

The Crane

Volume 51 Number 6 June-July 2010

The June Challenge

The Seventh Annual June Challenge will run from June 1st to June 30th. What's the June Challenge? It's a friendly competition originated by Alachua Audubon's Becky Enneis in 2004 in order to get us outside where we belong. The idea is to see as many species of birds in Alachua County as you can within the month of June. It's a competition because the desire to win will motivate you to go birding – and you're happy when you're birding, right? – but we don't take the competitive aspect too seriously.

June is a month that most birders spend indoors, and consequently it's terra incognita as far as bird movements are concerned. In 2004, the first year we conducted the June Challenge, we were amazed to find several locally-rare tern species on Newnans Lake, and in 2006 we found a Snail Kite on Paynes Prairie; obviously we wouldn't have known about any of those birds if we'd stayed indoors. Who knows what else might be out there? If you're interested in joining us, here are the rules:

1. Only birds seen in Alachua County during the month of June may be counted. (Those of you living in other counties are encouraged to do June Challenges there, too, and to report the results to me at the email address below when it's over. You folks in Gilchrist, Marion, and Columbia may find yourselves discovering new birding spots.)
2. Heard birds do not count; they must be seen.
3. You are free to put Muscovy Ducks and Whooping

Cranes on your list. Almost any wild bird can go on your list. But not – Bob Simons, I'm looking at you – not chickens.

That's simple, isn't it? Now here are a few tips: Do as much birding as possible during the first half of the month. You're more likely to see lingering migrants that way. There are June records for Common Loon, Ring-billed Gull, Forster's Tern, Cedar Waxwing, American Redstart, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, and Black-throated Blue Warbler, as well as several shorebirds.

Make several visits to Palm Point, Lake Lochloosa, or other large bodies of water to scan for gulls, terns, and pelicans, which may come and go on a daily basis. Go to Longleaf Flatwoods Reserve for Bachman's Sparrows and San Felasco Hammock for Hooded Warblers. There are over 100 species possible here in June. The first and last few hours of daylight are best. Birds tend to sing early in the morning.

Good luck to all of you who decide to join us! In the spirit of good sportsmanship, let me know (rexrowan@earthlink.net) when you see an unexpected bird so I can pass the word. Don't keep it a secret - as I say, it's a *friendly* competition, based on our shared enthusiasm for birding rather than a desire to come in first.

Rex Rowan

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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 Alachua Audubon Society 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 June/July
Crane: July 15th**



Given the hundreds of thousands of years that birds have been migrating between temperate and tropic zones in the Americas, it's probably prattle to talk about what is typical or not in spring migration; however, from our short bird-watching time frame, this spring did seem a little unusual. There were relatively low numbers of our normally more common migrant warblers such as Northern Waterthrush, American Redstart, Cape May, and Blackpoll Warblers. Other fairly common migrants such as

Black-throated Blue and Worm-eating Warblers only made a good showing a day or two and were otherwise fairly absent. Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks showed up as expected, but there were several species reported that normally migrate well to the west and are seldom reported here in spring. Matt Bristol found a Dickcissel April 27 perched and singing at the head of La Chua trail. Caleb Gordon turned up two Veeries April 30 at Loblolly Woods. Caleb also conducted some pre-dawn sessions listening for migrants passing overhead. Early one morning he heard, among other more common species, a Black-billed Cuckoo and a Swainson's Thrush passing over. Becky Enneis reported a Swainson's Thrush from her house in Alachua April 28, and Dalcio Dacol found another the following day. Black-throated Green Warblers are fairly rare here in spring, but Bubba Scales and Tom Hootor reported them in their yards April 9 and 26, respectively. Alder Flycatcher is a species which had never previously been reported in Alachua County, but while leading the Alachua Audubon bird-watching class at Lake Alice April 25 I clearly heard one singing from the lake side of the willows near the Medicinal Gardens boardwalk. The following day Charlene Leonard reported seeing and hearing one singing at the sink along Moonshine Sink trail at San Felasco Hammock. The yearly spring Common Loon watch also showed some deviation from what we have come to expect, with numbers of migrating loons much lower than usual, and sightings trending later than in past years.

Home Depot pond was looking like the hotspot for shorebird migration early this spring, with Stilt and Pectoral Sandpipers, and what seemed to be at least a few Short-billed Dowitchers, but the pond dried up. Attention shifted to Alachua sink, where April 28 Lloyd Davis found the first of at least six Semi-palmated Sandpipers. Rex followed up a week later and found ten species of shorebirds, the best being three White-rumped Sandpipers and an astonishing thirty-eight Black-necked Stilts.

The prairie basin had several other excellent sightings. Two White-faced Ibis continued to be seen at La Chua trail into late April. Mary Landsman and Barbara Mollison found a Roseate Spoonbill April 23 along Cone's Dike trail. The spoonbill later relocated to La Chua Trail. They were also lucky in locating a roost of several locally scarce Yellow-crowned Night Herons. Lloyd Davis found a Yellow-breasted Chat April 19, and I believe the only Bank Swallow reported this spring was one spotted April 28 by Rex Rowan along SW 15th Street, just up from the La Chua entrance. But the biggest news from the basin was the fledging of our first-ever homegrown Whooping Crane chicks! Yes, a pair successfully nested right here in Gainesville and two chicks have hatched. Appearing as a tiny speck in an aerial photograph while foraging with their larger white parents, this represents a great achievement for the conservation of the species, and is a proud moment for our own Payne's Prairie.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through May 10, 2010

What about the Oil Spill- The Short and Long Of It

We have all been watching the news for updates on what is going on with the oil spill in the Gulf. So far, it looks like the shorelines are taking a hit but we still do not know what influence this spill will have on many levels of life in the Gulf waters for years to come.

For those who have been wondering what you can do, please go to www.audubon.org or www.audubonofflorida.org and check out their link in the "*Gulf Coast Disaster - How You Can Help*".

One request made on the web page is this: "We encourage birders along the Gulf coast to record their observations of birds and submit this information to www.ebird.org, a real-time, online checklist program."

For those who are interested in the long term impact of their action, please check out the info and get signed up for the Action Alerts. Both the state and national websites have a feature that allows you to get email information about legislation, and they need you, the voters, to contact your political representatives and demand their support for specific action. This is the time to push for Clean Energy legislation!

Helen Warren

Optics for the Tropics

Optics for the Tropics, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charity organization providing quality optical equipment in the Caribbean and Latin America where resources are very limited. We distribute equipment to ornithologists and educators working to further bird conservation. More than half of North American birds spend part of their annual life cycle in the tropics. These birds do not recognize political boundaries. If we want them to return each spring, we must recognize the need for international partnerships supporting bird conservation. Our vision is two fold: to increase the resources needed to improve monitoring, inventory, research, management, and education regarding birds and their habitats in the Caribbean and Latin America; and to strengthen partnerships that work towards a comprehensive bird conservation effort.

You can help! Tax-deductible donations can be made at our web page using PayPal and a major credit card. Checks can be mailed directly to Optics for the Tropics, Inc. Your organization can sponsor a specific conservation effort in the Caribbean or Latin America by providing the matching funds for equipment you would like to send to the project. Keep in mind that all funds raised are matched dollar-for-dollar by Eagle Optics. To see more specifics about our accomplishments please view our annual report online at: www.OpticsfortheTropics.org

Joni Ellis

Looking for a Swift Count on a Swift Night Out

Will you help us put Gainesville and Alachua County on the map for Chimney Swifts? There is currently only one site in our community on the map with the Swift Night Out project and there are certainly many more roosts to be reported.

There are certain things that mark the change of seasons for me and the chattering of chimney swifts overhead has become one of those things. My neighbor has an active roost in her chimney that gives her great pride and we enjoy talking about the activity in her home as the birds arrive, give birth, and increase their loud exchanges throughout the season. While the sights and sounds of the chimney swift may seem a common occurrence this time of year, there is concern over loss of roosting habitat across the country. Their original choice was that of natural cavities in large hollow trees but as those structures have been removed the birds adapted to the cavity of chimneys or abandoned factory smoke stacks. They are again facing the loss of those modern roost sites.

How often are you out for an early morning or late afternoon stroll and hear the sound of chattering overhead? Can you spend a little time doing some detective work and try to locate the roosting site for your local flock? Take the extra challenge to get a count of the swifts using that roost. Do this a couple of times over the next few months and you should see a change in the activity with the numbers increasing as fall approaches. For some really great information about this bird, go to: www.chimneyswifts.org where you can find info about their behaviors, what to do if you have a roost in your chimney, or have a fallen chick in the home.

If you have an interest in participating in the *Swift Night Out* project to map locations of roost sites, we ask that you locate a roost and over the weekend of August 6, 7, 8, and / or September 10, 11, 12 observe the roost starting about 30 minutes before dusk and estimate the number of swifts that enter. When you have your count, email the research team at DWA@austin.rr.com. That's all there is to it! They would like you to include the following information:

- * Number of swifts counted
- * Time
- * Date
- * Location
- * Broad description of the site, e.g. school, warehouse, residence, Chimney Swift Tower, etc.
- * Weather conditions may also be reported.

For more information about this project go to the Swift Night Out website: <http://www.concentric.net/~dwa/page56.html>

Please also let me know where you located a roost. Send a note to helenkwarren@cox.net with info on the location and number of birds using the roost.

Helen Warren

The Flicker Mystery

We don't know much about the Northern Flicker in Alachua County. Is its breeding population healthy or declining? It's hard to say, because we have no historical data against which to measure current observations. Almost all our knowledge of their historical abundance is based on winter surveys (Frank Chapman in 1886-87, John Dennis from 1949-51, Christmas Bird Count from 1957 to the present), and such surveys included wintering northern birds as well as resident birds so they didn't tell us anything about the size of the locally-resident population.

So during the months of June and July I'm asking Gainesville-area observers to take note of any flickers they see, and to contact me by email at rexrowan@earthlink.net or leave a message on my phone at (352) 371-9296 with the location (as exact as possible), the date, and number of birds seen. If you find a nest that would be particularly valuable.

Rex Rowan

Adam Kent led a bird-watching trip to Lake Alice on March 28th during the Audubon Academy that was hosted in Gainesville. This photo, taken by Barb Kerkhoff, depicts the tranquil lake during sun rise.





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Birds and Children

Alachua Audubon believes that to have citizens that are bird lovers and environmentalists we have to grow them! Our chapter has moved in several directions to encourage an interest in nature in children. This school year we provided 38 classrooms in Alachua County with the national Audubon publications for children called Audubon Adventures. To assess the use of these materials we sent an opinion poll to all teachers who receive these materials. Most found them "excellent" and many wrote comments such as "this is an awesome resource" and "easy to work into the science curriculum".

Another outreach to children was the creation of birding outings specifically for children. Two were carried out this season during what were surely the coldest day and the wettest day of the entire year, yet to great enthusiasm on the part of the children.

This spring, chapter volunteers worked for several days with teachers at Kanapaha Middle School at their outdoor wetlands teaching about the need for wetlands and how they function and using binoculars to identify birds of the area.

A fourth activity was purchasing, at deeply discounted prices, enough copies of National Geographic's Field Guide for the Birds of North America for every public elementary school in Alachua County. We have now purchased more guides to send to every middle school, high school, and charter school library. The book plate in each guide states "Donated to your school by Alachua Audubon Society to foster a love of nature".

Last, efforts are being taken to develop a nature club for youth through city recreation offices. Perhaps you would like to donate time or finances to any of these programs. Please call Emily at 372-0754 or email at emilysgfl@gmail.com if you would like to be a part of our efforts.

Emily Schwartz

Kaitlin Deutsch wrote the article *Kid's Christmas Bird Count* that was printed in the last issue of *The Crane*. Her name as the author was inadvertently left out. Thank you Kaitlin for such an informative article!

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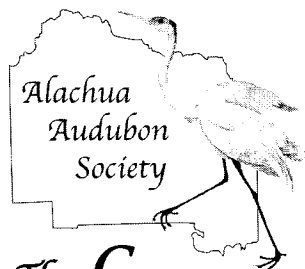
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The Crane
June/July 2010

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Want to Serve on an Audubon Committee?

Existing Alachua Audubon Committees include Education, Conservation, Special Events, Field Trips, Holiday Social, and Crane Circulation. Please contact Helen Warren at helenkwarren@cox.net if you would like to assist with a committee.

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
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Questions? Contact Paul 495-9419 or
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