirky northern outposts. Think Northern Exposure (the TV show) and notch it up a bit. Once you've been there, you will never forget it. At Barrow, there were possibilities for a few bonus birds for my list: Dusky Thrush, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff in alternate (breeding) plumage, and a couple other things, but none of them materialized. We had great weather and, oddly, pizza and Mexican food. (Did I already say "quirky"?). A bit weird having daylight all night long--hey, dude, when do we stop birding?!

Besides my three targets, we enjoyed 5 Loon species, Red-faced Cormorant, Emperor Geese, 4 species of Eider, Willow & Rock Ptarmigan, Pacific & American Golden-Plovers, Mongolian Plover at Barrow, Bar-tailed and a big flock of Hudsonian Godwits, many, many Red Phalaropes all over Barrow, great studies of all three Jaegers, Slaty-backed, Vega Herring, and Sabine's Gulls, Aleutian and many Arctic Terns, about 25 Snowy Owls at Barrow, Yellow Wagtails, Arctic Warblers, beautiful Bluethroats and Northern Wheatears in the same scopeview at Nome, Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Northwestern Crow (it's the voice!), Common and Hoary Redpolls, lots of Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings.

Best non-feathered sightings: Musk Oxen, Dall's Sheep, Mountain Goat, Black Bear, Polar Bear (for a lucky few), Sea Otter, Humpback Whale, Dall's Porpoise, Orca, Lemmings, and of course Moose.

Who doesn't like a Moose?

Dotty Robbins

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The Crane

April - May 2007

LATEST NEWS - EXCITING PROGRAM

Rudi Gelis of Pluma Verde Tours Monday, April 16th at 7pm

Mark your calendar now for a beautiful presentation by Rudi Gelis of Pluma Verde Tours in Ecuador. Rudi will only be in Gainesville for a few days but he is able to give us an evening to introduce the special **Birds of Ecuador**. We plan to meet on Monday, April 16th at 7:00 p.m. The meeting place will be announced in the Gainesville Sun or e-mail Emily Schwartz at hssess@aol.com for more information.

Join Audubon!

To join Audubon on 3 levels (National, Florida, and Alachua), fill in application and mail to:

Paul Moler 7818 Highway 346 Archer, Florida 32618

Questions? Contact Paul 495-9419 or
pmoler@worldnet.att.net

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