



# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 39 Number 1, August 1997*

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Wednesday, August 13, 6:30 p.m.**

### **Board Meeting**

We resume our activities after the summer break with the AAS Board Meeting, open to all members and the public. Location is the conference room at the Florida Museum of Natural History on the UF campus. There are some activities where volunteers are needed, so if you're interested in getting (a little more) involved in birding and environmental issues, join us and see where you might fit in.

**Sunday, August 17, 5:30 a.m.**

### **Zellwood**

Meet in the Publix parking lot at University Avenue and W. 34th Street. There's a reason we always start our field trip season with this long drive. The flooded farm fields of Zellwood attract thousands of sandpipers and other wading birds each summer, and there's no easier place to get a good close look at things you can't often find here — Fulvous Whistling-Ducks and Mottled Ducks, Black-necked Stilts, Wilson's Phalaropes, Stilt, Pectoral, and Upland Sandpipers (we generally record about 15 species of sandpipers), Glossy Ibises and Wood Storks, Barn and Bank Swallows, and Yellow Warblers. Bring water and maybe lunch, though there are plenty of restaurants on the way home.

**Sunday, August 31, 6:00 a.m.**

### **Hagens Cove/Tide Swamp**

Meet in the Publix parking lot at University Avenue and W. 34th Street. This remote Gulf Coast site can be marvelous for migrants, both shorebirds and warblers. Last year we got rained out after an hour,

but by that time we'd seen 11 Reddish Egrets, plenty of shorebirds at very close range, and Sora and Clapper Rails. The Tide Swamp walk lasted five minutes (in a downpour), but it was obvious that warblers, vireos, and other forest birds were abundant. This year we're expecting plenty of migrant warblers — possibly, for instance, Yellow, Hooded, Blackburnian, Worm-eating, Blue-winged, and Kentucky. Golden-winged and Cerulean Warblers wouldn't surprise me even a little bit. Bring water/bag lunch.

### **Not an AAS Function but of Interest to *Crane* Readers:**

The Florida Department of Transportation will hold a public presentation to display plans for the proposed **wildlife barrier** along Highway 441 at the Prairie Basin. Date: **August 6**, beginning at **5:00**, with the presentation at **7 p.m.** and comments following. Location: Doyle Conner Agricultural Building at 1911 SW 34th Street.

For details: Call Liz O'Neill, 466-4846

**Sunday, September 7, 8:00 a.m.**

### **San Felasco Hammock**

Meet at the San Felasco parking lot on CR-232, about 8 miles west of US-441 (parking fee \$2.00). Fall migration should be moving right along. Red-eyed Vireos and Veeries will be chowing down on magnolia and devil's-walkingstick berries, Hooded Warblers and Acadian Flycatchers should be bolder than usual, and we'll hope to see Kentucky, Blue-winged, and Worm-eating Warblers, as well as Ovenbirds and Veeries. We'll be finished by lunch-time.



## President's Column

### This year's programs: "full and varied slate"

It's more than a month until the first program meeting (September 27), but maybe you'll want to mark your calendar now, not only for that program but for all the others we have coming up this year, as they all sound pretty interesting.

Our first program will feature Tom Walker speaking on butterfly migration. We birders are thinking of birds when we speak of fall migration, but it's also when a number of butterfly species are migrating. The monarch butterfly migration is the most well-known, but there are others. Tom led a field trip for us several years ago and showed us the big nets he uses for catching and tagging butterflies; his research methods on butterfly migration parallel the banding done to study bird migration.

October's program (on the 25th) will be Steve Nesbitt, speaking about the progress to date on Whopping Crane reintroduction in Florida on the Kissimmee Prairie. Steve spoke to us a few years back when the project was just starting, so we're calling this "Whopping Cranes in Florida: Where We Are Today."

Our November program (on the 15th) is something really special. At noon, we'll be having a picnic at the old Archer Train Depot and celebrating T. Gilbert Pearson Day. Pearson was one of the early founders of the National Audubon Society and spent his boyhood days in Archer. The picnic will be similar to our Annual Meeting Picnic in April where everyone brings a covered dish or dessert to share. Our speakers are Oliver Orr, the author of *Saving America's Birds*, a biography of Pearson, and Clay Henderson, Florida Audubon's president. We're hosting this event with the Archer Historical Society and hope it will be so successful as to be an annual event. Watch for more details in *The Crane* closer to the date.

There's no December program, but when we resume on January 24, John Moran, the *Gainesville Sun* photographer, will be showing us his slides of the Suwannee River. As our January programs are always well-attended, you'll probably want to come early to make sure you get a seat.

On February 28, Don Goodman of Kanapaha Botanical Gardens will speak on hummingbird gardening, and on March 14, Vic Doig will tell us some more about Goethe State Forest. We have field trips in conjunction with both the Suwannee River and Goethe programs. Following the Annual Meeting in April, our final program meeting of the year will be on May 10 when we'll have a speaker from the William Bartram Bicentennial Committee.

I'm looking forward to all of these programs. I hope you'll agree that this is a full and varied slate of programs.

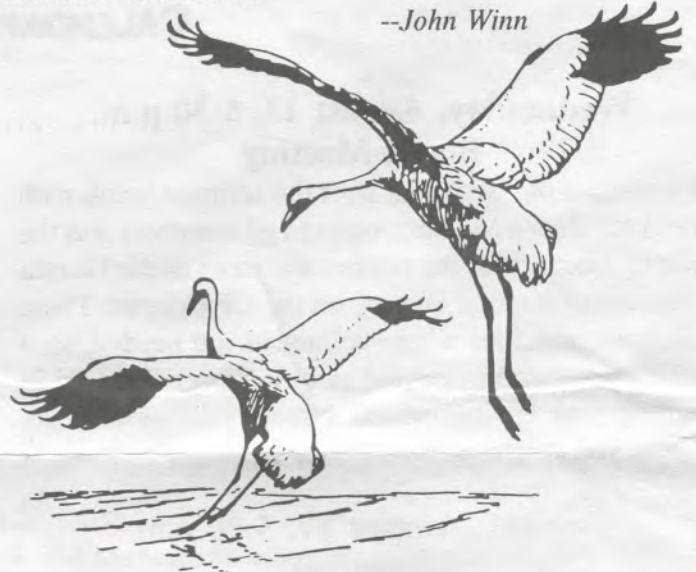
I have three other program notes. The first is that there's going to be construction work in process in the

Millhopper Branch Library this fall, so we're having to move the programs to the Tower Road Branch, at least for the September program, and probably for October also.

The next item is that Alice Farkash, who has been setting up the program meeting room, bringing the refreshments, and attending to other necessary details to make the program meetings successful, will not be able to do those things for all the programs this year. Can someone step forward to help out? If you can, call me at (352) 468-1669.

The final item is that Patti Putnam, who spoke to us a year ago on butterfly gardening, has a new book out, *North America's Favorite Butterflies*. If you'd like to get a copy, it's \$9.95, and you can buy it through our *Crane* bookseller advertisers.

--John Winn



Alachua Audubon Society  
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Or.....e-mail EvPerry@aol.com ***The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.**



# Alachua County Spring Migration Count - 10 May 1997

by Barbara P. Muschlitz

The weather was pleasant count day with moderate wind from the north. An early temperature of 68° climbed to only 78°. Some groups counted only during the morning hours, but several die-hards continued till fairly late in the day. This is the 6th year we have participated in the spring migration count. The first year, we had the weather to create an amazing fall-out. We counted 135 species and 11,189 individuals in 1992. This year was our second best year, as far as numbers go, with 121 species and 8990 individuals.

The 924 Bobolinks astounded me. A few are usually seen on our spring count, but in most years the majority of our transient Bobolinks have headed on north by early May. Four teams each counted over a hundred individuals. I consider Bobolinks a treat to observe, either individually or in numbers.

Probably most exciting of the species new to the count was Painted Bunting, PABU. Adam Kent found an adult male PABU, along Wacahoota Road at the Power Line cut. Later, the Micanopy team saw an adult male PABU on one side of the road and heard another singing on the other side. Subsequently, in the same locale, Alice Farkash found an adult male on May 14, and Cathy Reno spotted a green bunting. (Both imm. males and females are green.) Two days later, Alice observed both birds together. Again at the same spot on May 25, Cathy & Ike Fromberg saw an ad. male. Typically PABUs breed near the coast, but their breeding is decreasing, most likely from loss of habitat. It is exciting to think they may be extending their breeding range inland and to Alachua County. (More recently from mid June through at least July 5, Catherine Ramsey has seen an adult male PABU in her yard, which is located about 3 miles from the Power Line

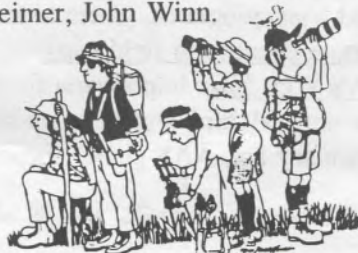
cut.)

Blue-winged Teal was also a species new to the count. Each of 3 different teams counted one! The third new species was Laughing Gull. Two were found at the dump near Archer by Bryant Roberts and Ron Robinson. This addition is not unexpected, Laughing Gulls were formerly uncommon inland but have been increasingly seen in Alachua County.

Other notable species were Connecticut Warbler found by Craig Parenteau at River Rise and a Palm Warbler discovered by Graham Rowan. Connecticut Warbler is a late warbler but as a skulker, usually hard to find. Two were found on our first count and one in 1995. Although 16 Palm Warblers were found on our first NAMC in 1992, none had been found in subsequent years. One report I found especially gratifying: John Winn found both Brown-headed Nuthatch and Bachman's Sparrow at his demonstration LEAF pine forest.

Although a high number of individuals for a species for one year does not necessarily indicate a trend, certainly our two exotics, Eurasian Collared Dove and House Finch, have been steadily increasing.

Observers: Howard Adams, Lyn Badger, Dave Beatty, Pat Burns, Sam Cole, Alice Farkash, Manny Garner, Gordon Gottlieb, Dale Henderson, Larry Johnson, Adam Kent, Mary Landsman, Mike Manetz, Greg McDermott, Michael Meisenberg, Barbara Muschlitz, Craig Parenteau, Cathy Reno, Bryant Roberts, Ron Robinson, Graham & Rex Rowan, Lenny Santisteban, Linda Terry, Jim Weimer, John Winn.



## Count Results

Underlined species name: new to count. Underlined numbers: new maxima

Pied-billed Grebe	3
Dbl-cr Cormorant	15
Anhinga	49
Least Bittern	15
Great Blue Heron	94
Great Egret	74
Snowy Egret	82
Little Blue Heron	55
Tricolored Heron	9
Cattle Egret	486
Green Heron	41
Blk-cr Night-Heron	22
Ylw-cr Night-Heron	1
White Ibis	101
Glossy Ibis	26
Wood Stork	20
Wood Duck	12
Mottled Duck	2
<u>Blue-winged Teal</u>	3
Black Vulture	95
Turkey Vulture	121
Osprey	57
Swallow-tailed Kite	1
Mississippi Kite	7
Bald Eagle	10
Cooper's Hawk	1
Red-shouldered Hawk	37
Red-tailed Hawk	10
American Kestrel	14
Wild Turkey	8
Northern Bobwhite	34
King Rail	3
Purple Gallinule	4
Common Moorhen	92
American Coot	57
Limpkin	2
Sandhill Crane	3
Killdeer	19
Greater Yellowlegs	1
Solitary Sandpiper	4
Spotted Sandpiper	24
Semipalmated Sandp.	2
Least Sandpiper	18
Peep, sp.	10
<u>Laughing Gull</u>	2
Ring-billed Gull	8
Rock Dove	145
Eurasian Collared	9
Mourning Dove	302
Common Ground Dove	16
Ylw-billed Cuckoo	18
Eastern Screech Owl	6
Great Horned Owl	2
Burrowing Owl	4
Barred Owl	6
Common Nighthawk	12
Chuck-Will's-widow	30
Chimney Swift	95
Ruby-throated H'bird	10

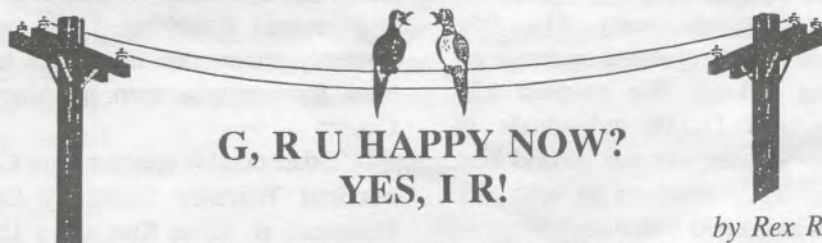


Belted Kingfisher	1
Red-headed Woodpecker	61
Red-bellied Woodpecker	161
Downy Woodpecker	54
Northern Flicker	7
Pileated Woodpecker	41
Eastern Wood Pewee	1
Acadian Flycatcher	22
Gt Crested Flycatcher	223
Eastern Kingbird	32
Purple Martin	62
N Rough-wngd Swallow	13
Barn Swallow	16
Blue Jay	190
American Crow	193
Fish Crow	83
Crow, sp.	150
Carolina Chickadee	27
Tufted Titmouse	224
Brwn-headed Nuthatch	8
Carolina Wren	308
Blue-gray Gnatcatchr	85
Eastern Bluebird	97
Wood Thrush	2
Northern Mockingbird	275
Brown Thrasher	57
Cedar Waxwing	254
Loggerhead Shrike	32
European Starling	80
White-eyed Vireo	116
Ylw-throated Vireo	17
Red-eyed Vireo	63
Northern Parula	232
Cape May Warbler	3
Blk-thr Blue Warbler	2
Ylw-throated Warbler	49
Pine Warbler	49
Palm Warbler	1
Blackpoll Warbler	6
Black&White Warbler	2
American Redstart	15
Prothonotary Warbler	20
No. Waterthrush	4
Connecticut Warbler	1
Common Yellowthroat	65
Hooded Warbler	8
Ylw-breasted Chat	2
Summer Tanager	102
Northern Cardinal	443
Blue Grosbeak	17
Indigo Bunting	20
<u>Painted Bunting</u>	<u>2</u>
Rufous-sided Towhee	141
Bachman's Sparrow	5
Bobolink	924
Red-winged Blackbird	576
Eastern Meadowlark	45
Boat-tailed Grackle	624
Common Grackle	133
Brown-headed Cowbird	47
Orchard Oriole	29
House Finch	11
American Goldfinch	2
House Sparrow	46
Number of species	121
Number of individuals	8990

## Calling All Bluebird Monitors

by Cathy Reno

As the 1997 bluebird nesting season winds down, I'll soon be checking my nestboxes one last time and tallying results. I look forward to hearing from all bluebird monitors — to hear stories of successes, failures, experiments, and interesting observations. Whether you monitor one nestbox or many, please share your experiences with Alachua Audubon by filling out the Bluebird Nestbox Report form included as an insert with this issue. I'll send our compiled results to the North American Bluebird Society to be included in its continent-wide survey. Please send me your results by September 15.



by Rex Rowan

Lacking beaches and salt flats, Gainesville's shorebird lovers depend for their sandpiper "fix" on local retention ponds. The best of these has always been the Kanapaha Waste Water Treatment Plant's "holding pond" on SW 41st Place, behind Veterans Park. Here the water level, artificially controlled, stays fairly constant, and presents plenty of shallows and muddy shoreline for the dining pleasure of Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitchers, Common Snipe, and, during migration, a variety of less common species.

The only problem with the holding pond has always been the chain-link fence surrounding it. Looking *through* the fence necessitated frequent adjustments of your spotting-scope tripod a few inches this way, a few inches that. It was a bother.

But friends in high places have come to our aid. Karen Johnson of GRU, a birder and Audubon member, offered to have an observation berm constructed that would be *higher* than the fence. We settled on a spot overlooking the shorebirds' favorite gathering place, and GRU engineer Greg Marzak supervised the construction of the berm, an expansive earthen platform with a long gradual incline on one side for easy access.

The berm is up and in use now (shorebird season peaks in August), but more is planned for the site. Wood Duck boxes will be set up in the holding pond (I saw a flock of 13 Woodies there on July 19), the surrounding area will be landscaped and planted to increase its attractiveness to wildlife, interpretive signs will be posted. But at the center of it all will be the holding pond itself, where over the years local birders have recorded 11 species of long-legged wading birds, 14 species of ducks, and 13 species of shorebirds — and from now on we'll have an unobstructed view of them all, thanks to Karen Johnson and GRU.

## Keeping You Posted...

**SunDial Bird Line:** 335-3500, ext. BIRD (2473) for the latest information on field trips, programs, where to see birds, what's happening with AAS, and last minute changes in field trips.

**AAS Web Site:** <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud/aud.htm> for unusual bird sightings updated on a regular basis, calendar of events, sanctuary list, AAS goals, purpose.



**BLUEBIRD NESTBOX REPORT**  
Alachua Audubon Society



Complete and mail by September 15 to:  
Cathy Reno, 211 SE 70th St., Gainesville, FL 32641.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Location of nestboxes \_\_\_\_\_

# of bluebird boxes monitored \_\_\_\_\_

# of boxes occupied by bluebirds \_\_\_\_\_

# of boxes that fledged at least one bluebird \_\_\_\_\_

# of fledgling bluebirds (if exact number not known, make best estimate) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# of predation incidents \_\_\_\_\_

Type of predator suspected (such as snake, raccoon, ants, cats, sparrows, vandalism) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Did you observe any harassment of bluebirds by mockingbirds? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other species that nested in your boxes \_\_\_\_\_

Please expand further on above results, add comments, or include anything interesting you may have observed (use back of page if necessary).



## Bluebird Nest Box Report 1996 Season

by Cathy Reno

Here's a very belated report for last year's bluebird nesting season.

During 1996, Alachua Audubon monitored 85 bluebird nestboxes. Sixty-nine of these boxes were occupied by bluebirds, and approximately 264 fledglings were raised.

Several participants improved nesting success by installing protection from predators. Sharon Dickson is using PVC for her nestbox poles — the slippery PVC, which makes climbing difficult for snakes and raccoons. Ria Leonard installed metal cylinder guards on her nestbox poles with great success in eliminating predators. Jean Dorney came up with an ingenious solution to ant predators. She and Alice Tyler placed Ant Stakes and Combat on the ground at the base of their nestbox poles.

Unfortunately, during 1996 at Kanapaha Ranch, nesting success was very low, in spite of installing metal cylinder guards on free-standing posts. This may be due to problems other than climbing predators. Look for a hopefully better update during the 1997 season.

Also during 1996, Karen Schaudt continued her battle with House Sparrows. She attempted trapping them with no success but was able to prevent them from nesting by continually removing their nest material from the boxes. Wally and Jean Stephens observed some harassment of bluebirds by a mockingbird. John Ennis observed no harassment by mockingbirds even though they nested only 50 feet away from his bluebird box.

Many participants expressed the pleasure and satisfaction of watching fledglings and parents on their properties. The Marzak family noted bluebirds still visiting their nestboxes on September 2. George and Josephine Elliott saw newly-fledged young head straight for their bird bath where they bathed for a full five minutes. Perhaps they were ridding themselves of mites acquired during their upbringing in the nestbox? Robert Fox observed fledglings in his pasture all summer long.

Thank you very much to all the 1996 participants. Your dedication to bluebird conservation is greatly appreciated.

Sharon Dickson	Claudia Larsen
Jean Dorney	Ria Leonard
George & Josephine Elliott	Marzak family
John Ennis	Barbara Muschlitz
Robert Fox	Nancy Oakes
Ike Fromberg	Karen Schaudt
Hargrave family	Wally & Joan Stephens
Effie Kirby	Alice Tyler

If you would like information about bluebirds, nestbox plans, tips on monitoring nestboxes, or predator control ideas, please call me at 375-2246.

## Field Trip Report

by Rex Rowan

You're probably wondering how our Port Canaveral pelagic trip went last May 17. It went pretty well. Sort of. For a pelagic trip.

Which is to say, we met at an ungodly hour, drove a very long way, blew \$30 on boat fare alone (not to mention gas and Dramamine), sizzled in the sun all day long, lost one of our group to seasickness, spent long periods of time staring out at the white glare of an utterly empty sea, and after all that saw only two species of birds. But the two species were **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** and **Leach's Storm-Petrel**, and the latter, at least, was a lifer for every birder on board. Thanks to the ten bucks I spent on popcorn — you throw it overboard in handfuls to create a "chum slick," and the birds fly along the slick to investigate (but not eat, thank heaven) the popcorn — we got repeated close looks at both birds. Towards the end of the day, and as Dave Barry would say, 'I am not making this up,' a disgruntled fisherman informed us that the popcorn was bringing the anglers bad luck, and asked us to refrain from further chumming.

I've gone over the field trip sign-up sheets for the past year, and I've discovered some interesting and disheartening facts. We had 26 field trips last year, and a total of 152 people went on at least one of them. Alas, 77 went on *only* one — and never came back! Another 26 went on two or three before they'd had enough. These statistics may not be so hard to understand — for instance, our largest attendance was for the "field trip" to Ron Robinson's yard, which had a particular appeal to backyard birders, as opposed to field birders. But only 15 went on five or more trips! Tell me what I'm doing wrong!

I can think of a couple possibilities. Field trips don't always produce the advertised birds because the ratio of birding trips to *productive* birding trips is rather steep. Most veteran birders know this — they go out ten times for every Golden-winged Warbler they see — but many beginners don't. So, let me suggest: don't go once and then give up if it's unproductive. Go on lots of them. Generally, out of every five trips, at least one will be quite good. Last fall and winter, for instance, we saw an astonishing Peregrine Falcon migration and warbler fallout at Guana River on October 5, had a great selection of warblers, thrushes, and tanagers at Bolen Bluff on October 12, and found a Harlequin Duck and two Sprague's Pipits at St. Marks and points west on January 11. But in between, there were six trips of varying quality on which we didn't see that much. Those who stuck with us through thick and thin had some great experiences; those who didn't, didn't.

The other possibility is the attitude of the leaders. It's a natural tendency for good birders to hang out with good



birders, because they notice more, and thus can share more: Look at this odd plumage! Listen to this unusual call-note! But this alienates beginners, who feel as if they've crashed a private party.

Here's a suggestion for prospective field trip participants. Don't hang back silently. Shoulder your way to the front and latch on to someone who seems to know what he or she is doing. Ask them: where is it? What is it? How do you know? Are these common? Why is this good habitat? You may not believe this, but you will not be considered rude or intrusive; in fact, you'll probably be adopted. Next to finding a good bird, birders and most other naturalists enjoy nothing more than puffing up and holding forth on their field of interest, taking rank beginners under their wings and "bringing them along." It's an ego thing. Take advantage of it, for everyone's benefit.

Children are certainly welcome on field trips, though it's worth considering whether they'll be bored by all that staring up into treetops and the occasional long, uneventful day. It's a topic of some concern in the birding community, how so few youngsters seem interested in birding or the outdoors. Most kids have no direct experience of the wild world at all. So if you know a child, especially a teenager, whose interest in wildlife is going un-nurtured, do him/her a favor and introduce him/her to Alachua Audubon's field trips.

Hope to see all of you this year.



## Around the County...

by Mike Manetz

Welcome to another year of birding in Alachua County. Before we get to our reports on summer nesting and fall migration, let me welcome those of you who are new to our area or new to *The Crane*. If you are an experienced birdwatcher, we invite you to help out on our migration or Christmas counts. If you are a beginner or relative novice, you might want to check out birdwatching classes sponsored by Alachua Audubon and advertised in Santa Fe Community College's Continuing Education catalog. Also consider attending our scheduled nature programs and field trips. These are all great ways to meet our birding and nature-oriented community as well as acquainting yourself with some of the wonderful natural areas in and around Gainesville. Finally, newcomers may find "A Birdwatcher's Guide to Alachua County, Florida"

to be a useful publication for finding good local birding and hiking locations, as well as informing when and where all regularly occurring avian species can usually be found. The book is available at Goering's and Books-a-Million for about seven bucks.

Updating the nesting season highlights, I am pleased to report the presence of between five and seven **Yellow-breasted Chats** along Bolen Bluff Trail throughout the summer. It is suspected that these birds, along with several Tom Webber discovered recently in the Cedar Key Scrub, represent the southernmost extent of that bird's breeding range. Puzzling was the appearance in early spring of two singing male **Painted Buntings** along Wacahoota Road. At least one male persisted through the summer, being seen sporadically at the feeder of Catherine Ramsey, though there were no definite sightings of females or nesting activity. Painted Buntings are not known to breed in our county. Another notable summer rarity was the **Belted Kingfisher** that was seen along La Chua Trail by Greg McDermott and myself on June 19 and again on July 15. John Hintermister reported one at San Felasco July 10. Kingfishers are normally considered winter visitors only, though there are records of nesting in the 1970's. A species of special concern locally is the **Wood Thrush**, so Susan Sommerville was doubly pleased to host two males singing behind her Rock Creek home. John H. also reported a singing male and a juvenile at San Felasco Hammock on July 10. **House Finches** seem to be continuing their relentless colonization of our county. I would imagine this winter they will be widespread at feeders (I now have eight in my yard) so you might want to review the differences between the House Finch and its look-alike cousin, the Purple Finch, which is rare here in winter.

I never cease to be amazed at how early fall migration begins. The first wave usually begins by the middle of July. So, as if right on cue, David Beatty found our first migrant **Louisiana Waterthrush** July 16 at Palm Point. Rex Rowan arrived to investigate and turned up a **Prairie Warbler**. Within a couple of days, **Black-and-White Warblers** began to show up as well, along with our earliest migrant shorebird, a **Spotted Sandpiper**. By the time the mailperson delivers this issue of *The Crane*, someone will have reported American Redstarts and Yellow Warblers, and perhaps some lucky birder will have found a Kentucky Warbler! Isn't that amazing? The prize warblers to look for in middle to late August include Cerulean (rare) and Golden-winged (uncommon). As usual, two of the best spots for migrant warblers will be Bolen Bluff Trail and Palm Point/Lakeshore Drive, but please check out some of our other great but under-birded spots. Poe Springs Park and Bellamy Road have been excellent the past two fall migrations. Thanks to those who shared their sightings through July 24.



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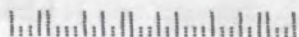
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*The Crane*

August 1997



MR-MRS JOHN C WINN  
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To join Audubon on 3 levels (National, Florida, and Alachua), fill in this application and mail to:

Paul Moler, 7818 Highway 346, Archer, Florida 32618

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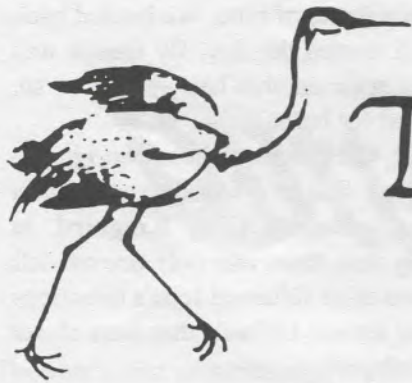
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# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 39 Number 2, September 1997*

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Sunday, September 7, 7:30 a.m.**

### **San Felasco Hammock**

Meet at the San Felasco parking lot (\$2 parking fee). We always go into this trip hoping for (in ascending order of improbability) Kentucky, Golden-winged, and Cerulean Warblers. But even if we don't see those - and we have a pretty fair shot at the Kentucky, anyway - chances are good for Ovenbirds, Veeries, Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers, Acadian Flycatchers, and several other migrant and resident species. Bring insect repellent.

**Wednesday, September 10, 6:30 p.m.**

### **Board Meeting**

The AAS Board Meeting is open to all members and the public. It is held in the conference room at the Florida Museum of Natural History on the UF campus. There are some activities where volunteers are needed, so if you're interested in getting (a little more) involved in birding and environmental issues, join us and see where you might fit in.

**Saturday, September 20**

### **North American Migration Count**

Alachua Audubon wants you! This is the NAMC's third annual continent-wide fall count, and all good birders will be needed to survey the county from one end to the other. In each of the past two years we've tallied 26 warbler species (29 species for the two years combined), including Golden-winged, Kentucky, Nashville, Cerulean, Swainson's, and Canada Warblers. It's a great day to go birding! Call Mike Manetz at 377-1683 to get involved.

**Saturday, September 27, 7:30 a.m.**

### **Newnans Lake**

Migration will be moving towards its peak as we meet to bird one of the most consistently productive fall hotspots in the state of Florida. The cypresses and water hickories should host Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, and Tennessee Warblers, abundant American Redstarts, and Yellow-billed Cuckoos. Possible are Blackburnian and Golden-winged Warblers, and Scarlet Tanagers, among many others.

**Saturday, September 27, 2:00 p.m.**

### **Butterfly Migration**



The morning will find us watching migrating birds and in the afternoon, we'll learn all about migrating butterflies! The first AAS program for the year is one you want to be sure to attend. See details on Page 3.

**Sunday, October 5, 6:00 a.m.**

### **Guana River State Park**

Meet at Powers Park on SR-20 (Hawthorne Road), 4½ miles east of Waldo Road. This trip is scheduled to coincide with the Peregrine Falcon migration along the Atlantic Coast. Last year we were greeted by a strong nor'easter, and consequently we saw at least 31 Peregrines, as well as abundant warblers in the maritime forest afterwards. This year's plan will be the same as last year's, beginning at the hawk watch on the dunes overlooking Ponte Vedra Beach and ending up in the woods. Can't guarantee the nor'easter, however. Bring water, sunscreen, bug spray, and lunch.



## Field Trip Report

by Rex Rowan

It's always hot at Zellwood, but I don't think it's ever been as hot as it was on August 17, when we kicked off the 1997-98 field trip season. Even at 8:15, as our caravan of 37 birders (!) rolled through the gate, the air was heavy and muggy, and it only got worse as the day dragged on. What with all the heat and dust, it would have been an ordeal — if not for the birds.

Most of them were concentrated in one pond, not too far down the road. I don't think I've seen so many in the nine years I've been going there. **Black-necked Stilts** were everywhere, yapping like little dogs, **Lesser Yellowlegs** and **Pectoral Sandpipers** cluttered the mudflats, and **Glossy Ibises** were common — all within a few feet of the road. **Stilt Sandpipers** were actually abundant — John Hintermister estimated 300 — and our tally of 20 sandpiper species included half a dozen **American Avocets**, a **Marbled Godwit**, and several **Wilson's Phalaropes** spinning like toys. There was a flock of **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks**, and three **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks**, my first sighting of that species at Zellwood, and a lifer for several people on the trip. All the expected peeps were present — some **Westerns**, some **Semipalmateds**, lots of **Leasts**. Nobody had the patience or the time to pick through them all, and thus many of us kicked ourselves the next day when a more assiduous, or perhaps luckier, birder reported seeing a **Little Stint** there (it was never relocated, and no photos were taken).

Afterwards, we headed for the sod fields, along the way passing what must have been a rather large percentage of the United States' **Wood Storks** standing gloomily in a dry field. They stalked a little farther from the road as we drove by, a slow, cautious stampede.

Only four birds were visible on the sod, but one of them was an **Upland Sandpiper** (the others were **Killdeer**). First seen by Greg McDermott, it was the only one of the day for most of us. While we set up the telescopes to enjoy it, the bird was satisfied to walk a few steps, pause, walk a little more. A much better-behaved Upland than last year's, which gave us only a brief look and a call-note as it sprang out of a field and disappeared over the horizon.

Although we drove all the way to the other end of Zellwin Farms, and although two more fields were flooded, we did not find another concentration of shorebirds. We did see three **Bank Swallows** perched among **Barn**

**Swallows** on a telephone wire; but otherwise, the latter half of the morning was a waste of time. We headed back to the pond where we'd started the day. By now it was lunchtime, and after birding for another half an hour or so, most of the crowd headed for home.

Which was, of course, the moment when John Hintermister drove up to tell me that he'd found over a dozen **Upland Sandpipers**, as well as a **Gray Kingbird**, in another field nearby. By then there was only one car left besides mine, but the two of us followed John's directions and got very nice looks at several Uplands that were closer than the first one had been.

Although the day was hot and the multitude of shorebirds confusing, I think the trip went very well, and a lot of people expressed satisfaction with the variety and the ease of viewing.

The field trips between mid-September and mid-October are generally the best of the year. We'd love to have you along. So don't be one of those who reads next month's field trip report, smacks his forehead in regret and self-disgust, and exclaims, "I Audugon to Audubon!" (Okay, I admit, you have to think about that one for a while...)



*It was early September, a red bright day of Indian summer sun and stillness, and the beach bird stood immobile for a time, observing the turtles and a muskrat, two black ducks and a green heron, as if certain of its central place in a strange and beautiful universe.*

—Peter Matthiessen, American naturalist and writer

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Jean Dorney, Alice Tyler, Pat Burns, Nancy Oakes.

*The Crane* is published monthly throughout the year except June and July. 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. Cost to members of other chapters is \$5. Cost to non-Audubon members is \$8. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed, can be on disk or hard copy, and must be received no later than **September 22** to be included in the **October** issue. Please limit each article to no more than two pages. Fax to 331-2585. Drop your disk or hard copy by The Branch Office, 519 NW 60th Street, Suite A, or mail to: Evelyn Perry, at the same address.

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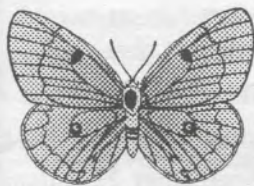
# Butterfly Migration

The year's first program meeting features Tom Walker, of the University of Florida Entomology and Nematology Department, speaking on butterfly migration. All members and the general public are cordially invited.

There are many similarities between butterfly migration and bird migration. For one thing, there are a lot of unanswered questions about both of them.

those question for nearly 40 answers because Gainesville

On a field trip Tom led for he uses for catching and tag-parallel the banding done to Sulphurs, and Gulf Fritillaries.



Tom Walker has been trying to find the answers to some of years. He says that he's picked a good place to look for those is right in the middle of a "butterfly flyway."

Alachua Audubon several years ago, he showed us the big nets ging butterflies; his research methods on butterfly migration study bird migration. Most numerous were Monarchs, Cloudless In spring, Buckeyes are also common.

Tom's studies in the Gainesville area show long-term trends in butterfly numbers. He says he now knows pretty much where migrating butterflies go but still needs to learn how butterflies know how to get where they're going.

Join us to hear the details of Tom's research and to see his butterfly slides. (Remember, the meeting place has changed for this year because of construction at the Millhopper Library.)

**Sat., Sept. 27, 2 p.m. - - - Free Admission - - - Refreshments**

**Tower Road Branch Library Meeting Room, 3020 SW 75<sup>th</sup> St.**

## AUDUBON ADVENTURES



### Update

Alachua Audubon members have overwhelmingly responded to requests for sponsors for *Audubon Adventures*. To date, there are sponsors for 63 classes for the coming school year.

Our goal is to provide *Audubon Adventures* to the class of every Alachua County teacher that wants to use it. Teachers who have used the materials ask for it year after year and students really seem to like them, judging from their letters of appreciation to sponsors.

It's not too late to sponsor a classroom's yearly subscription to *Audubon Adventures*. For \$35, you can provide the bi-monthly packet of environmental education materials to a classroom of your choice (usually fourth grade) for a whole year. Call Susan Sommerville (378-2808) for details.

Thanks to all of this year's sponsors:

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## AROUND THE COUNTY...

by Mike Manetz

It is once again time to mark your calendars for our third annual Fall Migration Count. The count will be held Sept. 20, and experienced birders are encouraged to participate. Be aware that this year's date coincides with the Tennessee game, but if you can give us at least half of a day's effort, it will be greatly appreciated. As a counter balance to Gator football, remember that Sept. 20 is prime-time for our warbler migration, and your chances of seeing anywhere between ten and twenty species of these forest sprites is relatively assured. If you have not previously participated or are not sure of your skill level, please call me at 377-1683.

The early phase of fall migration up to the middle of August was relatively slow. Water levels were uniformly too high to attract shorebirds, and the passerine migration was disappointingly weak. By mid-August, only six species of migrant warblers had been reported from Palm Point, and none of them could be found regularly or reliably. Don't be discouraged as you read this, though, because by the time this issue of *The Crane* arrives, the species count should have at least doubled as we enter the fullest and most exciting phase of the migration.

There are at least a few other items of migratory interest to mention. On Aug. 16, Terry Taylor spotted six **Black Terns** over Newnans Lake. Newnans is easily the best place in the county to look for Black Terns this time of year. David Beatty and Judy Bryant were present Aug. 9 at Palm Point when a **Roseate Spoonbill** chose to fly over. To my knowledge, this was the only spoonbill sighting in the county this summer. Rex and Graham Rowan were birding La Chua Trail on Aug. 9 between the water control structure and old Sweetwater branch when they heard a **Black Rail** calling vigorously and repeatedly from the rank grass several yards off the trail. The bird called for several minutes, during which time, park biologist Jim Weimer had arrived to enjoy the barrage of "keeki-doo"s. Rex reported the bird was still calling when he returned to the location as much as an hour later, but by the following day, it had either moved on or had fallen inexplicably silent. Black Rails are among the most elusive and secretive residents on Payne's Prairie. Their local breeding, migratory, and wintering status is a huge mystery, so any time one of them is encountered, it is notable. (The last Black Rail vocalization reported in the county was May 22, 1995.) Thanks to those who shared their sightings through Aug. 16.



As noted in the last issue,

Gainesville Regional Utilities has created an earthen birding platform that overlooks the holding pond at the Kanapaha Wastewater Treatment Plant. The platform sports a picnic table, benches, and a shelter so we can bird in the rain without getting wet.

What do we call this place? "The Kanapaha Wastewater Treatment Plant's holding pond" is too unwieldy. Can you think of something better? GRU wants to celebrate the pond's reincarnation as a wildlife sanctuary by inviting Alachua Audubon to christen it.

Therefore, GRU and AAS announce the "**NAME THAT LAGOON**" CONTEST. Think up a new name for the pond and, by **September 25**, submit your entry to Rex Rowan, 2041 NE 15th Terrace, Gainesville, FL, 32609, or phone at (352) 371-9296 (or e-mail at [afn49272@afn.org](mailto:afn49272@afn.org)). GRU will donate \$50 to the Colclough Pond Sanctuary Habitat Enhancement Fund (maybe we should rename that, too) in the winner's name.

## A Book Review

- by John Winn

**Saving American Birds: T. Gilbert Pearson and the Founding of the Audubon Movement**  
by Oliver H. Orr, Jr., University Press of Florida,  
296 pp. \$39.95

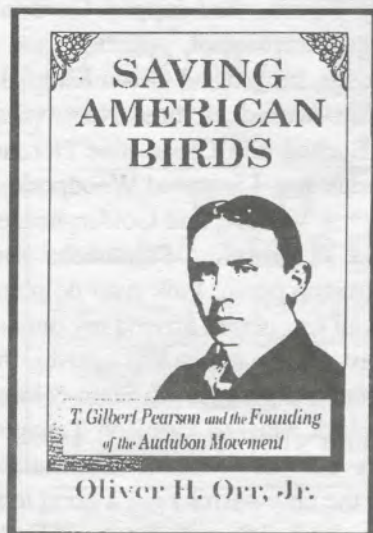
Any list of the first pioneers of the bird protection movement in the early 1900's would certainly include the names of Frank Chapman and T. Gilbert Pearson. What's somewhat unlikely — but nevertheless the case — is that they both have a connection with Alachua County.

Chapman, the older of the two, was the founder of "Bird-Lore" magazine, the forerunner of today's "Audubon." He spent several winters in Gainesville. While here in 1891, he met and encouraged a 13-year-old boy living in Archer who was developing a serious interest in ornithology. That was T. Gilbert Pearson, who was to become the first full-time leader of what is now the National Audubon Society.

Saving American Birds, Oliver Orr's biography of T. Gilbert Pearson, details the first part of Pearson's career, up to 1911 when he became the executive officer of the National Association of Audubon Societies. Prior to that, he had held various offices in the Audubon Society of North Carolina,



which he helped found in 1902. Pearson had attended Guilford College and the University of North Carolina and had remained in North Carolina to teach at Guilford. His activities in these years, particularly in regard to the hiring of wardens to protect seabird colonies, are quite interesting and inspiring — how he found the energy to do all he did quite astounds me. But the part of the book which I think might be of most interest to local readers is the early chapters set in Alachua County.



The Pearsons, a family of Quaker farmers, moved from the Midwest to Archer in 1882. T. Gilbert Pearson was nine. It was while he was here that Pearson's interest in wildlife developed. By the time he was 13, he was quite a serious egg collector — oology then being quite acceptable. In fact, his collection was so extensive that he was able to exchange it for room,

board, and tuition at Guilford College where it formed the nucleus of what was probably the largest egg collection in the South.

Drawing on Pearson's autobiography, *Adventures in Bird Protection*, and other sources, Orr describes how Pearson traveled around our area observing and collecting wildlife. Many of the places named — Levy Lake, Cedar Key, Kanapaha Prairie, Waldo — are familiar.

When he was 14, Pearson's first published article appeared, a brief report of an egg collecting expedition to a rookery near Archer. As Orr puts it, later "his pursuit of knowledge advanced from random, exploratory trips and collecting to systematic studies." He details how Pearson once spent a day on Kanapaha Prairie hiding behind an alligator nest to observe a Pied-billed Grebe nest to see if eggs are incubated by a parent bird during the day. Some other accounts in the book are that of Pearson's only attempt to raise a wild bird — a Great Egret — in captivity and a touching description of his observations over a five-year period of an American Kestrel and its too-trusting mate.

Chapman nominated Pearson for associate membership in the American Ornithologists' Union, and after he left Archer for college, his connection with that organization led to a deeper and deeper involvement in the campaign to halt plume hunting. He occasionally returned to Florida and Archer but never again lived here. It's certainly plausible to think that if his family had not moved to Archer when Pearson was in his formative years, he might never have developed his interest

in bird conservation. So those years from 1882 to 1891 were important to all of us and as good a reason as any for us to celebrate T. Gilbert Pearson Day in Archer on November 15.

*This event will be held at noon at the Archer Historical Museum (the former Archer Train Depot) and will include a picnic lunch, special speakers and many activities. Details will follow in upcoming issues of The Crane.*

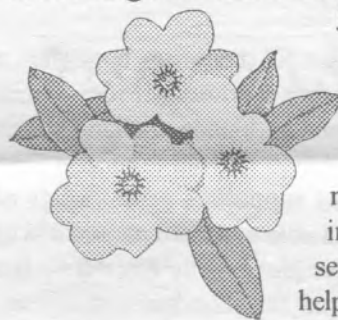
## Native Plant Sale - this month



Sponsored by Friends of Morningside and Florida Native Plant Society, Paynes Prairie Chapter  
In cooperation with the staff of Morningside Nature Center (City of Gainesville Nature Operations Division)

**Friday, Sept. 26, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**  
**Saturday, Sept. 27, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

at Morningside Nature Center, 3540 E. University Ave.



Join us for the 8th Annual Native Plant Sale at Morningside, where you will find at one time and place, the largest variety and quantity of native plants for sale anywhere in this area. All plants are nursery-propagated; you will be helping, not hurting, the chances of survival for native species if you

buy these plants.

We're having a "members only" preview sale on Friday evening — join at the door if you are not already an FOM or NPS member. Some rare and unusual plants will be available in small quantities, so come out on Friday from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. for your best chance to purchase them. Refreshments and drinks will be served at no charge.

On Saturday morning from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., the public sale will take place. Morningside staff will provide a supervised children's activity in the picnic area, near the sales area, so kids can play and learn while parents shop.

Park-a-Plant will be in operation — new and improved! — both Friday night and Saturday so you do not have to carry around an armful of plants while you shop.

Provide a home for some of the native plants — herbaceous plants, vines, shrubs, trees, and native grasses — that are destroyed to make way for our houses, streets, and shopping centers. You'll be rewarded with a plant that is right at home in North Central Florida's environment and will provide your garden with many years of trouble-free beauty.

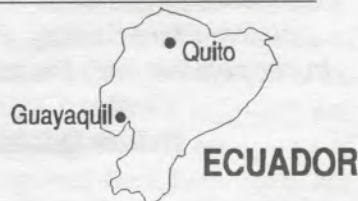


Finally, one fourth of the proceeds helps Friends of Morningside provide environmental education activities at the City of Gainesville's nature preserves.

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## Birding Adventures in



by Colin Bludau

A ten-day trip in May to the South American nation of Ecuador provided opportunity for a bit of Neotropical birding.

Ecuador is one of the smaller SA countries but offers a great variety of terrain and weather conditions. From central snow-covered Andean peaks and highlands, the land slopes down to Pacific coastline and Amazon basin rainforest. The great diversity of microhabitats supports a great variety of bird species — over 1600. I was able to record almost 3% of them. Many neotropical species are lavishly colored — but equally — many are drab. Despite the abundance of species, bird life rarely is conspicuous. Many species are uncommon, many common ones have low population densities, most are shy, and even colorful ones blend well into the vegetation.

Species identification was much easier than one would expect. Hilty and Browns' "Guide to the Birds of Colombia" (1986) is an excellent reference offering useful color plates, range maps, and descriptions. Species lists for some locations helped narrow the possibilities, and local guides provided some identification.

Our group purpose was area familiarization, not birding, and none of the other members had a serious interest in birds. In the highlands area, our itinerary did not offer much opportunity to look around, but on the high altitude plains called the 'paramo' — between tree-line and snow-line — Andean Lapwings, with Willet-like distinctive wing coloration, were noted. A pair of Carunculated Caracara flew overhead.

Five days spent in the Amazon basin rainforest were more rewarding. In developed areas, Smooth-billed Ani were common, and Roadside Hawks could be seen perched in trees waiting to ambush prey. In the seasonally flooded 'varzea'

habitat along rivers and lagoons, noisy Red-throated Caracara erupted in tirades when encountered. In waterside vegetation, grackle-sized Greater Ani were common and noisy, and Hoatzin, primitive birds with beautiful chestnut tail and wing markings, clambered and attempted short flights. A slender black raptor with orange facial skin, the Black Caracara, Black Vulture, and the large Ruddy Pigeon visited the campsite to scavenge and forage. Isolated trees in the flooded lagoon were occupied by pairs of White-winged Swallow, Tropical Kingbird, Ruddy Pigeon, Red-capped Cardinal, Lesser Kiskadee, Olivaceous Cormorant, Anhinga, and a Muscovy Duck. At water's edge, Ringed and Green Kingfishers, and Striated and White-necked Herons, Neotropical equivalents of the Green Backed and Great Blue Herons, searched for prey. Violaceous Jay, Linneated Woodpecker, Black-fronted Nunbird, Turkey Vulture, and Golden-headed Manakin were encountered. A patrolling Plumbeous Kite harried a caracara from its treetop perch. Pink river dolphins cruised the lagoon. A family of five played around my dugout canoe for a half hour one day. On the return trip upriver, the riverside edge habitat offered sightings of Slate-colored Hawk, a velvety red and black Masked Crimson Tanager, White-throated Toucan, a pair of Variable Chachalaca perched in a palm tree, and the only parrot I got a good look at, the black headed Orange-cheeked Parrot. Flocks of Fork-tailed Palm Swift buzzed over wide places in the river.

A visit to Bellavista Lodge in a cloud forest area on the western flanks of the Andes offered another type of habitat. A few of Ecuador's many hummingbird species visited feeders, among them Buff-tailed Coronet, Collared Inca, Green Violetear, Speckled Hummingbird, Purple-throated Woodstar, and Gorgeted Sunangel. Roadside Hawk were here, too. A tiny Cinnamon Flycatcher was easy to identify. Robin-like members of the Thrush family were well represented: Great, Glossy-black, Pale-eyed, and Slaty-backed Nightingale Thrush. Among the most colorful Neotropical species are the tanagers, and here the Blue-winged Mountain Tanager, Beryl-Spangled, Flame-Faced, and the aptly named Grass-green Tanager upheld the reputation. On a morning trek down the mountain, a pair of large Plumbeous Pigeon foraged in the road, and a pair of Masked Trogon appeared in nearby trees. The Rufous-collared Sparrow, seen here, is common almost countrywide. We saw a Yellow Grosbeak, a species which ranges into southern Arizona. A flock of Turquoise Jays, displaying varied shades of blue, foraged along the road, as did a White-tailed Tyrannulet, a small flycatcher. These represented but a small fraction of over 150 species which have been recorded here.

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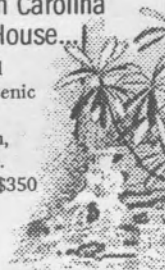
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*The Crane*

September 1997



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# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 39 Number 3, October 1997*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Sunday, October 5, 6:00 a.m.**

### **Guana River State Park**

Meet at Powers Park, on Hawthorne Road (SR-20) 4½ miles east of Waldo Road. We will start the morning on the dunes overlooking Ponte Vedra Beach, watching for southbound Peregrine Falcons, and after an hour or two of that we'll head for the trail system through the park's maritime forest, to look for migrant warblers, tanagers, and thrushes in the live oaks. This is usually a very successful and interesting trip. Bring water, sunscreen, bug spray, and lunch (unless you want to eat at a St. Augustine restaurant on your way home).



**Wednesday, October 8, 6:30 p.m.**

### **Board Meeting**

The AAS Board Meeting is open to all members and the public and is held in the conference room at the Florida Museum of Natural History on the UF campus.

**Sunday, October 12, 7:30 a.m.**

### **Bolen Bluff Trail**

Meet at the Bolen Bluff parking lot, 4½ miles south of Williston Road on US-441. It's entirely possible that this is the height of Florida's warbler migration. At any rate, this trip is your best bet for Magnolia, Tennessee, Black-throated Green, and Bay-breasted Warblers among several others (expect 12-18 species), as well as Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Wood, Swainson's, and Gray-cheeked Thrushes.

**Saturday, October 18, 7:30 a.m.**

### **San Felasco Hammock**

WE WILL CARPOOL FROM HUNTER'S RUN PUBLIX, AT THE CORNER OF NW 43RD STREET AND NW 53RD AVENUE, TO CUT DOWN ON PARKING FEES AND PARKING LOT CONGESTION. Migration ought to be tapering off a little, but Scarlet Tanagers and Wood, Swainson's, and Gray-cheeked Thrushes should still be around, and a few wintering birds - Blue-headed Vireos and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, for instance - ought to be making their first appearances.

**Saturday, October 25, 2:00 p.m.**

### **Program**

What's the latest on Whooping Cranes in Florida? Come hear the expert, Steve Nesbitt. See details on page 2.

**Sunday, October 26, 7:00 a.m.**

### **Wildflower Walk at Goethe State Forest**

Remember to set your clocks back to Standard Time, or you'll arrive at the Archer Road Target Store (just east of I-75) an hour early. UF botanist Dana Griffin, an Audubon favorite, will lead us as we poke around in Goethe's sandhills. He's an entertaining guide and speaker, so come along and learn the names of all those roadside flowers you've been wondering about. Bring your cameras and notebooks.





Saturday, October 25, 2 p.m.



Steve Nesbitt, Florida Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission, will be the speaker at our program meeting on Saturday, October 25. Steve's topic is "Whooping Cranes in Florida: Where We Are Today."

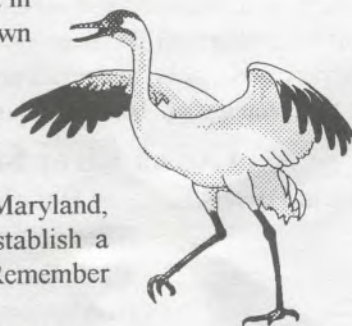
Steve will be updating us on the progress being made by the Whooping Crane Recovery Team. As Audubon members know, Whooping Cranes are an endangered species. Their primary flock of 140 birds — once down to only 15 birds — breeds in a remote part of Canada and winters at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Gulf coast in Texas. Since they are vulnerable to a variety of hazards which could decimate the flock, biologists are working to establish a second flock.

These efforts were first directed towards releasing birds near Greys Lake in New Mexico, but were not very successful. Now, although there is no solid evidence that Whooping Cranes ever bred in Florida, the goal is to create a nonmigratory breeding population here.

The first birds were released in 1993 at the Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area in Osceola County. This wetlands area was chosen for its suitability as crane habitat, as shown by the resident Florida subspecies of Sandhill Cranes. To date, 128 birds have been released and about half survive. Predation by bobcats has been the major cause of death for the released birds.

Each year about 20 additional young cranes are released. The cranes are obtained from the captive flocks at the National Biological Survey's research facility in Patuxent, Maryland, and the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin. The goal is to establish a population of 100-125 cranes. Please join us to hear Steve relate how things are going. Remember that this year's fall programs have been shifted to the

Tower Road Library at 3020 SW 75th Street.



## Bird Puzzler

There's no prize, but see how you do with the following puzzler — from Rich Feldman, NAS Human Resources and the *Networker*.

### What bird (is):

1. A British jet
2. Jingles
3. Married to Jesus (with all due respect)
4. An outfielder
5. Not sure of the words
6. A victim of Exxon Valdez
7. A Scotsman on the beach
8. A happy dog
9. A feathered feline
10. A backpacker

(Answers can be found elsewhere in this issue.)

Clue: Not all these birds are found in our North Central Florida area. Maybe you can come up with a puzzler for our area that you're willing to share with the AAS. Send to Evelyn, *Crane* editor, at one of the various addresses found in the next column.

**AAS Web Site:** <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud/aud.htm> for unusual bird sightings updated on a regular basis, calendar of events, sanctuary list, AAS goals, purpose.

### Alachua Audubon Society

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<i>The Crane</i> Editor.....	Evelyn Perry 371-2917 or 331-2223
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Assisting in circulation duties of <i>The Crane</i> are:	
Jean Dorney, Alice Tyler, Pat Burns, Nancy Oakes.	

*The Crane* is published monthly throughout the year except June and July. 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. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed, can be on disk or hard copy, and must be received no later than **October 20** to be included in the November issue. Please limit each article to no more than two pages. Fax to 331-2585. Drop your disk or hard copy by **The Branch Office, 519 NW 60th Street, Suite A**, or mail to: Evelyn Perry, at the same address.

Or.....e-mail [EvPerry@aol.com](mailto:EvPerry@aol.com) *The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.

### Keeping You Posted...

**SunDial Bird Line: 335-3500, ext. BIRD (2473)** for the latest information on field trips, programs, where to see birds, what's happening with AAS, and last minute changes in field trips.



## President's Column

### Where Are We Going?

by John Winn

Enclosed with this issue of *The Crane*, you'll find your copy of the annual yearbook. This is something we print each year, primarily to give to people inquiring about membership. As you can see, it's a handy reference for all the year's planned field trips and programs. But what I'd like to call to your attention is the section entitled "Purpose and Goals."

This is a broad and general statement of what we would like to achieve as an Audubon chapter. Please take a moment to read it.

Each year at our annual summer planning session, the board members on the executive committee review the "Purpose and Goals" statement and set specific objectives for the coming year. These are things we'd like to see done to try to accomplish the broader purpose. Here are the ones for this year:

1) Start compiling a bird checklist for Goethe State Forest. As you may know, National Audubon has what's called the "Adopt-a-Forest" campaign in which local chapters "adopt" a nearby state or national forest and work to protect, enhance, and illuminate it. So we have adopted Goethe. Goethe is — or can be — a real gem. (Provided it isn't ruined first. The proposed turnpike extension is a real threat to the integrity of the forest and its Red-cockaded Woodpecker colonies.) But as a relatively new state forest, Goethe still lacks some of the basics, and the state doesn't always have the money to provide for public education. So we thought we'd start compiling data for a bird checklist to be available to forest visitors. You've seen the sort of thing we have in mind, listing the birds which have been sighted and their relative seasonal abundance; Paynes Prairie has such a checklist and so do most national wildlife refuges.

2) Contribute recommendations to San Felasco Hammock land use plan. San Felasco is one of those wonderful places which, if care isn't taken, can be loved to death. It's a very popular spot for a variety of user groups. What people have to remember is: it's a *preserve*, not a recreation area. Fortunately, the state's parks and preserves managers are keenly aware of the distinction, and the proposed plan generally looks pretty good.

3) Undertake outreach efforts to university students. We've made great progress in our participation in the "Audubon Adventures" program; our goal has been to provide it to every Alachua County fourth-grade classroom that wanted it. With the generous support of about 60 of you, we are meeting that goal. So now we're trying to direct our efforts towards college students, particularly those with an interest in biology, wildlife, or forestry. We're just getting started on this, and if you'd like to offer

some suggestions, they're very welcome.

4) Plan specific fund raising objectives. T-shirt sales are winding down; while not an overwhelming success, they have been profitable. So we're thinking of what to do next, again. Suggestions are welcome.

5) Participate in additional events similar to Kanapaha Garden Festival. See the article on page about the T. Gilbert Pearson Picnic.

We'd be glad to hear how you think the AAS chapter of National is doing on all this. Do you think we're on the right track? Is there something else you'd like to see us doing? Call me at 468-1669 with your suggestions or comments.

## AUDUBON ADVENTURES

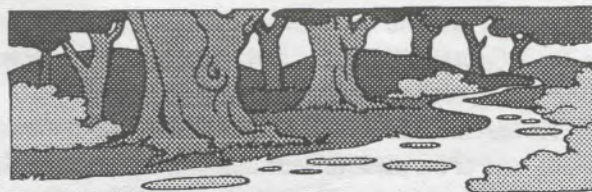
Thanks to all those who continue to support the Audubon Adventures in Alachua County school classrooms. The following people have recently sent in their sponsor checks. If you would like more information on the how you can help, please call Susan Sommerville at 378-2808.

Gene Meurlott  
Polly and Paul Doughty  
Marion Van Alostyne  
Mary Lyn and Don Eitzman  
Mr. and Mrs. Claire Schelske  
Catherine Lee

### *Alpine Windstorm*

Anchors of lofty evergreens embrace mountain rock;  
Living columns standing in timeless defiance  
Pushing against an invisible foe.  
From a starless abyss it sweeps the slope  
Its breath touching them with its tireless song.  
Great are their numbers yet standing alone  
Sighing and bowing  
Many troubled moments have passed  
And many to come  
For these, the patient and enduring and noble  
of the mountain forest.

Zach Neece, Glacier National Park, September 4, 1997

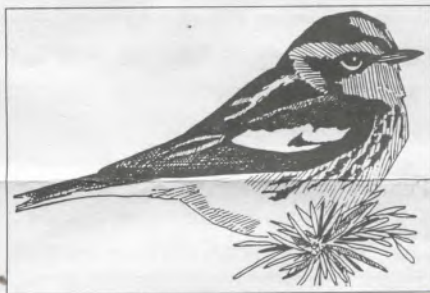




## Around the County...

by Mike Manetz

"It's just really slow out there...", one local birder described the flow of fall migrants at mid-September. It's not as though birds weren't being seen. In fact, every migrant species usually present by that time had been reported. Everything showed up more or less on schedule. Most days you could go out to Palm Point and see a few **Redstarts** and **Blue-winged Warblers**, and perhaps a **Chestnut-sided Warbler**; but, in the absence of any weather disturbances during the period, the birds were just not concentrated in large numbers. There were some exciting exceptions. The weekend of Aug. 23-24 was good for 12 warbler species at San Felasco Hammock (not bad for August) including the prized **Kentucky Warbler**, of which three individuals were seen. A very weak cold-front Aug. 30 was probably responsible for a burst of warbler sightings the following day. Bolen Bluff yielded 16 species, including an astonishing 3 **Cerulean**, two **Golden-winged**, a **Kentucky**, and an early **Blackburnian Warbler**. At



least one **Cerulean** and one **Golden-winged** were reported from Newnans Lake the same weekend, but by Monday the warblers had all but disappeared. **Yellow Warblers**

bucked the trend by remaining in better than average numbers along La Chua Trail. Perhaps the pattern of burning last winter created vegetation to their liking.

Migrant shorebirds presented the same feast-or-famine scenario. Despite near-drought conditions through mid-September, most of the usual shorebird spots in the county remained inexplicably high. The most notable exception was the retention pond south of the main post office on SW 34th Street. During the first week of September, this little pond drained nearly dry, leaving enough mud to attract and keep nearly 30 **Least**, a few **Semi-palmated** and **Pectoral Sandpipers**, as well as a locally rare **Western Sandpiper**. Unfortunately, by the following week the pond completely dried up and the birds had gone elsewhere. One spot that looks better and better for shorebirds as fall continues is Alachua Sink and the canal along the first section of La Chua Trail. **Spotted**, **Solitary**, and a few **Least Sandpipers** were being seen there through mid-September.

Rex Rowan and his son Graham had perhaps the most intriguing, and at the same time distressing, sightings of the fall. As they were driving Hwy. 441 over Payne's Prairie

Sept. 5, they spotted a small lump that looked like a bird along the shoulder. Upon closer investigation the small lump turned out to be a recently roadkilled **Black Rail**! They immediately carried the diminutive corpse to the Florida Museum of Natural History, where it took its hard-earned place as the only existing Alachua County specimen of its species. Such specimens are important evidence in establishing the range and migration patterns of birds, especially those as mysterious and elusive as the **Black Rail**. Still, one would have wished this little fellow a better fate.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings, dead or alive, through Sept. 15.

## Help wanted

*We need three or four more volunteers to help with the Audubon display and T-shirt sales at the T. Gilbert Pearson Picnic on November 15. If you can help for an hour or two, please call John Winn at 468-1669. Thanks.*

## Return of the Native

by Colin E. Bludau

Gracious, here it was October, and I hadn't yet written anything this year about birding in my native state of Texas. To rectify that, I reviewed notes from a month there in July.

This was my first mid-summer birding effort there, and the heat was, naturally, formidable. Without migrants passing through, fewer species were around. Refuges had few visitors.

Abundant rainfall had increased the amount of standing water all along I-10, and large waders were much more visible than usual—huge numbers of cattle egrets, smaller numbers of Green-backed, Little blue, and Tricolor herons and Great Egrets, and in Texas rice fields, a few Spoon-bills and White Ibis. Curiously, not a single Great Blue Heron. Cattle Egret were much more visible everywhere, including parts of Texas where I saw few only last year. Is this interloper, by virtue of ubiquity and numbers, bidding to become the de facto national bird? And what is it crowding out, I had to wonder?

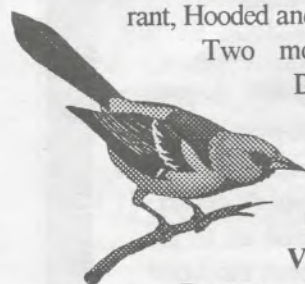
Around the South Texas countryside, Scissor-tails, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and doves—White-winged and Inca in towns, Mourning and Ground in rural areas—were abundant. Lesser numbers of Roadrunners, Bob-white, Common and Lesser Nighthawks, Meadowlarks, and



Pyrrhuloxia, and the expected Mockers and Cardinals caught the eye. A Dickcissel was new for me.

At Choke Canyon State Park, Curve-billed Thrasher, Painted Bunting, Lark Sparrow, Cave Swallow, Bronzed Cowbird, Vermilion Flycatcher, Olivaceous Cormorant, Hooded and **Baltimore Oriole** were noted.

Two mother Black-bellied Whistling Ducks led a string of 22 young across the water. Something new for me was a tiny



Bells  
Vireo.



Raptors were few;  
all of the half-dozen

Crested Caracara seen were sitting in shaded spots. It was too hot to be on the wing.

A brother and I headed to the Rio Grande Valley for a few days. In route and in area refuges, we found Reddish Egret, Western Kingbird, Harris Hawk, Black Bellied and Fulvous Whistling Ducks, White Pelican, Long-billed Curlew, White and White-faced Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Willet, Avocet, Horned Lark, Least Grebe, Green Jay, Kiskadee, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, White-tipped Dove, Olive Sparrow, Chachalaca, Snowy Egret, Least Tern, Long Billed Thrasher, Couch's Kingbird, Altamira Oriole, Chihuahua Raven, Spotted Sandpiper, Pied-billed Grebe, and had some glimpses of Green and Ringed Kingfishers. I hoped to find Groove-billed Ani, new for me, and we did encounter numbers of small groups in several locations, and an active nest. The ani were shy and less visible than expected. Unusual was the sight of a family of 4 Black-shouldered Kites hunting along a brushy ravine. At times, all 4 were hovering in their characteristic manner. A Gray Hawk had been regularly sighted at Santa Ana NWR, but wisely was not out and about in the brutal midday heat when we searched.

Newly-recorded species for the RG Valley since my last visit were Linneated Woodpecker, a Pileated- sized bird, and Stygian Owl.



*I rejoice that there are owls. Let them do the idiotic and maniacal hooting for men....They represent the stark twilight and unsatisfied thoughts which all have.*

-Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

## National Calendar

1997

Oct. 12-18 National Wildlife Refuge Week  
Oct. 18 25th Anniversary of Clean Water Act  
Oct. 26-Nov. 1 World Population Awareness Week  
Dec. 6 50th Anniversary Everglades National Park

1998

April 22 Earth Day  
May American Wetlands Month  
May 9 International Migratory Bird Day  
June 8 Oceans Day  
July 6-12 NAS Convention, Estes Park, CO

## Special Event... You're Invited!

Do you recognize the name of T. Gilbert Pearson? If you remember the book review in last month's *Crane*, you know that Pearson, a leader in the early days of the conservation movement, grew up in Archer. It was there that he formulated his interest in birds and their conservation. He went on to be one of the founders of what has now become the National Audubon Society.

To commemorate Pearson's connection with our area, Alachua Audubon Society and the Archer Historical Society are sponsoring the first T. Gilbert Pearson Picnic and Environmental Awareness Day on **Saturday, November 15**. The event will be held at noon at the Archer Historical Museum, located in the former Archer Train Depot.

Members of all local environmental groups and the general public are cordially invited. Participants are asked to bring a covered dish or dessert to share at the picnic. This is similar to our annual picnic in April. Plates, utensils, and beverages will be provided. The picnic is free.

Following the picnic lunch, Oliver H. Orr, Jr., author of *Saving American Birds*, a biography of Pearson reviewed in last month's *Crane*, will speak on Pearson's career. Additionally, Clay Henderson, president of Florida Audubon Society, will speak on today's environmental movement. There will then follow a walking tour of Archer's historical sites, including the former Pearson home. The Archer Historical Museum has Pearson memorabilia which will be on display. Local environmental groups will also have informational displays.

We hope that this event is well-received and can become an annual event to be held around the time of Pearson's birthday, November 10. Please plan to attend.





## Field Trip Report

by Rex Rowan

I never did any drugs, but I know a bad trip when I see one — and I saw two in the past month.

Actually the August 31 Hagens Cove trip started out real well. The tide was higher than I'd expected when we arrived at eight, but the sun was at our backs and the **Least Sandpipers**, **Short-billed Dowitchers**, and **Semipalmated Plovers** foraging in the tidal rack allowed us to get amazingly close — so close in fact that we could see the absence of webbing between the Least Sandpipers' toes, a characteristic that distinguishes them from the other two peeps, the Western and the Semipalmated.

Further out, there were numerous herons and egrets, including eight **Reddish Egrets**, one of them in white plumage. We enjoyed watching them lunge around in the shallows in pursuit of breakfast. We located two or three distant **Marbled Godwits** among the extremely numerous Willets, and spooked the fall's first **Blue-winged Teal**.

Swallows were flying south over our heads at a rate of several each minute, and mixed in with the expected **Barn Swallows** were an estimated 20 **Bank Swallows**, always a treat to find in Florida, as well as two or three **Cliff Swallows**, an even rarer species here.

As the tide came in, we drove on to our first inland stop, Fish Creek Road, which cuts through dry, scrubby old clearcuts alternating with pine plantation. It looked promising at first — we found about 20 **Eastern Kingbirds** and several **Blue Grosbeaks** — but as we drove further down the road we saw and heard less and less.

So we went on to our next stop, Tide Swamp, for which I had great hopes. Think of it — a trail through a Gulf Coast swamp during early fall migration! Nothing would have surprised me there — except a complete absence of birds, which was the case. Some of you may understand the significance of this and some of you may not: we did not see or hear a single Red-eyed Vireo! At the flood-tide of its migration! And we saw precious little else. A female **Hooded Warbler**, two **Yellow Warblers**, three or four **Ovenbirds**, and half-a-dozen **Acadian Flycatchers** were it.

I have a bad habit when I can't find birds. I just keep walking. I figure they have to be somewhere. Maybe in the tall trees a mile further on. So we walk another mile, just as birdless as the first, and then we have to turn around and trudge all that way back.

I expected the September 7 San Felasco trip to be better, don't know why. I had the idea that Hooded and Kentucky Warblers would be almost easy to find, a curious notion perhaps traceable to some kind of mental disorder. Certainly it had no basis in fact. Although **Red-eyed Vireos** were so abundant as to be pesky, other birds were extremely hard to come by. We found a few Ovenbirds, a few Acadian Flycatchers, and several **Veeries**, all of which were cooperative enough to sit still for extended periods of time, but a treetop **Blackburnian Warbler** at the beginning of the trip and a singing male **Hooded Warbler** at the end were the only real standouts.

I expect things to liven up considerably during the second half of September and, especially, during the first half of October. The field trips listed on the front of the newsletter ought to be the birdiest of the year.



Answers to Bird Puzzler: 1. Harrier; 2. Bellbird; 3. Nunbird; 4. Flycatcher; 5. Hummingbird; 6. Oilbird; 7. Sandpiper; 8. Wagtail; 9. Catbird; 10. Canvasback



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e-mail: mondocomd@aol.com

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*The Crane*

October 1997



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Paul Moler, 7818 Highway 346, Archer, Florida 32618

Check the level of membership desired and enclose your check payable to:

National Audubon Society

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

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# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 39 Number 4, November 1997*

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## **T. GILBERT PEARSON & ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS DAY**

**Noon, Saturday, November 15  
at the Historic Depot Downtown Archer**

*Sponsored by Alachua Audubon Society,  
Archer Historical Society & Museum, and Archer Branch Library*

### Featuring:

- \* *Oliver Orr, author Saving American Birds*
- \* *Clay Henderson, President, Florida Audubon Society*
- \* *Folk Entertainment*      \* *Historical Tour*
- \* *Information Booths*      \* *A casual time for all ages*
- \* *Bring your own picnic (beverage provided)*

*Please bring blanket or cloth to spread your lunch.*



*T. Gilbert Pearson, a founder of  
the National Audubon Society and  
Archer resident 1882 1891*



### **Everything Free! Everyone invited!**

Clay Henderson, president of Florida Audubon Society, is the featured speaker for the first-ever T. Gilbert Pearson Picnic and Environmental Awareness Day. The picnic begins at noon in the Archer Historical Museum, located in the former Archer Train Depot. Pearson was one of the founders of what has now become the National Audubon Society and spent his youth in Archer. All Audubon members and the general public are invited. The picnic will be similar to AAS's annual meeting in April in that everyone is asked to bring a covered dish or dessert to share. Plates, utensils, and beverages will be provided.

In addition to Clay Henderson speaking on today's environmental movement, Oliver H. Orr, Jr., biographer of Pearson's early days in the conservation movement, will speak on Pearson's career. Following that will be a walking tour of Archer's historical sites, including the former Pearson home. The Archer Historical Museum, co-sponsor of this event, has Pearson memorabilia which will be on display. Several local environmental groups will also have informational displays.



## Upcoming Field Trips

**Sunday, November 9, 8:00 a.m.**

### Northwest Alachua County

Meet at the tag agency on NW 34th Street just south of US-441. Blackbirds should be abundant at the Hague Dairy, and we may be lucky enough to find a Yellow-headed among them, or see a Cooper's Hawk make a pass at one of the flocks. In the surrounding fields we should be able to track down Eastern Meadowlarks, Eastern Bluebirds, American Pipits, and a few sparrows.

**Saturday, November 22, 6:30 a.m.**

### Cedar Key

Meet at the Target Store on Archer Road just east of I-75. Fall migration will be coming to an end, but we ought to have a good collection of shorebirds, gulls and terns, various waders and waterfowl, and winter passerines. Possibilities for this trip include American Avocet, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, American White Pelican, White-winged Dove, Seaside and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, American Oystercatcher, and Florida Scrub-Jay.

**Saturday/Sunday, December 6/7**

### Florida Caverns State Park

Call Rex Rowan at (352) 371-9296 for details on this overnight trip. Florida Caverns is one of the most beautiful and interesting spots in the state's park system, and one of the few places where birders have a fair chance of seeing northern species in Florida: Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Dark-eyed Junco, and Golden-crowned Kinglet are fairly likely there, and Fox Sparrow, Purple Finch, and Rusty Blackbird are possible. Canoes can be rented to go up or down the Chipola River, where you may see some of Florida's few beavers. There's also the caverns tour, which is about \$4 per person. Campsites are available in the park, and there are plenty of motels and restaurants just up the road in Marianna.

## Keeping You Posted...

**SunDial Bird Line: 335-3500, ext. BIRD (2473)** for the latest information on field trips, programs, where to see birds, what's happening with AAS, and last minute changes in field trips.

### AAS Web Site:

**<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud/aud.htm>**

for unusual bird sightings updated on a regular basis, calendar of events, sanctuary list, AAS goals, purpose.

## Board Meeting

**Wednesday, November 12, 6:30 p.m.**

The AAS Board Meeting is open to all members and the public and is held in the conference room at the Florida Museum of Natural History on the UF campus.



### Alachua Audubon Society

Officers and Chairpersons of Standing Committees, 1997-98

President.....	John Winn 468-1669
Vice-President.....	Rex Rowan 371-9296
Secretary.....	David Wahl 336-6206
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Programs.....	TBA
Field Trips.....	Rex Rowan 371-9296
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Conservation Coordinator.....	John Winn 468-1669
Birdwatching Classes.....	Ike Fromberg 375-2246
The Crane Editor.....	Evelyn Perry 371-2917 or 331-2223
The Crane Circulation.....	Margaret Green 378-3314

Assisting in circulation duties of *The Crane* are:

Jean Dorney, Alice Tyler, Pat Burns, Nancy Oakes.

*The Crane* is published monthly throughout the year except June and July. 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. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed, can be on disk or hard copy, and must be received by **November 18** to be included in the December issue. Please limit each article to no more than two pages. Fax to 331-2585. Drop your disk or hard copy by The Branch Office, 519 NW 60th Street, Suite A, or mail to: Evelyn Perry, at the same address.

Or.....e-mail [EvPerry@aol.com](mailto:EvPerry@aol.com) *The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.



# Field Trip Report

by Rex Rowan

*Missing: One fall migration. Identifying feature: lots of birds. If seen, notify any local birdwatcher.*

There are times when your field trip leader feels he should commit ritual suicide by falling on his binoculars. I felt that way on August 31, when a long walk through Tide Swamp produced almost nothing for field trip participants to look at, and I've felt that way ever since.

It's the lamest excuse for a fall migration I've ever seen. We've been waiting for the Big Push since mid-September, certain it was just around the corner, but it's mid-October as I write this, when migration is supposed to taper off, and there's nothing for it to taper off from.

Consequently, field trips have been very much less than exciting. Bryant Roberts led a small group down Lakeshore Drive on a rainy September 27. They saw a few warblers, notably **Magnolia** and **Tennessee** (the

latter especially hard to find this fall), but unfortunately the bird of the day went unidentified due to its skittishness: it resembled a **Red-eyed Vireo**, but its facial markings were indistinct - which is how one would describe a **Warbling Vireo**, a bird never recorded in this county.



The October 5 trip, to Guana River State Park, was well-attended, and things started out well for the 21 participants. Four **Roseate Spoonbills** flew over the Vilano Beach boat ramp to start the day. At the hawk-watching platform overlooking Ponte Vedra Beach, we met Bob Stoll, who had been conducting a falcon watch for some weeks. He said the migration had been a little slow, and didn't expect us to see much. However, perhaps due to the 18 mph east wind, we got wonderful views of five juvenile **Peregrines** passing low over the platform, as well as an **American Kestrel** taking a dragonfly over the dune grass.

However, once we crossed A1A and entered the oak hammock at the state park, it got very, very quiet. We took a different route than we usually take, a much longer one - three hours, I don't know how many miles - and though all agreed that it was a beautiful hike, the only actual migrants we tallied were 3 **American Redstarts**, 3 **Black-and-white Warblers**, a **Swainson's Thrush**, and a **Northern Waterthrush**. A major disappointment.

Well, I thought, give it two more weeks. Mid-October at Bolen Bluff is *always* good.

Nope. When I pick up last month's newsletter and re-read the advertisement for the October 12 Bolen Bluff trip, it makes me shudder with embarrassment. I predicted all those birds! And they were actually seen on that trip in 1995 and 1996. But this year, it was a repeat of our three-hour hike at Guana River: just about all we got was exercise. When the best birds of the trip are a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** and a pair of **Black-throated Blue Warblers**, when you don't see any grosbeaks, any thrushes, any tanagers - it is, as the French put it, *un bad day*.

Speaking of which, Greg McDermott led the October 18 San Felasco trip in a steady rain. About an hour into it, with very few birds seen in the dripping woods, the group came to a fork. Greg said, "We can go right, we can go left - or we can go home." The vote to go home was unanimous.

So, about all that can be said for this fall's birding excursions is - a familiar cry in this town - "Wait 'till next year!"

## Thanks!

Thanks to all of the Audubon members and families who came out to work on the wildlife berm at the Kanapaha Reclamation Facility on September 13. The ground was like concrete, and backhoes were eventually enlisted to dig the holes, but we accomplished a lot in our morning there.

As we were finishing up for the day, an eagle flew overhead, so Rex Rowan pronounced that the bird gods must be smiling on the project.

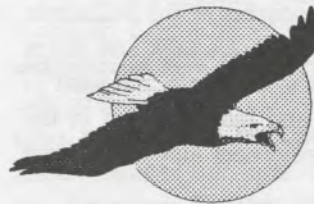
GRU crews finished the plantings later that week.

They have also kept the new plants watered whenever Mother Nature has not been cooperating with rainfall.

We will have an official dedication and ribbon-cutting by the Mayor on **Sunday, November 16 at 2 p.m.** The pond's new name will be announced and a new informational sign about the site and its most popular feathered friends will be unveiled. Refreshments and birding (if the birds cooperate) will be provided. It is important to have a good turnout so that our elected officials and staff know that these kinds of projects are supported by the community. Please make plans to join us at the dedication. Meanwhile, thanks especially to Rex and the other members who have made this project such a success.

Sincerely,

Karen Johnson, GRU





## Your Action is Needed!

*"Without action by those who love the area, the long-term health of the Newnans Lake ecosystem could be in jeopardy."*

by Gary Appelton - 371-7826

As bird enthusiasts, we are all familiar with the excellent birding to be found at Newnans Lake. Hardly an issue of *The Crane* goes by without a report of great sightings of warblers at Palm Point or of ducks or

raptors over the lake. Despite the excellent birding, the lake and its surrounding watershed are in serious trouble. Without action by those who love the area, the long-term health of the Newnans Lake ecosystem could be in jeopardy. What is needed is a long-term plan for the protection and management of the lake. Fortunately, such a plan does exist, but it will need a strong expression of public support to make sure it is implemented.

Recently, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission publicly stated that the Lake's water quality was worse than Lake Apopka (Apopka is often referred to as the most polluted large lake in Florida). St. Johns River Water Management District officials call the chlorophyll levels (an algae indicator) in the lake "alarming." It doesn't take a scientist to notice the thick algae throughout the lake and water color comparable to pea soup. Several streams flowing into the lake from the north have some of the highest levels of phosphorous of any streams monitored throughout the entire St. Johns River Water management District! At present, the source or sources of the pollutants are unknown. Possible culprits are septic tank and storm water runoff from developed areas to the north and west of the lake and forestry practices and land clearing in the watershed. And, of course, development along the shore line is an ever increasing threat.

In 1993, the Newnans Lake CARL (Conservation and Recreation Lands) Project was developed and submitted to the state's CARL program. CARL is the state's ambitious \$3 billion, ten year, land acquisition and protection program. The Newnans Lake project was developed and submitted by Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT), a local group that has quietly worked to secure valuable additions to Paynes Prairie Preserve and San Falasco Hammock, and is responsible for the protection of other sensitive lands in our area.

The Newnans Lake CARL Project is a proposal for state acquisition of almost 12,000 acres around the lake. Of that, approximately half of the project's lands have been designated as high priority areas for protection, if money ever becomes available. This includes several thousand acres of the watershed just north of the lake, much of the eastern shoreline, and a large tract of beautiful land on the southeastern shore extending from the lake's cypress fringe

to just south of Highway 20. Before lands can be purchased through the CARL program, land owners must be willing to sell. Acquisition can take many forms. Lands may be sold outright to the state, or the state can buy a conservation easement. Easements may allow for nothing more than the right to build a recreational trail through the land or may allow the landowner to continue to use the land for activities such as tree harvesting, with restrictions aimed at protecting certain watershed functions.

Each year, the CARL program goes through a ranking process to determine which select few projects of the many around the state will receive funds for acquisition and protection. Currently, Newnans Lake is ranked 27 on the CARL list. In order to receive money, the project needs to move much higher to a ranking of about 12.

The CARL program ends in two more years. Therefore, competition for funding has become very intense and increasingly political. In order to move the Newnans Lake project higher in the ranking, it is essential that there be clear public support for the project. ACT is currently working to ensure support from the Alachua County and Gainesville City Commissions. You can help the Newnans Lake CARL project by writing a short letter to the CARL Committee expressing your support for the project. **Letters must be sent as soon as possible since the new 1997 ranking takes place on December 3.** For information on who to write to and for content suggestions, see below.

1. Send letters to:

Dr. Greg Brock  
Department of Environmental Protection  
3900 Commonwealth Blvd.  
Mail Station 140  
Tallahassee 32399-1650

2. Clearly state that you want the letter distributed to the entire CARL Committee.

3. Suggestions as to what to say:

- ✓ Succinctly express your support for the Newnans Lake CARL Project.
- ✓ If you live near the lake, stress this.
- ✓ Emphasize recreation, birds, the sense of wilderness, and your love for the resource.
- ✓ Remind them that protecting the Newnans Lake watershed benefits Paynes Prairie, Prairie Creek, and Orange Lake.

4. Letters should be brief — the Committee is very familiar with the Project.



## Cape May at Newnans Lake

by Rex Rowan

Before dawn on October 10, my son Graham and I arrived at Palm Point to do some bird-banding. We'd had a great morning the previous Friday - 27 birds of 12 species in four hours - and we were hoping for more of the same.

We'd gotten one mist-net up and were working on another when Lenny Santisteban arrived. Lenny, a wildlife student and an excellent birder, had agreed to help with the banding. Not long after that, several other birders arrived in a party: Tim Antanaitis, Pat Burns, Alice Farkash, Mary Landsman, and Barbara Muschlitz.

In other words, we had witnesses for what happened next.

The morning began slowly. An *Empidonax* flycatcher flew into the net, and Lenny and I spent some time trying to work out its identity with the banding manual. We caught a couple male Indigo Buntings. But things weren't as lively as the week before. I suggested to Lenny and Graham that, since the nets were empty, we walk down to the Point and see if any warblers were in the big trees there.

As we were walking down the trail, Lenny glanced at the sky and stopped. "What's that?" he asked.

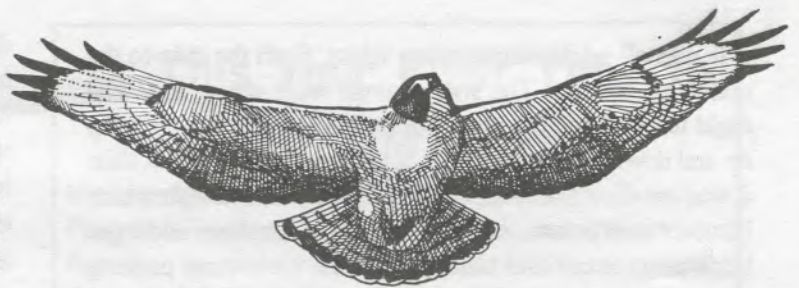
I looked up to see a crow harassing a hawk - but what kind of hawk? The entire underside as well as the wing linings were dark brown, the flight feathers and tail lightly banded. Nothing that normally occurs in North Florida looks like that. I called down to Barbara's group: "Hey, y'all! Is there anyone down there who would recognize a western hawk?" But even as I spoke, I was remembering a similar bird I'd seen near the Hague Dairy last fall. The pattern was the same. "It's a Western Red-tailed Hawk!" I declared. But there was one little point I wasn't noticing as the hawk and the crow wheeled over us.

"Rex," said Lenny. "It's the same size as the crow."

We should pause here for effect.

Because, as a matter of fact, there is a small hawk native to Florida that is all-dark below: the Short-tailed Hawk. But there are only two records for Alachua County, one shot by O.C. Van Hyning in 1926, and one seen by Paynes Prairie biologist Jim Weimer during a controlled burn on the Cones Dike Trail in 1992. Short-tails are primarily birds of South Florida, and in these parts, they're jump-up-and-down, froth-at-the-mouth, frenzied-screaming rare.

Luckily it was in no hurry to leave the area. It circled over us at treetop level for 45 minutes, allowing Tim to take a couple photographs while Lenny, Alice, and I made sketches and called out all the field marks we could see. On several occasions it folded its wings back and stooped, falcon-like, into the trees, but we never saw it come up



with anything.

One little concern was a pair of what looked like green strings trailing from its talons. I assumed they were jesses, the strings used by falconers to secure birds to their perches. It seemed unlikely that any falconer would be using a Short-tailed Hawk, though; and we noticed that the bird seemed to be trailing twigs and plant fibers behind it as well - perhaps collected on its dives into the treetops. The matter finally settled itself when the green strings disappeared - where to, we didn't see. But for the last fifteen minutes of observation there was no trace of them.

It was a day for hawks. While we were watching the Short-tail, an adult Peregrine Falcon appeared low over the trees, black-masked, white-breasted. Such a sight would have sent us into hysteria under any circumstances, but to have it and the third-county-record Short-tail over our heads at the same time was almost literally unbelievable, the sort of thing that would be damaging to our reputations had there not been eight of us. The Peregrine sailed by a second time, over the clearing where we stood and then out over the lake and away.

A Sharp-shinned Hawk also put in an appearance, evidently drawn by its own splenetic temperament, for it did nothing but dive repeatedly at the Short-tail from the time it arrived to the time it left a minute or two later. And an American Kestrel sailed out from the trees - I, at least, thought the Peregrine had come back - and then continued over our heads and south, following the lakeshore.

The Short-tail was last seen at 10:40. By eleven, all the other birders had left. At noon, Graham and I folded up the nets - we'd ended up banding 13 birds of 7 species - and headed north on Lakeshore Drive. A mile up the road, I looked out the window, up at the sky. Two Bald Eagles - and a tiny little white hawk. A sudden veer onto the shoulder, barely waiting for the car to





It was all white, immaculate white, from the chin to the undertail coverts. The wing linings were white, too. The flight feathers and tail were lightly barred. I began to jump up and down at the utter mind-bending impossibility of this: it was *another* Short-tailed Hawk, the white morph which I'd never seen before. As it drifted north, Graham and I got back into the car and blazed up to the crew team parking lot, where we got another good look at the bird before it disappeared executing a falcon-like stoop into the trees.

"Well," I told Graham on the ride home. "There have been four sightings in the county, ever, and you and I have half of them!"

The Short-tails stuck around for a few days; the dark-morph was last seen on the 12th, the white morph on the 14th. But other hawks continued to move through. Bryant Roberts and Terry Taylor saw a Merlin on the 11th. Andy Prather and Dave Beatty had Peregrine Falcons (perhaps the same one) on the 13th and 14th, respectively. And another Merlin streaked over while we were doing more banding on the 17th.



## Around the County...

by Mike Manetz

Fall Migration Count '97 did not look promising. With a lingering drought, temperatures still hovering in the nineties, and a televised Tennessee game in the offing, one might have predicted something like a bust. Instead, a remarkable thing happened. Forty Alachua County birders showed up at dawn September 20, put in a good day of birding, and recorded a remarkable twenty-four species of warblers! It is true that many species were present in lower-than-usual numbers, and some teams had trouble finding more than a handful of some of the more common migrants. But in spite of conditions listed above, early returns from other counties are confirming what I have suspected since the first fall count in 1995. Alachua County is the best location in the state for the fall warbler migration. It is fact that, for three years running, our fall count has uncovered far more warbler species and more individual warblers than any other county fielding comparable numbers of observers and party-hours. Three years of data has put us consistently over the top, and now I think it is safe to say that, even in a mediocre year, the Gainesville area is one of Florida's best kept fall birding secrets. Consider also that without a Fall Migration Count, and so many skilled birders who have participated over the last three years, the



real quality of fall birding here might have remained obscure.

As I said, this year's count was, in some ways, not as outstanding as the previous two. Such staple migrants as **American Redstart** and

**Prairie Warbler** were down by about half. The numbers of **Chestnut-sided** and **Blackburnian Warblers** were likewise depressed. But some species were better represented than ever, and there were many delightful surprises. A total of eight **Kentucky Warblers**, for instance, was phenomenal. Three **Golden-winged** and two **Cerulean Warblers** would make a birder happy anywhere. The eighty-two **Ovenbirds** mark a new count record for that species. **Veerys** were tallied in good numbers, and the Micanopy team turned up two **Gray-cheeked Thrushes**. Howard Adams and his team on the prairie basin were treated to a display of forty-two **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** feasting on a prolific patch of blossoming morning glories. This year's total number of reported hummers was fifty-one. Compare that to the previous two years totals of one and three.

Sam Cole and his team at north San Felasco encountered a tantalizing empidonax puzzle. Empidonax flycatchers make up a genus of several species that are so maddeningly similar in appearance they are considered by most birders to be unidentifiable unless they are calling, which is what three of the San Felasco birds were doing. After a careful review of field guide descriptions and taped recordings Sam concluded his birds were most likely **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers**. Hopefully the F.O.S. Records Committee will agree and we can add them to our count list.

With the absence of even a hint of frontal activity, warbler hunting in the weeks after the count was as difficult as before. A party could go out and find ten-plus species, but the numbers of individual birds remained low. Things began to pick up around the middle of October when a very slow moving front passed through bringing good numbers of late Warblers such as **Magnolia** and **Black-throated Blue**, as well as a few **Gray-cheeked Thrushes**.

There were some interesting non-warbler reports. On Sept. 24 Judy Bryan found twenty-five **Fulvous Whistling Ducks** on Orange Lake. It has been several years since they have been seen here. Mary Landsman uncovered a



**Yellow-breasted Chat** Oct. 6 at Bolen Bluff. Although Chats probably breed on the prairie, no one previous had seen one here in fall. A regular fall treat in recent years has been the appearance of **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** at the Hague Dairy. Although the number of cowbirds and starlings seem lower than usual so far this fall, Rex Rowan managed Oct. 11 to find a female Yellow-headed among them.

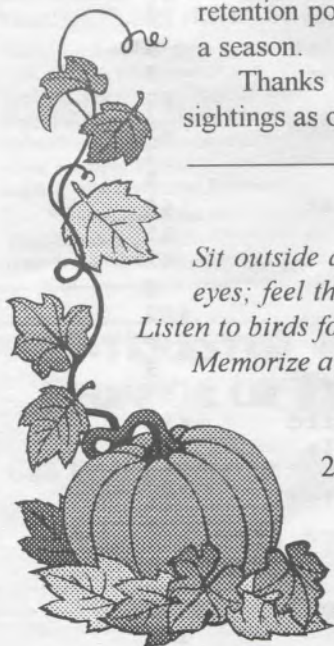
October 10 was a great day to be at Palm Point. Several local birders were on hand when Lenny Santisteban noticed a small dark buteo being harassed by a crow. Upon closer examination the buteo turned out to be a dark-morph **Short-tailed Hawk**! As if aware that this was one of only a few sightings of Short-tails ever seen in the county, the bird obligingly soared above the park for forty-five minutes, allowing everyone present to get a good look. During that space of time a **Peregrine Falcon** made an appearance as well. If that is not enough, Rex Rowan and son Graham stopped at the north end of the lake on their way home and found a light-morph Short-tailed Hawk. Bryant Roberts and Terry Taylor located the dark-morph bird the following day, and turned up an early Wilson's Warbler in the process.

By the time you receive this issue of *The Crane*, fall migration will be history. The woodlands will be full of Yellow-rumped Warblers and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and it will be time once again to check open areas of the county for western strays such as Scissor-tailed and Ash-throated Flycatchers and Western Kingbirds. All three species, though considered accidental, have been recorded here in previous Novembers. A trip to the Dairy can be worthwhile in November for the concentration of both blackbirds and the raptors that prey upon them, and ducks should be making appearances on the local lakes and retention ponds. To everything there is a season.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings as of Oct. 15.

*Sit outside at midnight and close your eyes; feel the grass, the air, the space.  
Listen to birds for ten minutes at dawn.  
Memorize a flower.*

-Linda Hasselstrom  
20<sup>th</sup> Century American  
Writer and Rancher



## Is This Your First Time to Read *The Crane*?

If you picked up this issue of *The Crane* at the T. Gilbert Pearson & Environmental Awareness Picnic and it's your first time to read *The Crane*, welcome! Please consider joining Alachua Audubon Society. We're the local group that's part of National Audubon and Florida Audubon. One membership fee makes you a member of all three, and in addition to receiving *The Crane* by mail every month, you'll receive the National and Florida publications as well. Please use the membership form on the back page of this issue. We'd love to have you join us for field trips and program meetings and share your interest and love of birds and the natural environment with us.

### Welcome to New Members Joining Last Month

Kash & Carol Britton	Dr. J. Koenig
K. Biery	Otto R. Albuschat
Forrest F. Lisle	Terri Hinckley
Garcia Family	Jame Rester
Thomas Little, Jr.	Mr/Mrs Scott A. Smith
Pence Family	Jane Edwards
Hugh Phillips	Jeff Disnukes
Ray Wessels	Barbara Miles
Amy Fender	Rhoda Reed
Dr. K. Schowengerdt	Mary Rhea
Mrs. B. Wyatt Fearney	

*Enjoy  
Thanksgiving!*

### 1997 Fall Migration - Alachua County

The results of the count appear on the next page. Participants are listed below; team leaders' names are underlined. Howard Adams, Dave Beatty, Ed Bonahue, Judy Bryan, Sara Byrd, Dan Cimbaro, Sam Cole, Debbie DeLoach, Lowery Douglas, John Hintermister, Tom Hctor, Larry Johnson, Karen Johnson, Greg Jones, Grace Kiltie, Andy Kratter, Carmine Lanciani, Mary Landsman, Mike Manetz, Ashley Manetz, Greg McDermott, Brian McNab, Kelly McPherson, Karl Miller, Don Morrow, Barbara Muschlitz, Craig Parenteau, Bryant Roberts, Ron Robinson, Rex Rowan, Lenny Santisteban, John Skemp, Katie Sieving, Paul Sindilar, Terry Taylor, Tom Webber, Jim Weimer, John Winn, Tom Workman.



# FALL MIGRATION COUNT - ALACHUA COUNTY - SEPTEMBER 20, 1997

Pied-billed Grebe	28
Dble-crested Cormorant	9
Anhinga	111
American Bittern	1
Least Bittern	8
Great Blue Heron	81
Great Egret	92
Snowy Egret	61
Little Blue Heron	65
Tricolored Heron	25
Cattle Egret	1560
Green Heron	21
Blk-crowned Night-Heron	33
White Ibis	95
Glossy Ibis	38
Wood Stork	22
Wood Duck	46
Mottled Duck	39
Blue-winged Teal	48
Northern Shoveler	3
Duck, sp	33
Black Vulture	100
Turkey Vulture	107
Osprey	3
Bald Eagle	17
Cooper's Hawk	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	62
Red-tailed Hawk	9
American Kestrel	6
Falco, sp	1
Wild Turkey	19
Northern Bobwhite	14
King Rail	2
Sora	3
Purple Gallinule	16
Common Moorhen	586
American Coot	33
Limpkin	13
Sandhill Crane	9
Killdeer	16
Solitary Sandpiper	3
Spotted Sandpiper	2
Least Sandpiper	2
Common Snipe	2
Forster's Tern	1
Black Tern	5
Rock Dove	185
Eurasian Collared Dove	5
Mourning Dove	113
Common Ground-Dove	6
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	17
Eastern Screech-Owl	15
Great Horned Owl	6
Barred Owl	23
Common Nighthawk	1
Chuck-will's-widow	6
Whip-poor-will	2
Chimney Swift	140
Ruby-thr Hummingbird	51
Belted Kingfisher	23
Red-headed Woodpecker	93
Red-bellied Woodpecker	250
Downy Woodpecker	156
Northern Flicker	15
Pileated Woodpecker	115
Eastern Wood-Pewee	15

Acadian Flycatcher	74
Empidonax, sp	13
Great Crested Flycatcher	1
Eastern Kingbird	2
Barn Swallow	2
Blue Jay	180
American Crow	136
Fish Crow	30
Crow sp.	129
Carolina Chickadee	40
Tufted Titmouse	298
Brown-headed Nuthatch	15
Carolina Wren	346
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	236
Eastern Bluebird	8
Veery	58
Gray-cheeked Thrush	2
Swainson's Thrush	4
Gray Catbird	5
Northern Mockingbird	112
Brown Thrasher	21
Loggerhead Shrike	9
European Starling	45
White-eyed Vireo	383
Solitary Vireo	1
Yellow-throated Vireo	10
Red-eyed Vireo	208
Blue-winged Warbler	15
Golden-winged Warbler	3
Orange-cr Warbler	1
Northern Parula	139
Yellow Warbler	74
Chestnut-sided Warbler	5
Blk-thr Blue Warbler	2
Blk-thr Green Warbler	1
Blackburnian Warbler	7
Yellow-throated Warbler	56
Pine Warbler	85
Prairie Warbler	35
Palm Warbler	2
Cerulean Warbler	2
Black-and-white Warbler	22
American Redstart	45
Prothonotary Warbler	5
Worm-eating Warbler	9
Ovenbird	82
Northern Waterthrush	20
Louisiana Waterthrush	2
Kentucky Warbler	8
Common Yellowthroat	148
Hooded Warbler	21
Summer Tanager	41
Scarlet Tanager	2
Northern Cardinal	452
Blue Grosbeak	2
Indigo Bunting	9
Eastern Towhee	85
Red-winged Blackbird	493
Boat-tailed Grackle	221
Common Grackle	30
Brown-headed Cowbird	16
Baltimore Oriole	7
House Finch	2
House Sparrow	3
Number of individuals	9209
Number of species	126



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## *The Crane*

November 1997



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# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 39 Number 5, December 1997*

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Saturday/Sunday, December 6/7**

#### **Florida Caverns State Park**

Call Rex Rowan at (352) 371-9296 for details on this overnight trip. Florida Caverns is one of the most beautiful and interesting spots in the state's park system, and one of the few places where birders have a fair chance of seeing such northern species as Brown Creeper and Winter Wren. Campsites are available in the park, and there are plenty of motels and restaurants just up the road in Marianna.

### **Wednesday, December 10, 6:30 p.m.**

#### **Board Meeting**

The AAS Board Meeting is open to all members and the public and is held in the conference room at the Florida Museum of Natural History on the UF campus.

### **Saturday, December 13, 8:00 a.m.**

#### **La Chua Trail**

Meet at the Park Service's District Headquarters: going east on University Avenue, cross Waldo Road, turn right (south) on SE 15th Street, and proceed for two-and-a-half miles. When the road turns left, keep going straight across the three-way intersection, through the gate, and down the dirt road to the parking lot. This is Alachua County's single most interesting birding spot, and we can expect to see Sandhill Cranes, raptors (including Northern Harriers), herons and egrets, and sparrows of several species. Ducks, Marsh and Sedge Wrens, and American Bitterns are also possible, depending on our luck. Bring a scope if you have one. We'll be finished by lunchtime.

### **Sunday, December 21, All Day**

#### **Christmas Bird Count**

Experienced birders are preferred for the CBC because it is important to accurately report sightings and hearings. If you'd like to participate, please call Craig Parenteau at 472-2729 to see if there may be a spot for you.

### **Saturday/Sunday, January 10/11**

#### **St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge**

Call Rex Rowan at (352) 371-9296 if you plan to go on this overnight trip. St. Marks is probably the single best birding spot in North Florida. It is particularly good for ducks: we can expect to see 10-15 species, most of them at pretty close range in the roadside ponds. Some participants in this trip may want to return the same day, while others may wish to camp, or stay in motels at Wakulla Springs, Tallahassee, or Panacea. This is a delightful trip with which to begin the new year.



**SunDial Bird Line: 335-3500, ext. BIRD (2473)** for

the latest information on field trips, programs, where to see birds, what's happening with AAS, and last minute changes in field trips.

#### **AAS Web Site:**

<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud/aud.htm>

for unusual bird sightings updated on a regular basis, calendar of events, sanctuary list, AAS goals, purpose.



## Around the County....

by Mike Manetz

As fall merged into winter, our local bird population made the transition in a measured and routine fashion. By mid-November most of our regular winter visitors had been reported. There were a few holdovers from fall. Cathy Reno spotted a late **Yellow-breasted Chat** in her yard on the 30th of October. A **Blue Grosbeak** was still hanging out along LaChua Trail as late as Nov. 14, and **Indigo Buntings** were being seen at the Hague Dairy through the 15th. On the 12th John Winn reported an **American Redstart** near Lake Alto. While birding at the Hague Dairy Nov. 2, I found a male **Parula**. On Nov. 8, Greg McDermott found what was probably the same bird, as it was in the very tree where I had seen it!

A real highlight of our past few years has been the growing number of reported western hummingbirds, especially the Rufous, choosing to winter with us. Last year, in addition to numerous reports of **Rufous Hummingbirds**, we were graced with the first verified **Allen's Hummingbird** in the state. This winter the trend seems to have reversed. So far, only one *Selasphorus* sp. has been reported from Kanapaha Botanical Gardens, and one adult male Rufous appeared briefly at the home of Nina Rowan. Bryant Roberts, who watches hummingbird trends very closely, told me that the entire southeast is experiencing reduced numbers of winter hummers this year.

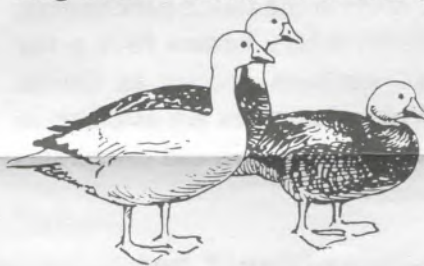
As for our other uncommon winter birds, LaChua trail has been a productive site. On Nov. 7, Howard Adams and I found a **Lincoln's Sparrow** where the trail intersects with Sweetwater Branch. Rex and Graham Rowan found a second **Lincoln's** the same morning at Alachua Sink overlook. **White-crowned Sparrows** have been regularly reported this winter from both those spots as well. Another regular but hard-to-find winter resident of the first section of LaChua trail is the **Grasshopper Sparrow**, only one of which has been reported this winter, seen by John Hintermister.

The Hague Dairy continued to be an interesting spot through mid-November. Back on Oct. 19, Pat Burns discovered a **Dunlin** and two **Northern Shovelers** at one of the dairy's ponds. The Dunlin is a coastal species and is rarely seen here. The concentration of thousands of blackbirds at the dairy never ceases to amaze me. Though predominately **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, you can find many **Starlings** and **Red-winged Blackbirds** and an occasional rarity. I was pleased to find two **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** among them Nov. 15. The huge numbers of blackbirds attracts predators such as **Sharp-shinned** and **Cooper's Hawks**, and an occasional **Merlin**. This affords an opportunity to study these usually hard to find raptors. Also coursing over the fields you may find **Kestrels**, **Red-tailed** and **Red-shouldered Hawks**, and **Northern Harriers**. As many as three Harriers have

been seen there this winter, including two of the rarely-seen adult males of the species. Another rare raptor being seen at the Dairy through the 15th, was the very pale color morph known as **Krider's Red-tailed Hawk**.

In the waterfowl department, there have been a few productive spots. On our Nov. 7th LaChua trail walk, Howard Adams and I found two **Snow Geese** at Alachua Lake. One, a blue-phase, was sitting on the Lake. The other, a white-phase, flew over the observation platform as we were watching the first. The newly renamed Kanapaha sewage treatment pond, now called Chapman's Pond, has hosted several dozen **Blue-winged** and **Green-winged Teal** as well as a lone **Ruddy Duck**. Greg McDermott and I found three **Red-breasted Mergansers** and three **Ruddy Ducks** Nov. 11 at Newnans Lake. Later in the day Greg and Rex counted an astonishing forty-nine **Horned Grebes** and several rafts of **Lesser Scaup**. Inspired by all this, Greg commandeered a boat on the 15th and rounded up a similar assortment of diving ducks plus several dabblers including **Northern Shoveler**, **American Wigeon**, and **Gadwall**. Another good spot for ducks is Orange Lake. You can go out to Heagy-Burry Park (in Marion Co.) and scope for numerous Coots, Ring-necked Ducks, and a variety of other possibilities, including Common Loon and Red-breasted Merganser.

As always, thanks to those who shared their sightings through Nov. 15.



### Alachua Audubon Society

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Or e-mail EvPerry@aol.com *The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.





## The Buzzards, the BBC, and Me

by Rex Rowan

"Hello, this is Sharmila Chowdhury of the BBC in London."

I was home for lunch on October 23rd when the call came. I usually let the answering machine pick up, but this one sounded interesting. I leaped for the phone.

Ms. Chowdhury was involved in the production of a new television series to be called "The Life of Birds." I had met an associate of hers, Phil Hurrell, at Morningside Nature Center in April (watch for Morningside's Red-headed Woodpeckers when the series airs on TV), and apparently he'd given her my name and number. She wanted to know, did we have any Turkey Vultures in Gainesville? Plenty, I told her. Did we have any forests? Yes ma'am, we did.

She had one more question. Would I be willing to find a dead animal, or if I preferred a day-old piece of meat, and lay it out on the forest floor in a place where the canopy was closed? The idea was that Turkey Vultures, which are said to use their sense of smell to find food, would locate the bait, whereas Black Vultures, which forage by sight, would not be able to see it through the treetops. If it worked - if I put out the bait, and it attracted Turkey Vultures but not Black Vultures - series host David Attenborough and a production crew would fly to Gainesville and reproduce the experiment for the television cameras.

The next morning I went out with my wife and children - quality family time here - to cruise the roads around Newnans Lake in search of something dead. We found a Raccoon near Prairie Creek. It was somewhat ripe, but with surgical gloves and two plastic trash bags I managed to get it into the trunk of the car.

Then we headed for Gum Root Swamp. This was the only place I could think of where the canopy might be thick enough to prevent an aerial view of the forest floor, and the forest floor might be open enough to allow vultures to land and take off. My family made me walk behind them with my malodorous burden. Some distance off Hatchet Creek I found a likely spot and, letting the Raccoon out of the bag as it were, laid it at the base of a cypress tree.

When my son and I returned two hours later, the birds saw us well before we saw them. We heard a hubbub in the distance and could see forms moving through distant trees, and although they were obviously big dark birds, we couldn't see enough of them to tell what kind. We sat down and waited for them to come back. After twenty minutes and no sign of them, we walked over to investigate. The Raccoon was all but gone. My son pointed out a Turkey Vulture in a nearby tree.

When Ms. Chowdhury called the following week, I told her what had happened, but emphasized that I had not been able

to see the birds gathered around the bait. For all I knew, they had been Black Vultures, except for the one in the tree. She asked if I would be willing to try again. Rather disappointed, having hoped that David Attenborough would immediately jump on a plane with no further effort from me, I nonetheless agreed.

Another day, another dead Raccoon. This time, to be sure it would be invisible from the sky, I piled some sticks on it. Then I retired about a hundred yards and climbed into the low fork of a cypress tree. I could see vultures of both species above the trees. From time to time, one of them would veer back, as if scenting the bait. But none dropped below the canopy. After an hour, I descended the tree and confirmed that the Raccoon was undisturbed. Another half hour, and I went home.

Returning that afternoon, I expected to find only tattered remains of the Raccoon. But it was still there, under the sticks. I kicked the sticks away, and moved to the edge of the creek and sat down. Birds continued to fly overhead, but none seemed to take notice of the bait. It was a rather breezy day, and that might have accounted for the experiment's failure; the smell may have been carried off on the wind.

Ms. Chowdhury called back that week. I told her what had happened, and added that the trees in the swamp seemed to be losing their leaves. She said that, if things didn't work out in Gainesville, the BBC might have to do their filming in Trinidad instead, a less desirable location due to procedural complications. Rather wistfully, she asked that I keep them in mind, and e-mail her if I found another suitable spot to set out another dead Raccoon. We left it at that.

I do feel a little guilty about my lack of initiative. I mean, if I'd been more industrious with the dead Raccoons and all, Gainesville residents might some day be able to point with pride to a horde of Turkey Vultures eviscerating a carcass on the television screen, and say, "That's my town!"

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## FIELD TRIP REPORT

by Rex Rowan

Our trip to Northwest Alachua County and the Hague Dairy began well: as we were gathering at the tag agency on NW 34th Street, a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** landed at the base of a cabbage palm across the street and stayed put long enough that we were able to view him through our telescopes. Then he nabbed a **Northern Cardinal** and flew away.

The dairy was our first stop, and it was a birdy place. Although a field of sorghum in which Greg McDermott and I had found a Blue Grosbeak and several Indigo Buntings the week before had been harvested, open areas nearby produced several **Eastern Meadowlarks** and **Eastern Bluebirds**, as well as an **American Kestrel** and a **Red-shouldered Hawk**. Near the dairy buildings we were able to train our scopes on an immature **Cooper's Hawk** perched on a fencepost - no doubt a well-fed bird, considering the thousands of **Brown-headed Cowbirds** covering the ground and filling the air. We looked around for Yellow-headed Blackbirds and other exotic fare, but saw only cowbirds (two Yellow-headed Blackbirds showed up a week later). Several small flocks of **American Robins** flew over, as well as the fall's first **American Pipit**.

Continuing north along back roads, we found several raptors aloft over another harvested field - as many as six **Red-tailed Hawks**, two **Red-shouldered Hawks**, and two **Northern Harriers**, including a beautiful gray male - while spishing at a wet thicket coaxed out **Swamp Song**, and **White-throated Sparrows**, plus two rarely-seen **Yellow Palm Warblers**. At our last stop of the day, out NW 156th Avenue near Alachua, we saw a lingering **Indigo Bunting**, and watched a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** dive into a fallow field just a few feet away from us; however, he was not as successful as the bird we'd seen at the tag agency, and emerged from the weeds empty-handed.

The trip's 11 participants managed to see 41 species of birds, and that despite a fairly stiff breeze that kept most of the smaller birds in cover.

The 13 of us who went on the November 22 Cedar Key trip didn't have much wind to contend with, but fog obscured our view till well past noon. Thus, although the tide was perfect (for once), we were unable to scan the mud flats for shorebirds because we couldn't see more than fifty feet in front of us.

So we mostly concentrated on land-birding, without a great deal of success. The usual sites on the island yielded fewer birds than usual. However, as we were driving from Hodges Hill to the airport, I was looking at the **Eurasian Collared-Doves** crowding each other on the wire, and thought I saw one that was a little different, one that might be a White-winged Dove. I had Gerry Herr, who was driving, stop in the middle of the road, and I got out to check. I was wrong - the bird that had caught my attention was a Collared-Dove - but a **White-winged Dove** was sitting on the cross-piece of a

telephone pole not ten feet away! This is a rare late-fall migrant on the Gulf Coast, and I'm always excited to see one.

Later we stopped at a small "beach" down the street from the water tower. There, in addition to a second White-winged Dove on a telephone wire and all four of Cedar Key's **Rose-ringed Parakeets**, we found a small mixed flock of shorebirds: **Ruddy Turnstones**, **Sanderlings**, **Semipalmated Plovers**, and ... something else.

Preoccupied with the dove, I had only glanced at the small, pale, big-headed bird and written it off as a Piping Plover. A minute later I heard Terry Taylor say, "A **Snowy Plover**!" Rather irritated, I nonetheless controlled myself and did not give him the Snowy Plover lecture; I did not say, "Terry, Snowies are birds of the white-sand beaches, and you will not see one, you poor ignorant soul, unless you go to Honeymoon Island, St. George Island, or someplace similar. You don't know what you're talking about." Instead, I simply contented myself with saying, "No, that's a Piping Plover."



Which was good, because when I finally turned my attention to it, I discovered that it *was* a Snowy Plover. I could hardly believe it - I looked through the scope, consulted the field guide, made it fly so I could see its rump, looked through the scope again, flushed it again. The whole procedure took about twenty minutes, but when it was over I was convinced: it didn't have the Piping's white uppertail coverts, its legs were dull flesh rather than orange, and its bill was relatively longer and less stubby than a Piping's. It was a Snowy Plover, the first I'd ever heard of at Cedar Key.

By now it was lunchtime, and the fog had lifted just a little. We checked the beach downtown, which was empty but for **Laughing** and **Ring-billed Gulls**, then walked over to the old railroad trestle, where we found 12 **Yellow-crowned Night-Herons** and one **Black-crowned**. Focusing our scopes from just thirty feet away, we were able to get breathtaking views of several Yellow-crowns roosting in a tree, perhaps the most beautiful of the heron tribe.

Stopping along SR-24 on the way home, we added **American Avocet** and a few more sandpipers to the day's tally (total, 73 species). Our last stop was the fishing pier, where we found six **Common Ground-Doves** and two lingering **Indigo Buntings**, and watched a **Great Blue Heron** eat a small stingray. It would have been a great day if not for the fog, but as that famous birder Roseanne Roseannadanna used to say, "It's always something."



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