

# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 38 Number 6, January 1997*

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Wednesday, January 8, 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting**

Open to all members and the public, the AAS board meeting is held in the Conference Room at the Florida Museum of Natural History.

### **Saturday/Sunday - January 11/12 St. Mark's National Wildlife Refuge**

Call Rex Rowan at 371-9296 if you plan to go. St. Marks is probably the best single 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 at Wakulla Lodge or in a Tallahassee motel. This is a delightful trip with which to begin the new year.

### **Saturday, January 25, 2:00 p.m. Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard**

This month's program will feature Ron Robinson speaking on "Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard." Ron was one of the speakers at last year's popular and well-attended January program on basic birding and will present an expanded version of his segment of that program. The emphasis will be on suggestions of ways to increase the number and variety of birds for you to see in your own yard. Ron will give us his advice for types of plantings, feeders, water-drip birdbaths, and other things to do to attract birds and other wildlife.

There's a field trip to Ron's house the following day to see how his recommendations actually work, as well as the hundreds of birds which customarily

come to his yard. For nearly 20 years, Ron has been doing the things at his home to attract birds he'll be telling us about. His efforts have been so successful and publicized that he has founded a consulting business, Backyard Attractions, offering his expertise to other people who want to see more wildlife in their own yards.

The program is held at the Alachua County Library Millhopper Branch, 3145 NW 43rd Street and begins at 2 p.m.

Refreshments will be served. The field trip is January 26; details below. Please join us for either or both.



### **Sunday, January 26, 8:00 a.m. Ron Robinson's**

Meet at the Tag Agency on NW 34th Street just south of US-441. After you've listened to Ron discuss the principles of attracting birds to your yard at the program meeting, come visit his place and see those principles in action. We'll tour his five acres, looking at the trees he's planted, and seeing how he's set up his feeders and water projects. What seed is the best? How do you attract warblers? What do you do about squirrels? It will be an ideal opportunity to get some tips from a real expert. This field trip shouldn't be missed by any backyard naturalist.



## AROUND THE COUNTY...

by Mike Manetz

Each winter holds the possibility of a so-called "invasion" of birds that do not usually winter in big numbers here. Last year, for instance, we had an unusually high number of **Golden-crowned Kinglets** in the county. We also saw more **Dark-eyed Juncos** than is typical. Some winters have been responsible for driving massive numbers of unusual finches, such as **Pine Siskins**, into our area. So far, none of the above species seems poised to mount a major incursion into north Florida. Only one individual each of junco (Kate Lee) and Golden-crowned Kinglet (Greg McDermott) have been reported. Things could change, but it looks like this winter may be kinder to the birds than to birders.

Some interesting birds **have** been seen. Leading the list was the **Red-throated Loon** John Hintermister found Thanksgiving day on Bivens Arm Lake. This represents only the second record in our county for that species. John also found two **Common Goldeneye** Dec. 12 at Kanapaha sewage treatment pond. The high water level on Paynes Prairie probably accounts for the appearance there of some unusual diving ducks. Andy Prather found two **Buffleheads** Dec. 2 on Alachua Lake. While scanning the lake Dec. 12, Don Kelting and I found a **Canvasback** swimming in the middle of two dozen **Lesser Scaup**. Preserve biologist Jim Weimer said it was the first Canvasback recorded on the Prairie in several years. Rex Rowan found another (or the same?) bird on Orange Lake Dec. 14. He also reported a **Black Skimmer** Nov. 20 at Orange Lake.

Rex additionally found the best shorebirds so far this winter. He called Nov. 26 to report two **Short-billed Dowitchers** at Home Depot pond. He checked the pond again two days later and found five of them. Long-billed Dowitchers are expected here in winter, but Short-billed are usually found only on the coasts.

Barbara Muschlitz reported a **Lincoln's Sparrow** Dec. 10 on La Chua Trail near Sweetwater Dike. This marks the third winter in a row a Lincoln's has been seen at that same location. Adam Kent and I lucked into a **Grasshopper Sparrow** at Hague Dairy while wading through a field of several hundred (no exaggeration)

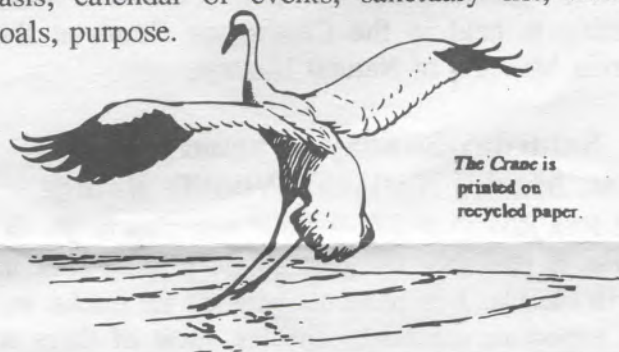
**Savannah Sparrows.** Another Grasshopper Sparrow showed itself briefly at Hickory Ranch Dec. 16 as Greg McDermott and I were scouting for the Christmas Count. Another good bird that hopefully will show itself on the Christmas Count is the **Western Kingbird** John Hintermister found at Palm Point Dec. 13.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through Dec. 16.

### Notable Numbers to Call (Up)

**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.

**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.



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## NEOTROPICAL BIRDS

### WHAT'S WATCHLIST?

by John Winn

Endangered Species List. The Red Book. The Blue List. Species of Special Concern. Now the WatchList. What exactly is it?

As you can tell from the company it keeps, it's more bad news for neotropical birds. The WatchList, compiled for the first time this past year, is an annual count of birds with declining populations and rare birds suffering habitat losses. While not yet on the endangered species list, WatchList birds are headed in that direction. The list is put together by National Audubon as part of the Partners in Flight program.

The first list has some 90 birds on it. Not all of them are necessarily rare birds; in some places, some are quite common — such as Gray Catbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and Bobolink. But their numbers are declining, so the list is an early warning that something needs to be done before it's too late. Some other birds on the list are, if not rare, at least pretty uncommon. Black Rail and Cerulean Warbler are on the list because of their limited habitats. In the case of the Cerulean, both its small winter range in the Andes and its summer home in the Ohio River basin are under attack.

The WatchList is national in scope. Additionally, it is divided into regional lists of featured birds. That for the southeast has on it Swallow-tailed Kite, Swainson's Warbler\*, and Painted Bunting. Those few of you who attended our November program meeting heard Joni Blakeslee tell us about the Fish and Game Commission's Bunting Watch program to monitor Painted Buntings in northeast Florida. Again, this is a bird which is on the list on account of habitat loss.

Some other birds on the list which are resident in our area are Common Ground-Dove, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and Loggerhead Shrike. Some of "our" neotropical migrants on the list include Chimney Swift, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Wood Thrush, Orchard Oriole, and Prothonotary Warbler. As you might expect, there are ten more warblers on the list, as well as a half dozen shorebirds, reflecting the plight of neotropical migrants in general.

National Audubon has a free packet with the

complete list and other information, including six suggestions of simple things you can do to help birds. (When I say "simple" I mean simple; you're probably already doing most of the things suggested.) To get the packet, call 1-888-AUDUBON.

#### \*Swainson's Warbler



Known to most birders by its enigmatic song, the Swainson's Warbler is one of North America's most secretive and least understood bird species. A denizen of dense wooded swamps and cane thickets in the southeastern United States, habitat destruction through urbanization and the conversion of bottomland woods to farmland threaten the future of this species. Additionally alarming, many Swainson's Warblers, confused by bright lights, collide with tall buildings and towers during migration.

(from National Audubon Society WatchList)

### FIELD TRIP REPORT

by Rex Rowan

During most field trips there's a moment when I think, "I wish all those people sitting at home were here right now to see this." At several points during the December 7 trip to Bienville Plantation, I thought, "I wish we were all sitting at home right now." It was a comedy of errors, and I think the handful of new people who came along are probably still hiding under their beds.

To begin with, when I called our guide two days before, he told me that he wouldn't be able to lead the trip. He gave me directions to the primary sites, but my misgivings about the trip began here.

Then there was the rain. We saw lightning before we even pulled out of the parking lot, and shortly after we started north on the Interstate, the downpour began, heavy enough that a lot of worried discussion about hydroplaning took place in the car I rode in. The rain diminished to a



drizzle by the time we arrived in White Springs, and we had breakfast at McDonald's, hoping it would stop altogether. But after about half an hour we steeled ourselves to get wet and began our trip — losing several of the saner participants at this point.

Our first stop was a road through plowed and fallow farm fields north of White Springs. The rain slacked off, then stopped as we strolled along, spotting among the various small land birds five species of sparrows — **Savannah, Song, White-throated, Chipping, and Vesper.**



Our next stop was intended to be a sparrow stop too — Eagle Lake, where last year's field trip found a rare Henslow's Sparrow. Working from directions given to me by our absent guide, I succeeded in locating a body of water, but it wasn't Eagle Lake. I poked around a little more, leading our caravan through the woods, making U-turns, finally giving up.

So on we went to the dikes of Bienville Plantation. Now I had made a big deal out of this. On last year's Christmas Count, the Bienville dikes had produced almost 20 species of ducks, including the first White-winged Scoters I'd ever seen. They were *always* good. They would make up for all the problems so far. Our guide had talked to the management, and they had assured him that all the gates would be opened for us. I told everybody this several times, to know that the Bienville dikes would make up for all the hardships they'd suffered so far.

We made our way along the muddy ruts of Bienville's roads, fearful of getting mired, but still hopeful of seeing birds. And the gate was locked. What else could go wrong? "Well, we can at least walk up to this pond," I pointed out. "It's always got ducks in it." Well it didn't have any ducks in it. Nor did the next.

We walked back to the cars in time to meet a Bienville truck. The fellow inside told us that he had locked the gate because the dike roads looked

too treacherous for our cars. We would have been grateful for his concern — nobody wanted to end up at the bottom of a settling pond — but it was discouraging nonetheless.

It was lunchtime, so we headed back to the White Springs McDonald's for some food and civilized bathrooms. A few more people took the opportunity to go home, and I suspect several more would have if we hadn't car-pooled.

We started back to the public waterfowl area, but a failure to communicate led us onto I-75 North and caused a fifteen-minute "detour." When we finally got there, we had another slushy road to navigate. It was a miracle of sorts that no one got stuck.

But here, finally, we saw some birds. **Northern Shovelers** and **Ruddy Ducks** were present by the hundreds, and we also had **Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Ducks, Northern Pintails, Blue-winged and Green Winged Teal**, and a **Canvasback**. Three **Horned Grebes** and seven **Eared Grebes** were present, and close enough to each other that the two species could be compared in the same field of view. A long walk down a dike brought us to some shallows where we saw nine **American Avocets** and 32 **Stilt Sandpipers** (an amazingly large number of these birds, which usually winter much further south). **Ring-billed** and **Bonaparte's Gulls** were everywhere, as were **Double-crested Cormorants**, and several species of herons and egrets, including the rarely-seen **Black-crowned Night-Heron**. A "**Krider's**" **Red-tailed Hawk** was so pale, and showed such a white crown, that we initially thought it was an Osprey.

So, finally, the day paid off. It took a long time, though, and many of our participants were scarred for life. Those still recovering will be pleased to know that the President has declared the Bienville field trip a natural disaster and has approved FEMA funds for all the survivors. Applications are in the mail.





## BIRD CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

The Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has a new birding certificate program called "Wings Over Florida." The purpose is to recognize and encourage the efforts of dedicated birders who keep track of the birds they see through listing. "Wings Over Florida" awards full color certificates at four different achievement levels to birders who report their Florida state lists to the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

The program is free to Florida residents as part of FGFWFC's effort to provide new programs for birdwatchers statewide. Certificate levels are:

- I. Chickadee Level: 50-149 birds recorded
- II. Frigatebird Level: 150-249 birds recorded
- III. Bunting Level: 250-349 birds recorded
- IV. Caracara Level: 350 or more birds recorded

To obtain the application form or for more information, write Alexander Kropp, Birding Projects Manager, Bureau of Nongame Wildlife, 620 S. Meridian Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600 or call (904) 414-7929.



## RESULTS OF CHRISTMAS COUNT

by Barbara P. Muschlitz

The temperature was 38° when the owls started before dawn. We experienced fog early, but it cleared and got almost hot at 68°. Four new species were added to our overall count. A **Brown Pelican** seen by Howard Adams and Lowery Douglas from the Prairie Basin was undoubtedly the same one seen by Linda and Bill Bolte at Bivens Arm. This bird is reportedly increasing inland, and it has been seen more frequently in Alachua County lately. John Hintermister and David Hoyt found the **Dickcissel** along LaChua Trail near Sweetwater Branch. (It was seen again the next day; maybe it will hang around.) Jan and Bill Bolte reported an immature **Common Tern** at Bivens Arm and compared it with nearby Forster's Terns. Dan Cimbaro and Ike Fromberg found a **Western Tanager** feeding on berries along Newnan's Lake Road. The observers

wrote "Unusual Bird Reports" for each of these species. All are subject to review by Regional Editor Paul Sykes.

Reports were written for other unusual birds. Andy Kratter wrote one for an amazing 3 **Henslow's Sparrows** seen by Jim Weimer's team at Persimmon Point. Henslow's Sparrow is a notorious skulker, but Andy also found one last year on our count. Two other sparrows seen in the same area probably were Henslow's but were not seen well and can only be reported generically as *Ammodramus*, sp. Mike Manetz and Sam Cole found a **Winter Wren** at Hickory Ranch. Seen on 7 counts in the period 1971 to 1983, one had not been reported on the Gainesville count since 1983. Each year the hospitable Williamsons give my group permission to visit their ranch. It is about a half mile S of Bolen Bluff on US 441. This year Greg McDermott spotted an immature female **Vermilion Flycatcher** on a fence near the Williamson's house. We watched her flitting about and flycatching for at least 15 minutes. The ranch, formerly "Al Marah Arabians," is now used for breeding cows instead of horses. The last Vermilion Flycatcher I saw in this area was there, an adult male for our CBC in 1988. The Boltes spotted an elusive **Yellow-breasted Chat**, on our count only once previously, in 1971. Dan Cimbaro found a female **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, listed for our count only in 1983, but seen occasionally here in winter. The first **Lincoln's Sparrows** were counted here first in 1985, but this year they made our list for the 5th time. Craig Parenteau found one on the west side of Paynes Prairie. Neither House Sparrow nor House Finch was counted. They are around in some numbers, and it was more a case of no one making a special effort to find them. Both will be listed as "Count Week" birds.

As usual, we had our Count-up supper at Civitan. Griselda Forbes, our Hospitality Chairperson, was assisted by her son Ethan, in providing all of us with food and drink. Again, I have special thanks for Pat Newman-Wolfe for adding the numbers as each team reported for each species and to Bob Knight who did the data entry, at the same time, in my portable computer. It saves me so much time afterwards and permits me to prepare this report in time for the January *Crane*.



# CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, GAINESVILLE, FL 22 DECEMBER 1996

Observers (Team leaders in bold face): **Howard Adams**, Lowery Douglas, John Hintermister, Dave Hoyt, Adam Knight, Bob Knight, Scott Knight, Don Morrow, **Jim Weimer**, Susan Weimer, Marge Hemp, Andy Kratter, Celeste Shitama, **Mike Manetz**, Judy Bryan, Sam Cole, Michael Meissenberg, **Barbara Muschlitz**, Dave Beatty, Dale Henderson, Mary Landsman, Greg McDermottt, Steve Morello, Katie Sieving, **Brian McNab**, Kavita Isvaran, Grace Kiltie, Carmine Lanciani, Suhel Quader, **Craig Parenteau**, Ria Leonard, Mike Paczolt, Dan Pearson, **Rex Rowan**, Bill Bolte, Jan Bolte, Debbie Roberts, **Tom Webber**, Karen Garren, Karl Miller, **Martha King**, Pat Burns, Lyla Lundeen, Alice Tyler, **Pat Newman-Wolfe**, Larry Johnson, Lorraine Yomano, Shelly Yomano, **Dan Cimbaro**, Ray Ashton, Ruth Ernsberger, Ike Fromberg, Frank Mead, Lynn Mosura-Bliss, Paul Sindelar, Kirk Stage.

Tabulation: New species and new highs underlined.

Pied-billed Grebe	126	Killdeer	386	Solitary Vireo	56
<u>Brown Pelican</u>	1	Greater Yellowlegs	15	Orange-crnd Warbler	42
Dbl-cr Cormorant	1054	Lesser Yellowlegs	1	Northern Parula	2
Anhinga	157	Common Snipe	309	Blk-thr Blue Warbler	1
American Bittern	3	American Woodcock	28	Ylw-rumped Warbler	5697
Great Blue Heron	210	Bonaparte's Gull	59	Ylw-throated Warbler	19
Great Egret	313	Ring-billed Gull	3254	Pine Warbler	90
Snowy Egret	46	Herring Gull	15	Prairie Warbler	1
Little Blue Heron	100	<u>Common Tern</u>	1	Palm Warbler	261
Tricolored Heron	29	Forster's Tern	32	Black&White Warbler	62
Cattle Egret	154	Rock Dove	137	Ovenbird	3
Green Heron	12	Mourning Dove	391	Common Yellowthroat	166
Blk-cr Night-Heron	<u>225</u>	Barn Owl	1	Ylw-breasted Chat	1
White Ibis	852	Eastern Screech Owl	19	<u>Western Tanager</u>	1
Glossy Ibis	72	Great Horned Owl	18	Northern Cardinal	300
Wood Stork	<u>220</u>	Barred Owl	25	<u>Dickcissel</u>	1
Wood Duck	126	Whip-Poor-Will	4	Eastern Towhee	112
Green-winged Teal	348	Belted Kingfisher	28	Chipping Sparrow	142
Mottled Duck	33	Red-headed Woodp.	19	Field Sparrow	1
Mallard	39	Red-bellied Woodp.	<u>258</u>	Vesper Sparrow	6
Northern Pintail	1	Ylw-bellied Sapsucker	48	Savannah Sparrow	129
Blue-winged Teal	232	Downy Woodpecker	72	Grasshopper Sparrow	2
American Wigeon	41	Hairy Woodpecker	1	Henslow's Sparrow	3
Canvasback	1	Northern Flicker	95	<u>Ammodramus</u> , sp.	2
Redhead	1	Pileated Woodpecker	83	Song Sparrow	56
Ring-necked Duck	127	Eastern Phoebe	164	Lincoln's Sparrow	1
Lesser Scaup	19	Vermilion Flycatcher	1	Swamp Sparrow	187
Common Goldeneye	2	Tree Swallow	451	Wht-throated Sparrow	43
Bufflehead	1	Blue Jay	279	Wht-crowned Sparrow	3
Hooded Merganser	97	American Crow	291	Red-winged Blackbird	5554
Ruddy Duck	8	Fish Crow	19	Eastern Meadowlark	263
Black Vulture	168	Crow, sp.	85	Boat-tailed Grackle	2658
Turkey Vulture	420	Carolina Chickadee	90	Common Grackle	1430
Osprey	7	Tufted Titmouse	223	Brown-headed Cowbird	3
Bald Eagle	<u>109</u>	Brwn-headed Nuthatch	55	Baltimore Oriole	10
Northern Harrier	32	Carolina Wren	221	American Goldfinch	135
Sharp-shinned Hawk	9	House Wren	111		
Cooper's Hawk	6	Winter Wren	1	Number of Species	139
Accipiter, sp.	2	Sedge Wren	<u>76</u>	Total Individuals	37763
Red-shouldered Hawk	79	Marsh Wren	13		
Red-tailed Hawk	51	Ruby-crnd Kinglet	238		
American Kestrel	57	Blue-gray Gnatcatchr	157		
Merlin	2	Eastern Bluebird	83		
Wild Turkey	15	Hermit Thrush	69		
Northern Bobwhite	2	American Robin	2887		
King Rail	25	Gray Catbird	120		
Virginia Rail	25	Northern Mockingbird	179		
Sora	<u>100</u>	Brown Thrasher	12		
Purple Gallinule	1	American Pipit	27		
Common Moorhen	216	Cedar Waxwing	480		
American Coot	1128	Loggerhead Shrike	57		
Limpkin	1	European Starling	218		
Sandhill Crane	1250	White-eyed Vireo	59		





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## *The Crane*

January, 1997



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### Join Audubon

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

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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\_\_\_\_ **INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP / \$20**





# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 38 Number 7, February 1997*

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Saturday, February 1, 6:00 a.m.**

**Ft. Clinch / Wards Bank**

We'll meet in the Publix parking lot at NW 13th Street and NW 39th Avenue and carpool from there. The two best birding sites on Florida's northeastern tip usually make for an interesting day: Ft. Clinch's fishing pier parallels the south jetty of the St. Mary's River, on which we often see Purple Sandpipers at very close range, while the shallow bay at Wards Bank produces a variety of seabirds and shorebirds, among them Piping Plovers, Great Black-backed Gulls, Horned Grebes, and Red-breasted Mergansers. Red-throated Loon, Northern Gannet, Marbled Godwit, and Long-billed Curlew are also possible on this trip, and we may try for the newly-split Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow. Dress for cold weather and bring your lunch.

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

**Bolen Bluff Trail**

Meet in the Bolen Bluff parking lot on US-441, 4.3 miles south of Williston Road. Although hints of spring should be everywhere, and the Purple Martins should be returning, we'll see mostly common winter birds on this trip through the oak uplands and wet brushy fields of this popular birding trail. Down on the Prairie, expect to see Savannah, Song, and Swamp Sparrows, House, Sedge, and maybe Marsh Wrens, Northern Harriers, and, if we're lucky, a Sora or Virginia Rail. Along the upland trail, we should find a feeding flock or two, containing Black-and-white and Orange-crowned Warblers and Solitary Vireos, and perhaps an Ovenbird, Northern Parula, or Baltimore Oriole.

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

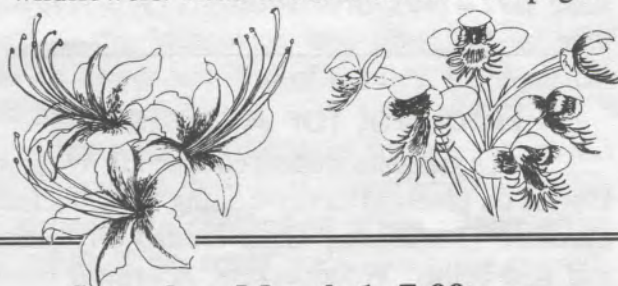
**Board Meeting**

Open to all members and the public, the AAS board meeting is held in the Conference Room at the Florida Museum of Natural History.

**Saturday, February 22, 2:00 p.m.**

**Program**

Be sure to attend this month's program on wildflowers. Read about it on the next page!



**Saturday, March 1, 7:00 a.m.**

**Lochloosa Conservation Area**

Meet at Powers Park, on SR-20 (Hawthorne Road) 4.4 miles east of Waldo Road, to carpool. This large tract of woodland and wetland at the south end of Lake Lochloosa is owned by the St. Johns River Water Management District. Though at 31,751 acres it is half again as large as Paynes Prairie State Preserve, it remains unknown to most local residents. Therefore we will explore it as best we can, birding, botanizing, insecting (?), and naturalizing in general as we make our way by car and on foot. We'll see pinewoods, cypress and hardwood swamps, and a fine view of the lake. If the weather cooperates, it should be a lovely trip, and you might want to bring a lunch in case we run a little long.



## Wildflowers — This Month's Program

Walter Judd, botany professor at the University of Florida, will be our speaker at the program meeting on **February 22**. Dr. Judd will speak on "Wildflowers of Sandhills and Pine Flatwoods." The program will begin at **2 p.m.** in the Millhopper Branch Library, 3145 NW 43rd Street.

Spring usually comes a month earlier in north Florida than the official "First Day of Spring," March 21. As a result, spring wildflowers will be in full bloom for our field trips in March and April. We'll be going to such places as Lochloosa Wildlife Management Area, Goethe State Forest, and San Felasco State Preserve. Those are all good spots to see some of the flowers Dr. Judd will be telling us about at the program.

Dr. Judd's research specialty is plant taxonomy, and he has done field work in both the southeastern United States and the Greater Antilles. He promises someday to do a program for Alachua Audubon on the wildflowers found in the mountains of Haiti. But who will lead that field trip?

### Consider This...

Just like the Marines, we're looking for a few good men and women. The Alachua Audubon Society nominating committee is seeking candidates for board members and officers. Nominees will be presented to the membership at the annual picnic.

If you would be willing to serve, or would like to suggest someone to the committee, please call one of the following people on the nominating committee: Tom Webber (392-1721), Griselda Forbes (371-3124), Paul Moler (495-9419), Martha King (372-4149), Bryant Roberts (376-7472).



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### Request for Assistance

I am a graduate student conducting research in Florida on pineland cavity-nesting birds, including Carolina Chickadees, Great-crested Flycatchers, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers. A critical component of my work is monitoring cavity nests in pine snags.

I am seeking extension ladders and tall folding ladders for my field crew to use between March and June. If you have old ladders that you wouldn't mind donating, selling cheap, or even lending to our research, please call me

— Karl Miller — at 377-5940 or write to [karlos@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:karlos@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu). Thanks!



#### Alachua Audubon Society

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Vice-President.....	Rex Rowan 371-9296
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Assisting in circulation duties of *The Crane* are:

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

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## Field Trip Highlights

by Rex Rowan

Pat Burns of Alachua, to spare herself an early wakeup and a pre-dawn drive to St. Marks, had driven to Panacea on Friday afternoon and checked into her motel. With a few hours of daylight to kill, she'd headed south to Alligator Point to see what she could find.

The next morning, January 11, she met the rest of us in the parking lot of the St. Marks visitor center. She conferred with Barbara Muschlitz for a moment, and Barbara pushed her towards us.

"Tell them what you saw," she said.

"A **Harlequin Duck**."

After all the screaming and fainting subsided, and immediately renewed upon learning that this was a male — thus not only rare (Florida's 22nd ever) but spectacularly gorgeous — we changed our plans for the day. Originally we'd meant to spend all of Saturday at the refuge, then devote Sunday to exploring other areas; instead we decided to head west at lunchtime.

We passed the morning pleasantly in the vicinity of the St. Marks lighthouse. The tide was low in Apalachee Bay, and several kinds of shorebirds and waterbirds were foraging around the exposed oyster bars — **Common Loons**, **Horned Grebes**, **American Oystercatchers**, a pair of **Common Goldeneyes**, **Red-breasted Mergansers**, and **Greater and Lesser Scaup**. In addition, several species of waterfowl were on display in the Lighthouse Pond: **Ruddy Ducks**, **Northern Shovelers**, a male **Redhead**, and the largest number of **Canvasbacks** I've ever seen in one place.

We walked the grassy strip along the bayshore and were rewarded with brief looks at a handful of **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows** as well as a possible **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed**. Bill Bolte caused temporary hysteria when he called out, "**Black Rail!**" but efforts by the rest of us to find the bird were unsuccessful.

A little after noon we started west. Arriving at Alligator Point, we went directly to the marina behind which Pat had made her discovery. A quick scan of the water showed two **Horned Grebes** and a small flock of **Lesser Scaup**, but no Harlequin. We walked up to the breakwater to look further east and west, and just as we reached it, the duck



flushed immediately below us and flew fifty feet out into Ochlockonee Bay. There it sat, splendid and ornate, a deep blue-gray with rich burgundy flanks and sharply-defined white markings on its head, neck, and back. Several people in the group actually cried out in amazement and delight. The bird seemed content to bask in our admiration, and floated peacefully on the water, taking a minute to swim around a piling with its head submerged, looking for barnacles to eat.

After fifteen or twenty minutes of gazing, we remembered that we had other birds to see and moved on to our next stop, an hour west in Apalachicola (actually, because the Apalachicola River is the dividing line between the Eastern and Central time zones, we performed the neat trick of driving forty miles and arriving a few minutes before we'd left). Here a **Ross' Goose**, the 8th ever recorded in Florida — but the 4th this year — had been enjoying the low company of a flock of **Muscovy Ducks**. We were unable to find the goose or the Muscovies, and after half an hour went on to our last stop of the day, the Apalachicola Municipal Airport.

A few weeks before, three Sprague's Pipits had been discovered there in the short grass bordering the airfield. We checked in at the airport office and asked if we could walk along the runway. Now really, can you imagine making that request and getting any response but unbelieving laughter or a call for airport security? Not in Apalachicola. The lady behind the counter said, "We've had fifteen or twenty people already today. They've been finding the birds in this first strip out there. Y'all be careful." And that was all.

The eight of us formed a line and walked through the grass, probably a quarter mile or so to the trees at the end of the field. We saw lots of **Robins** and **Killdeer**, as well as a few each **Savannah** and **Vesper Sparrows**, and one **Grasshopper Sparrow**. But no pipits. We turned around and started back. Just past our original starting point, a small bird flushed from the grass and flew in a series of "bounces" across the



runway. Andy Kratter walked over to investigate, and then called for us to follow. There were two **Sprague's Pipits**, but we concentrated on the nearest — although we couldn't find it for the longest time because it was creeping, head down, through the grass, appearing and disappearing. Attempts by those who saw it to describe its whereabouts were frustrating and only partially successful ("See that fuzzy thing? Look about three feet left of that. Now two feet. Now ... it's right there! See it?" "What fuzzy thing?"). But finally those who could see the bird focused spotting scopes on it, stepped quickly out of the way, and allowed someone else to get a look at the thing before it walked out of the field of view.

From there it was back to Gainesville for most of us. A few stayed in the area for an extra day, but they didn't have much luck. A trip out to St. George Island for Snowy Plovers was cold, extremely windy, and unsuccessful. The same for a trip to Ochlockonee River State Park in search of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. However, another visit to St. Marks netted several more species, including a **Red-throated Loon** in Apalachee Bay and a flock of **Snow Geese** over the Mounds Trail.



## **NEOTROPICAL BIRDS** **LWCF FY-98**

*by John Winn*

Here it is in the dead of winter, and there shouldn't be a neotropical migrant within a couple of hundred miles. So what's "LWCF FY-98" and what's it got to do with "our" birds?

LWCF stands for Land and Water Conservation Fund, perhaps the country's most significant — and least known — conservation program. Established by Congress in 1964, LWCF takes in close to \$1 billion each year from offshore oil and gas lease royalties. The money is supposed to be used to purchase land for national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges. The problem is that since 1980 Congress has been using most of the money for other things. Some \$11 billion that could have been spent on acquiring vital wildlife habitat

wasn't.

National Audubon's Washington office works to get adequate LWCF funding for wildlife habitat acquisition. Of particular interest are those areas which are habitat for WatchList species. The 90 birds on the list with declining populations or threatened habitats make up about 15% of the total U.S. species. Last year Congress appropriated LWCF money for 19 of the 31 priority projects identified by National Audubon, including Lake Woodruff NWR, Lake Wales NWR, and Everglades National Park. (Two other Florida refuges on National's list which did not get funding were Archie Carr NWR and Pelican Island NWR.)

Right now at this time of year, Congressional committees are working on the budget; hence, the "FY98" mentioned above. Our representatives should hear from us that the LWCF should be used for the purpose for which it was designed — land acquisition — and not be tapped for other purposes. Land costs may not be soaring nationally as they are in Florida, but the same logic as that behind P-2000 applies: if vital habitat isn't protected by acquisition today, it's likely to be gone tomorrow. Some in Congress don't seem to realize that and are even calling for a five year moratorium on federal land acquisition. That move failed last year, but it's certain to be brought up again this year.

So here's what LWCF FY98 has to do with birds: if LWCF funds continue to be diverted away from habitat protection, the declines we've been seeing in the number and variety of neotropical migrants are very likely to continue. The LWCF isn't a panacea and won't by itself halt or reverse declining numbers, but it'll sure help. Here are the names of four people you should tell that to: Karen Thurman, Cliff Stearns, Bob Graham, and Connie Mack.

### **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.



## AROUND THE COUNTY...

by Rex Rowan

(sitting in for Mike Manetz)

It's a truism of Florida birding that wintering species reach the southernmost limit of their travels between Thanksgiving and Christmas and almost immediately start drifting back north again. Certainly most waterfowl are easiest to find during November and December; the dropoff afterwards is precipitous — try finding a Mallard or a Northern Pintail in February. **Redheads** were almost common during the first week of November, but by the middle of the month they had thinned out considerably, and the last one, a lone drake, was seen on Alachua Lake on the CBC.

In fact, several of the most interesting CBC birds disappeared before New Year's Day. The **Winter Wren** at Hickory Ranch remained through December 30, but no one has seen it since. The **Dickcissel** on the La Chua Trail made occasional appearances in the week after the Count, but hasn't been reported since the 28th. And the **Western Tanager** hasn't been spotted by anyone since Dan Cimbaro first found it. The only exotic that seems to be sticking around is the female **Vermilion Flycatcher** at the Williamson Ranch, which was still present, according to Barbara Muschlitz, on January 15.

Though the number of *great* birds has dwindled, there are still plenty of *good* birds hanging around. Dan found two female **Common Goldeneyes** at the Kanapaha holding pond on January 15 — presumably the same birds that John found there a month before. And the **Lincoln's Sparrow** that Barbara discovered at Sweetwater Branch on the La Chua Trail was seen again by Jerry Krummrich on the 15th (obviously a good day, the 15th). The **Rufous Hummingbird** that first came to Bryant Roberts' yard on September 26 is still there, and the immature **Selasphorus** that has been at Kanapaha Gardens since October 30 hasn't left either (it has a pure green back, and Bryant wonders if it might be the county's first **Allen's Hummingbird**).

There's also been one new arrival. On January 12, Bryant was checking on the Kanapaha Gardens hummingbird when he saw a flock of **Tree Swallows** overhead. Looking at them through his binoculars, he noticed three swifts flying among

them — probably **Vaux's Swifts** from the Pacific Northwest, visiting for the fourth winter in a row. They seem to find the Gardens particularly attractive; it's been the closest thing to a reliable spot for finding these birds.

I should mention a site that, although within the county, is seldom considered by Gainesville birders because of its relative inaccessibility. I mean Lake Santa Fe, where the Melrose CBC found several birds usually considered rare, and found them in startlingly large numbers, especially given the small size of the lake: 26 **Common Loons**, 15 **Horned Grebes**, and 32 **Buffleheads**. It might be worth driving out to Melrose, finding a house on the lakefront, and asking the owner if you can scan the water from his dock. It works real well for Bill Bolte, who has been running the Melrose Count for five years, is on good terms with several lakefront property owners, and says that the numbers given above are typical.

A last word on last year: Five birders participated in the annual year-list competition, with the best results ever. Of the 240 species recorded in Alachua County in 1996, I saw 224, Mike Manetz 214, John Hintermister 208, Greg McDermott 199, and Barbara Muschlitz 196 — all of us besting our previous highs. Greg's was an excruciating tale: he got his 199th bird, the Vermilion Flycatcher, on the CBC, and planned to get #200, the Rufous Hummingbird at Bryant Roberts' house, first thing the next morning before leaving to spend the holidays in Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, he woke up late and ended the year one bird shy of the magic number. Well, as the Gators always *used* to say, wait till next year, Greg.



*The truth of the matter is, the birds could very well live without us, but many — perhaps all — of us would find life incomplete, indeed almost intolerable, without the birds.*

—Roger Tory Peterson



# CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, CEDAR KEY, FL 4 JANUARY 1997

"The weather cooperated, but the birds didn't," would be a good way to sum up this year's Cedar Key Bird Count. After a week wherein the fog lifted for only a few hours a day, January 4 began with perfect visibility, yet little to see. While there were count record numbers for 10 species, all groups reported "few birds." Pleasant surprises included a white-phase **Reddish Egret**, recorded for only the third time, and a record number of **American Avocets**: 62. Many thanks to all participants, especially to Ken Litzenberger, Manager of Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge and to Jeff Ripple, who furnished sea kayaks to survey the shallow waters of Waccasassa Bay. Because of the ever increasing weekend vehicular traffic, it was decided to schedule the count next year on the last Friday of the period, January 2, 1998.

Dale C. Henderson

Compilers: Ron Christen & Dale Henderson. Other Observers: Howard Adams, Tracy Feldman, John Hintermister, Grace Kiltie, Carmine Lanciani, Mary Landsman, Ken Litzenberger, Nicky Macruski, B.K. McNab, Derrick McNab, Barbara Muschlitz, Craig Parenteau, Bryant Roberts, Paul Sindelar, Betty Smocovitis, David Steadman, G. Steadman, Nancy Taylor, Bob Witman.

Tabulation: New Highs underlined.

Common Loon	6	Killdeer	70	Carolina Chickadee	46
Pied-billed Grebe	11	Am. Oystercatcher	431	Tufted Titmouse	27
Horned Grebe	13	American Avocet	62	Carolina Wren	47
Am White Pelican	121	Greater Yellowlegs	88	House Wren	18
Brown Pelican	227	Lesser Yellowlegs	1	Sedge Wren	12
Dbl-cr Cormorant	2602	Willet	519	Marsh Wren	28
Anhinga	6	Spotted Sandpiper	6	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	64
Great Blue Heron	70	Whimbrel	55	Bl-gray Gnatcatcher	10
Great Egret	87	Marbled Godwit	3	Eastern Bluebird	12
Snowy Egret	24	Ruddy Turnstone	492	Hermit Thrush	18
Little Blue Heron	22	Red Knot	55	American Robin	2503
Tricolored Heron	12	Sanderling	282	Gray Catbird	81
Reddish Egret	1	Western Sandpiper	1208	Northern Mockingbird	58
Blk-cr Night-Heron	64	Least Sandpiper	108	Brown Thrasher	9
Ylw-cr Night-Heron	10	Dunlin	3662	Cedar Waxwing	12
White Ibis	23	Peep, sp.	300	European Starling	96
Wood Stork	2	Short-bld Dowitcher	700	White-eyed Vireo	20
Wood Duck	13	Laughing Gull	467	Solitary Vireo	3
Canvasback	1	Ring-billed Gull	1011	Orange-cr Warbler	1
Greater Scaup	148	Herring Gull	52	Ylw-rumped Warbler	1632
Lesser Scaup	1202	Caspian Tern	25	Ylw-throated Warbler	2
Common Goldeneye	1	Royal Tern	124	Pine Warbler	30
Bufflehead	81	Forster's Tern	153	Palm Warbler	47
Hooded Merganser	49	Black Skimmer	542	Black & White Warbler	6
Red-brstd Merganser	76	Rock Dove	1	Common Yellowthroat	88
Ruddy Duck	13	Eur. Collared Dove	146	Northern Cardinal	57
Black Vulture	17	White-winged Dove	9	Eastern Towhee	92
Turkey Vulture	57	Mourning Dove	146	Chipping Sparrow	32
Osprey	27	Common Ground Dove	37	Savannah Sparrow	4
Bald Eagle	11	Rose-Ringed Parakeet	4	Nelson's Sharp-tailed	25
Northern Harrier	6	Eastern Screech Owl	13	Seaside Sparrow	15
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	Great Horned Owl	7	Song Sparrow	11
Cooper's Hawk	1	Barred Owl	20	Swamp Sparrow	26
Accipiter, sp.	1	Belted Kingfisher	21	White-thr Sparrow	8
Red-shouldered Hawk	18	Red-bell. Woodpecker	66	Red-winged Blackbird	471
Red-tailed Hawk	6	Ylw-bell. Sapsucker	15	Eastern Meadowlark	10
American Kestrel	4	Downy Woodpecker	18	Boat-tailed Grackle	355
Northern Bobwhite	1	Northern Flicker	17	Common Grackle	155
Clapper Rail	25	Pileated Woodpecker	19	Brown-headed Cowbird	5
Sora	2	Eastern Phoebe	31	American Goldfinch	26
Common Moorhen	2	Tree Swallow	1	House Sparrow	11
American Coot	4	Blue Jay	55		
Black-bellied Plover	176	Florida Scrub-Jay	10	Number of Species	129
Wilson's Plover	1	American Crow	13	Total Individuals	22697
Semipalmated Plover	90	Fish Crow	122		



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## *The Crane*

February, 1997



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### Join Audubon

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

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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\_\_\_\_ **INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP / \$20**





# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 38 Number 8, March 1997*

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

### **Board Meeting**

Open to all members and the public, the AAS board meeting is held in the Conference Room at the Florida Museum of Natural History.

**Sunday, March 16, 7:30 a.m.**

### **Gum Root Park/Gum Root Swamp**

Meet at the entrance to Morningside Nature Center, on SR-26 (University Avenue) 2 miles east of Waldo Road. From there it's only a short distance to this 741-acre conservation area, jointly owned by the city and the St. Johns River Water Management District. Still being developed, both halves of the park nonetheless have good hiking trails, and we'll take advantage of that, walking along Hatchet Creek to the north end of Newnans Lake (dryshod, we hope), visiting the enormous field at the center of Gum Root Park, and exploring the sandier byways for birds, wildflowers, and, depending on the weather, reptiles and insects. Gum Root is a fairly new acquisition and thus unknown to most Audubon members. Come along and get acquainted.

**Saturday/Sunday, March 22/23**

### **Kanapaha Spring Gardens Festival**

Alachua Audubon Society will again have a booth at the Spring Festival at Kanapaha Gardens. Stop by and see us and tell us about your bird and other wildlife sightings. We'll have T-shirts for sale and information available on AAS and birds you know and love in this area.

### **March Program**

As of the time of publication of *The Crane*, there is a change in the March program. Vic Doig, who was tentatively scheduled to present a talk on the Goethe State Forest, has had to cancel. Efforts are underway to have a replacement speaker, but details have not been finalized.

Please check the SunDial Birding Information Line at **335-3500, ext. BIRD (2473)** to find out if there is a replacement speaker or if there will even be a March program!

**Saturday, April 5, 6:30 a.m.**

### **Goethe State Forest**

Meet in the parking lot of the Target store on Archer Road just east of I-75. This huge tract of land includes flatwoods and longleaf-pine sandhill, Fox Squirrels and Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, swamps and blackwater creeks, and a variety of spring butterflies and wildflowers.

### **...Reminder of Some Upcoming Field Trips**

Sun. April 13 - San Felasco

Sun. April 20 - Cedar Key

Sat. April 26 - Wards Bank/Cedar Point





## President's Message

by John Winn

The 1997 session of the Florida legislature will be starting soon. Interest in legislative activity among members of the general public must cover the full spectrum from that of the "legislative junkie" who looks at the nightly report on public television to those folks on the other end who "couldn't care less."

I'd guess that most Audubon members fall somewhere in the middle. We read stories in the daily newspaper but don't make it a point to follow very closely everything happening in Tallahassee. So except when some environmental legislation catches the collective eye of the media, we really don't hear a lot about all the bills which might have an environmental impact — either good or bad — as for the most part, these don't get much coverage. There is, however, a way to get news about these bills without having to spend a lot of time combing through a flock of detailed reports. That's with the legislative newsletter put out on a more-or-less weekly basis by Florida Audubon.

Charles Lee, the Florida Audubon representative in Tallahassee who puts the newsletter together, has been attending legislative sessions since the time Andrew Jackson was governor. Well, maybe not that long, but for a pretty long time. So he has a good grasp on what's going on: what's new as opposed to what has been kicked around for years, what's really serious or what's just a parliamentary maneuver, and which way legislators are likely to vote on a particular bill. In short, the newsletter is a great source of information on issues which might be of real interest to you as an Audubon member — and which you most likely wouldn't be able to get easily any place else. When something is coming up where letters and calls to legislators might be helpful, the newsletter tells who to contact.

So how much does the newsletter cost? Nothing — it's free. But Florida Audubon has to spend a bunch in putting it out, so if you ask for it, you really should make a contribution. Anyway, if you'd like to get the newsletter, you can write to Florida Audubon at 1331 Palmetto Avenue, Suite 110, Winter Park, Florida 32789. If you would like to get the newsletter by e-mail and also get "urgent alerts," send an e-mail message to the following:

Majordomo@igc.apc.org. Your message should say "subscribe audubon-florida." If you have a fax number, you could also use it to get immediate requests to contact legislators.

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*Magic birds were dancing in the mystic marsh.  
The grass swayed with them, and the shallow  
waters and the earth fluttered under them. The  
earth was dancing with the cranes, and the low  
sun, and the wind and sky.*

—Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

### Alachua Audubon Society

#### Officers and Chairpersons of Standing Committees, 1996-97

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*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. Cost to members of other chapters is \$3. Cost to non-Audubon members is \$5. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed, can be on disk or hard copy, and must be received by **March 21** to be included in the **April** issue. Please limit each article to no more than two pages. Fax to 331-2585. Drop your disk or hard copy by 519 NW 60th Street, Suite A, or mail to: Evelyn Perry, 9419 SW 67th Drive, Gainesville, Florida 32608. e-mail EvPerry@aol.com





## Around the County...

by Mike Manetz

It is only early March, and we have a candidate for "bird-of-the-year"! That is, of course, the **Allen's Hummingbird** which was caught and banded Jan. 30 at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens. It was also unofficially one of the best birds of 1996, as Bryant Roberts first noticed it at the Gardens in October of last year. Because some hummingbird experts consider the Allen's and Rufous Hummingbirds to be indistinguishable in the field, Bryant could only report the bird as a *Selasphorus* species, hang out a feeder, and wait for someone with the proper banding licenses and equipment to make a positive identification, which can only be achieved by measuring the bird's tail feathers! When this operation was carried out by Bob Sargent, the most renowned hummingbird expert in the southeast, Alachua County could claim the first ever verified Allen's Hummingbird in the entire state. This led to a wonderful front page feature in *The Gainesville Sun*, and began a week of pilgrimages by the state's top birders eager to add this rarity to their state lists. The bird, a beautiful male, stayed around long enough for those most interested to have a look and then departed on or around Feb. 10.

Signs of spring seem to be everywhere. It would be difficult to miss the dawn chorus of **Cardinals** and **Wrens** as they establish their breeding territories. By the time this issue of *The Crane* reaches you, Northern Parulas and Yellow-throated Warblers will be doing the same. **Purple Martins**, our earliest neo-tropical breeders to return from winter vacation, began appearing in late January. Lyn Badger reported one visiting her new complex of martin houses Jan. 28 on Kanapaha Prairie, and there was one anonymous report from Alachua the day before.

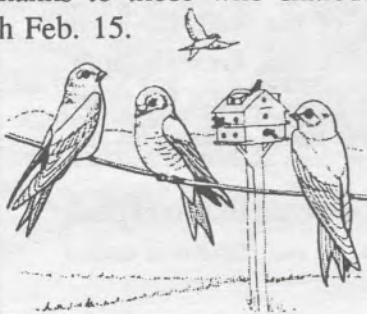
Some interesting winter birds continued to linger into our early spring. John Winn reported a **Common Loon** and a **Horned Grebe** on Lake Alto in early February. Both species are fairly common on nearby Lake Santa Fe, but John says they rarely show up on the smaller Lake Alto. **Dark-eyed Juncos** continued to be seen around the parking lot at Morningside Nature Center. Ike Fromberg found three there in January. When he and Adam Kent checked on Feb. 15, they found as many as five. Also at Morningside, a female **Hairy Woodpecker**, first spotted last December by Rex Rowan, continued to be seen into mid-February. This bird seems to favor the south end of the park, in the vicinity of the entrance drive, parking lot, and cabin areas. Rex also reported a **Lincoln's Sparrow** still present on La Chua Trail near Sweetwater Branch and a beautiful adult **White-crowned Sparrow** in the same area. The first stretch of La Chua Trail has also been reliable for **Vespers Sparrows** since that section was recently burned. The paving and re-routing of the Rail Trail has restricted access to this winter's prime location for **Henslow's** and **Grasshopper Sparrows**, but perhaps the new route will reveal some equally good habitat for these prized skulkers. If you find anything of interest along the new route, please let me know.

Spring is the best time to learn and enjoy bird songs. If you would like to expand your vocabulary of bird vocalizations, I recommend you obtain an instructional audio



tape. There are several good ones on the market, but one you might want to start with is "Sounds of Florida Birds" by William Hardy (usually available at the Florida Museum gift shop). The advantage of this tape is that you do not have to sift through dozens of species that never, or rarely, sing in Florida. Still, the number of bird songs on Hardy's tape can be overwhelming to the novice, and many species included occur only in southern Florida or in the Panhandle, so I suggest you start listening to and studying only those birds that are likely to sing in our area. A technique that I have found extremely helpful is to re-record onto a separate tape only a handful of the songs you are most likely to encounter. (I believe this is legal if you do it solely for your own private use.) If you are handy with tape-dubbing equipment, you can record longer extended versions of a specific species' song. Start with just a few species at a time. When you are comfortable that you can identify those songs in the field, then add a few more. A suggested beginner's list, assuming a typical Gainesville area woodland or wooded neighborhood, might start with Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, Carolina Wren, Tufted Titmouse, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Northern Mockingbird. If you are familiar with these residents, add Northern Parula, Great-crested Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, Rufous-sided Towhee, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, White-eyed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. If you live near open meadows, you might make a point of learning Eastern Meadowlark, Blue Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting. Before your next trip to Newnan's Lake, make sure you can identify Prothonotary and Yellow-throated Warblers. Knowing the sounds of our most common birds can really enhance your awareness and enjoyment of being outdoors. If you are hiking, birding, or merely going from house to car on the way to work, you may find yourself just lingering to listen!

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through Feb. 15.



4 The Crane

## *Coming Soon to a Garden Near You!*

For the fourth consecutive year, Alachua Audubon Society will have a booth at the Kanapaha Spring Garden Festival. The festival takes place Saturday and Sunday, March 22 and 23.

There may be a few volunteer spots left. Call John Winn at 468-1669 if you are interested in taking a shift at the booth.

T-shirts will be available for purchase in an excellent variety of colors and sizes. If you don't yet have your official Alachua Audubon Society T-shirt, you can purchase one or more at the booth.



## *Learning to Crack the Environmental Code*

by Mary-Slater Linn,

Natural Areas Coordinator, Florida Sierra Club

We all hear the comment "think globally, act locally," but the Florida Sierra Club is actually going to show you how to get involved to provide citizen input on local task force set up to protect the environment. Through an interactive workshop, we will teach you the skills needed to be involved in Ecosystem Management Task Force and Regional Planning Councils. Learn how to meet with agency staff, prepare and present testimony, attend local zoning board meetings, and communicate with the media.

Anyone interested in learning this process is invited to attend on March 22 from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Alachua Public Library, 401 E. University Avenue, Gainesville.

Ecosystem Management Task Force is a state-wide program of the Department of Environmental Protection. Regional Planning Councils are required by law to have citizen input. They determine future land use for every county in Florida. Your involvement determines Florida's environmental future!



## Sandhill Cycles...

by Robert W. Udy

Despite the cold morning, we were looking for the eight-foot gator who had surprised us last fall. Thirty yards from a shallow pond, the gator had been lying in the shade of a big live oak. Scanning the area where the gator had been, we almost missed the crane. She (or he) was sitting on a nest.

My wife and I live on the edge of the Kanapaha Prairie where we enjoy hikes almost every day. We like to check on the Sandhill Cranes — the migrants from the north and two or three pairs of residents. We also get to watch a dozen Yellowlegs hunting the pond edges and a Northern Harrier chasing a Red-shouldered Hawk. The cranes remain our favorites.

The new nest, then, is especially welcome and almost makes up for an unhappy discovery a few weeks ago. Easing our way through a blackberry thicket near a pond, we found a dead crane. Little remained but bones and a lot of hardware. The crane's legs were outfitted with three bands and a dead radio transmitter. The bands — two were white plastic — persuaded us the crane was one we've watched for four years. Elegant and stately, the crane used to stride with its mate about the prairie rim, avoiding us and shunning the migrants. A call to Steve Nesbitt brought him out to collect the bands and radio and to take a look at the dead crane. Nesbitt's records indicate the crane may have been seventeen years old. The absence of bobcat or coyote signs at the carcass suggests the crane died of old age.

We'll focus our binoculars on the new nest for the next three weeks, hoping for a pair of hatchlings, a pair of permanent residents. The prairie needs them.

### Note from editor: **New Sponsor**

We welcome Spence Guerin of Melbourne to our sponsors. Please take note of his listing on the sponsor page offering a "secluded North Carolina rental home on 50 acres."

You can get information direct from Spence via telephone or e-mail (see ad). Also, he has sent me a two-page detailed description, with pictures, of the vacation home. If you would like me to fax you a copy locally, call me at my business, The Branch Office, 331-2223, and I will send it to you. *Evelyn*

## (Not) Learning the Wasps



by Rex Rowan

In 1994 it was my good fortune to make the acquaintance of entomologist David Wahl. David, at the time a beginning birder, was curator of a large collection of parasitic wasps owned by the American Entomological Institute. When I first visited him at the cinderblock building that houses the collection, he gave me the tour. Two entire rooms were filled with boxes shelved like books in wooden cabinets. Open up any of these boxes, and dozens of wasps, most of them no larger than a mosquito, stood forth regimented on their pins, bearing labels that showed collection dates decades before my birth, collection sites all over the world. I was entranced.

David was a frequent participant in Audubon field trips, and as he picked my brains about birds, I picked his about wasps. What was that glittering blue one hunting through the grass, wings flicking? A Sphecid. What was that one crawling about on the flower, black and yellow, hairy, with the long abdomen? A Scoliid.

It was all very well for David to say "a Scoliid," but I wondered what *made* a Scoliid. For instance, I would characterize a gnatcatcher as a small slender insectivorous bird with a thin bill and a long tail; how would I characterize a Scoliid? I got out my copy of Borror and White's *A Field Guide to the Insects* (in the Peterson Field Guide series) and opened it to the Hymenoptera, the ants, bees, and wasps. It was a discouraging experience. The Scoliids were distinguished by, among other things, a transverse suture between the mesosternum and the metasternum. The what? I was appalled to discover that in nearly every family of wasps features that made for a positive identification were microscopic, and the effort of locating them was further hampered by the necessity of flipping continually to the glossary for definitions of such terms as coxa, pronotum, clypeus, and tegula. Yet David could take one in his hand, give it the merest inspection, and announce, "Oh, this one is *Baryceros*."

I understood with chagrin that my situation was similar to that faced by beginning birdwatchers: I had the book, here were the animals right in front of me, but I couldn't make heads or tails of them.



Although David assured me that many wasps required a hand lens at the very least, it was obvious that field identification at some level was possible and equally obvious that I couldn't do it.

But then, I couldn't even identify one in the hand. So in May, David offered to loan me a Malaise trap, a tent-like net that funnels insects into a jar of alcohol, so that I could make an entomological sampling of my own back yard. Understand, I live in a lower-middle-class area of northeast Gainesville. There isn't a grove of trees within half a mile. Yet within just a few weeks, I had discovered nearly forty species of wasps and bees — not counting those too small for me to identify — among the thousands of insects that ended up in the jar.

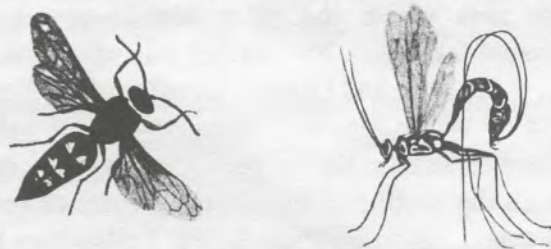
We own a cheap dissecting microscope, which made sorting the dead insects easier. But beyond the practical work of distinguishing the wasps and bees from the flies that resembled them, and rather to my surprise, I took the greatest pleasure from simply contemplating through the lens creatures of such elegant design. One exquisite group, the cuckoo wasps, the Chrysidids, had bodies of bright metallic green: they looked more like jewelry than like living things. I admired the glittering obsidian shells of the hunting wasps, the hard enamel sickle-curves of their mandibles.

Was I sorry to have killed them? Yes, actually. But I don't think there's any way to make them sit still without killing them. And I also think that an awareness of nature's particular beauties is preferable to an ignorance of them, however benign (though I'm sure the individual wasps would disagree!).

So, am I now a wasp expert? Nope. All my laboring over microscope and field guide has profited me little so far. In fact, I'm very close to where I was when I started. I do know that, of the two species of dark paper wasps (not the caramel-and-yellow ones), *Polistes annularis* is the more likely to make its nest near permanent water, builds the nest with a slanting face, and is the more irascible; while *Polistes metricus* is the less aggressive, and builds its nest with the face hanging straight down. I do know that. So I've made a start.

But far outweighing the little knowledge I've gained is my newfound enthusiasm for the company of these creatures. I'm actually planning to

plant a stand of white sweet clover (*Melilotus alba*) and fiddler's spurge (*Poinsettia heterophylla*) this spring, to attract them. And during the summer months, when there are no birds to chase, I'll set up a lawn chair in front of my wasp garden, pull Fabre off the bookshelf, and see what else I can find out.



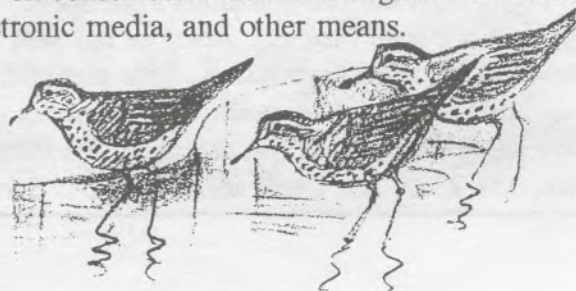
### NEWCOMER?

If you have received this *free issue* at the Kanapaha Spring Garden Festival, and this is your first time to read *The Crane*, we welcome you, hope you enjoy the articles, and hope that you will join us in our mutual pursuit of happiness—the lifelong pleasure, learning experience, and enjoyment of wild birds and wildlife in general. If you are not currently a member of Audubon, we invite you to complete the membership form on the back page or call any of the persons listed above for more information. You are welcome also to **join us on the field trips** shown on page 1 and **come to the annual picnic** next month (details will be in next month's *Crane* and also available at 335-3500, ext. BIRD).

Purpose and Goals of AAS are as follows:

Alachua Audubon Society is a public service organization that seeks to advance appreciation of nature, to protect wildlife and wild places, and to promote the prudent, sustainable use of natural resources. We do this by the following means:

1. Presentation of authentic natural history information at regularly scheduled public meetings and on expertly led field trips.
2. A program of youth education that will develop knowledge and a sense of responsibility toward nature.
3. Maintenance and interpretation of sanctuaries.
4. Distribution of authoritative and timely information on conservation issues through our newsletter, electronic media, and other means.





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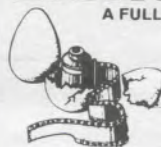
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## *The Crane*

March, 1997



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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

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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\_\_\_\_ **INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP / \$20**





# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 38 Number 9, April 1997*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Sunday, April 13, 7:30 a.m.**

### **San Felasco Hammock State Preserve**

Meet at the San Felasco parking lot (fee \$2). Nearly all of our spring birds will have arrived by now, and we should be able to see and/or hear singing Yellow-throated and Red-eyed Vireos, Hooded Warblers, Summer Tanagers, Great Crested Flycatchers, Brown-headed Cowbirds, and Eastern Wood-Pewees, as well as nesting woodpeckers, notably Red-heads. We may see a few migrants as well; this is a good spot for Black-throated Blue and Worm-eating Warblers. Spring flowers will be in bloom. Mid-April can have unpredictable weather, but if it doesn't rain we should have a particularly lovely walk.

**Sunday, April 20, 6:30 a.m.**

### **Cedar Key**

Meet in the parking lot of the Target store on Archer Road just east of I-75. The spring warbler migration is at its heaviest during the third and fourth weeks of April, and Cedar Key is one of the half-dozen best sites in the state to see it. Blackpoll and Cape May Warblers and Gray Kingbirds are almost a sure thing, while Black-throated Green and Magnolia Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and thrushes are all possible. We'll also look for Florida Scrub-Jays, Swallow-tailed Kites, and such shorebirds as American Oystercatchers and Marbled Godwits. This is a good trip for beginners, as the birds tend to be beautiful to look at, distinctively patterned and thus not so confusing, and relatively plentiful. We may stay into early afternoon, so bring a lunch and something to drink. By the way, if it rains, the birding will be even better.

**Wednesday, April 23, 6:00 p.m.**

### **Picnic at Green Acre Park**

This is the Alachua Audubon Society's annual meeting/picnic and is always fun with lots of good food and conversation (usually about birds). Please see details on the next page and plan to attend.



**Saturday, April 26, 6:00 a.m.**

### **Wards Bank/Cedar Point**

Meet in the parking lot of the Publix at NW 13th Street and NW 39th Avenue. The Atlantic Coast also has a heavy spring migration. We'll start at Wards Bank (fee 50¢ per person), looking for Gull-billed, Least, and Sandwich Terns, as well as shorebirds, and then we'll go inshore to the federal government's new Cedar Point Preserve, where we'll hope to see Blackpoll, Cape May, and Black-throated Blue Warblers, and American Redstarts, as well as the Painted Buntings and Yellow-breasted Chats that nest there. Bring a lunch, something to drink, and insect repellent.

**Saturday, May 3, 7:30 a.m.**

### **Bolen Bluff Trail**

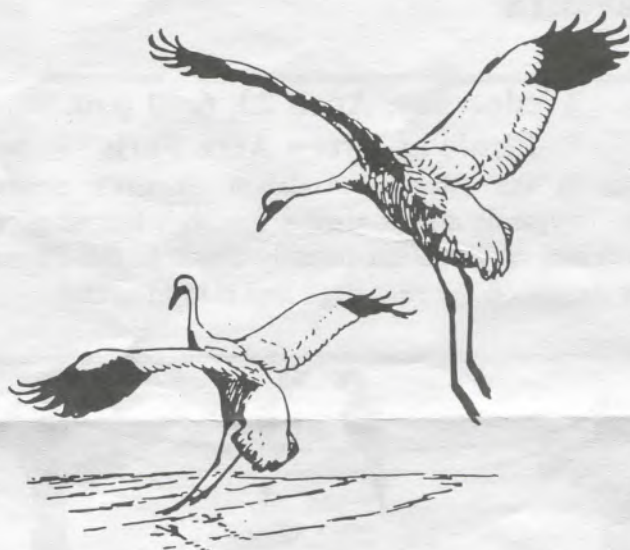
Meet at the Bolen Bluff parking lot on US-441 4.3 miles south of Williston Road. Although our spring migration in interior Florida is not much to brag about, there should be plenty of locally-nesting birds  
(continued on next page)



(May 3 field trip continued)

on this popular split-level trail. We ought to see and hear Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Red-eyed Vireos, Summer Tanagers, and Great Crested Flycatchers along the upland portion, while the lowland section, which extends onto the Paynes Prairie basin, should yield Blue Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, and, if they come back for a third year, at least one pair of Yellow-breasted Chats. It'll be hot enough that you should bring some sunscreen, though we'll be finished before lunch.

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## Nominating Committee Report

The following people have been nominated to fill board of director terms which expire in April: Mary Clench, Stephanie Haas, Karl Miller, Pat Newman-Wolfe, and Craig Parenteau. Nominations "from the floor" will be accepted at the annual meeting in April.

Current officers (who also serve on the board, but for one-year terms) have agreed to continue on for the 1997-98 club year, with the exception of Secretary Kate Lee. David Wahl will take on the job of secretary.

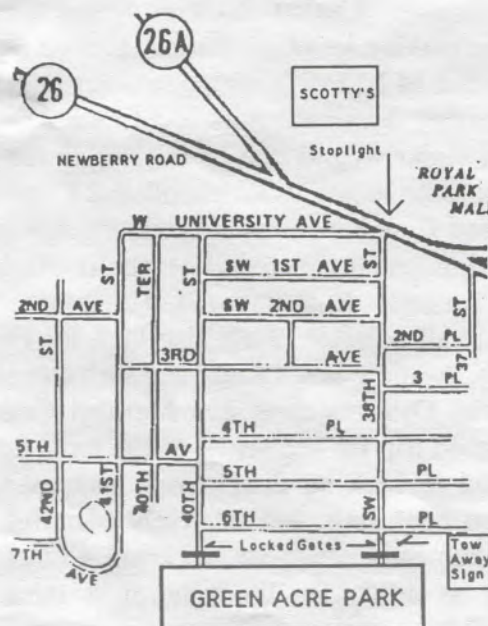
The general membership will vote on directors and officers at the annual picnic meeting on April 23.

The Nominating Committee for next year will remain: Tom Webber, chairman; Griselda Forbes, Martha King, Paul Moler, and Bryant Roberts.

## COME TO THE PICNIC!

This year the annual meeting and picnic will again be held at Green Acre Park. It's a great little park and very close by — no long drive to make! Bring a dish of some kind to share with others. There's always plenty of really good food, and there's always lots of good bird stories to share. AAS provides drinks, plates, eating utensils. There's a map below, but written directions to get to the park are: Newberry Road to the stoplight at the entrance to Royal Park Mall (across Newberry Road from where Scotty's is). Turn south onto SW 38th Street and go to the gate at the dead end. Parking is available along the streets, but be careful not to park in a tow away zone. It's a short walk to the picnic tables. There will be a brief meeting with election of board members and officers. If questions, please call Griselda Forbes (371-3124).

Join us on Wednesday, at 6:00 p.m., April 23.





## Around the County...

by Mike Manetz

By the time you receive this issue of *The Crane*, most of our neo-tropical breeding birds will be establishing their territories, forming pair-bonds, and working out the serious details of raising a family. As every self-respecting feathered male sings out to proclaim proprietary rights and to attract females, their voices will be joined by wintering species who, having no territorial interests, will nonetheless become inspired to try out their vocal chords after the long winter silence. Winter visitors that have already begun singing prior to their departure include Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Whip-poor-will, Solitary Vireo, and Black-and-white Warbler. One of the best places in the county to treat your ears to this rich dawn chorus is San Felasco Hammock. There you can hear a good variety of our breeding birds, including the Hooded Warbler, which breeds regularly in Florida no farther south than the Hammock. San Felasco is also one of the few reliable places in the county to hear the ethereal song of the wintering Hermit Thrush.

Speaking of winter visitors, most people who keep feeders have expressed disappointment at this year's relatively small population of Goldfinches. The number of these birds varies greatly from winter to winter, and they can sometimes be conspicuous in their absence. Evelyn Perry reported a late February buildup of **American Goldfinches**, (which included the appearance of a **Pine Siskin!**), but nothing like the huge numbers to which her feeders have been accustomed. Conspicuous by their presence have been Cedar Waxwings, which seem to be everywhere. Most birders I've talked to agree they are present this year in unusually high numbers.

For the most part, late winter birding was rather dull, but there were a few interesting sightings worth passing along. A **Brown Pelican** was seen almost daily at Newnans Lake through much of February. This may have been the same bird found on the Christmas Count in December. Dan Wenny found a **Horned Grebe** at Lake Alice on March 17. Rex Rowan found another, or possibly the same one, at Bivens Arm the following day. Dan also reported a **Peregrine Falcon** flying over campus on March 12. Adam Kent located a **Red-breasted Merganser** March 8 at Alachua Lake during a ranger-led walk, and Rex reported **White-crowned Sparrows** and the **Lincoln's Sparrow** still present March 13 at Sweetwater Branch. Those two sparrows, both rare in the county, have been remarkably reliable at that location.

**Least Sandpipers** have been reported regularly on the mudflats around Alachua Sink. If we have a dry spring, that spot could be very interesting for other migrant shorebirds by mid-April.

Most of our breeding birds seem to be arriving on

schedule with a few early-bird exceptions. Andy Kratter reported a **Great Crested Flycatcher** in the Duck Pond area as early as February 20. Greg McDermott saw another March 14 on the University campus. Both of these pre-date the previous early record for the arrival of that species. **Chuck-wills-widows** don't usually start showing up here until mid-March, but Jim Weimer heard one March 1 near Newberry. On March 3, Bryant Roberts found the first **Yellow-throated Vireo** of the year, setting a new early record for that species.

Thanks to all who shared their sightings through March 17.



## Sandhill Nest Follow-up

by Robert W. Udy

When I discovered the nesting crane on the 16th of February, I was determined to watch the nest every day for the next three weeks, the typical incubation period for Sandhill Cranes. I expected to see a pair of chicks by the second week in March. Steve Nesbitt advised me that hatching would probably occur in the morning, so I was there, on Kanapaha Prairie, hiding behind a tree every morning, my binoculars focused on the nest one hundred yards away.

On the third morning of my watch, I heard two gators grunting at one another in the pond behind the nest. I wondered if they might discover the nest, but I worried even more about the Great Horned Owls in the woods behind me. They would go for crane hatchlings in a flash and might kill an adult vulnerable on the nest. The owls stayed in the woods while I watched, however, and the only predator I saw near the nest was a gray fox. Too small to be a threat, he walked by the nest at dawn; the mother crane paid no attention.

Despite the lack of activity at the nest — brooding is brooding, after all — the Prairie kept me entertained. From the woods behind me, crows screamed insults at the owls, and in the pond before me, a Great Blue Heron caught a water snake, beat it against the ground, failed to swallow it, then beat it some more.

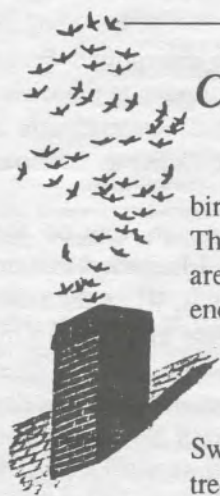
My best day on the Prairie, however, was on the morning before I concluded my watch. I had tried in vain to catch the changing of the guard, that is, when the male assumed brooding chores from the female around 10 a.m. Twice, I had discovered the male within two hundred yards of the nest, but he came no closer. But on the day before my nest watch ended, I spotted the male two hundred yards away, making his way toward the nest. It



was wonderful to watch. He would ease through the broom sedge, stand motionless for ten minutes, look around, then glide another few feet — a red-capped, white-cheeked periscope, barely parting the tall waves of sedge. It took him an hour and ten minutes to reach the nest. When he was within fifteen feet of the female, they called to one another, she stood, tidied up the nest, then disappeared into the sedge. The male stepped up onto the nest, stood fully erect for five minutes while he looked around, then settled onto the pair of eggs. The female was feeding at the edge of another pond as I made my way home ten minutes later.

The following morning was gorgeous on the Prairie; dew decorated spider webs on thistles, while Great egrets preened in the willows. I was focusing my binoculars on the nest, hoping to see a hatchling peek from beneath the mother's wing, when the green Game and Fish pickup arrived. The cranes were still brooding eggs that should have hatched two weeks ago, and the Game and Fish men, Nesbitt and Schwikert, were there to have a look. Pulling on wading boots, the biologists waded out to the nest, while I slogged along behind them. The water was cold, the bottom pure muck. The female watched us until we were twenty feet away, then flew off to hide nearby. Examining the eggs, Nesbitt found them infertile. He speculated that the parents would abandon the nest, build a new one, and try again to raise a family. Not until nighttime temperatures average 70 degrees, will they give it up.

The green pickup departed to make its rounds on the Prairie. I went back to my tree; I wanted to see if one of the cranes would return and what it might do. Scanning the area around the nest, I located first one, then both parents. Apparently unconcerned with the abandoned eggs, the adults caught insects in the grass, preened a bit, and remained two hundred yards from the nest. After twenty minutes together, one of them disappeared; the other made its way cautiously back to the nest. When it stepped onto the nest, I could see it was the male. He looked around, as before, then eased himself down on the barren eggs.



## NEOTROPICAL BIRDS

### *Chimney Swifts*

by John Winn

Chimney Swifts are one of my favorite birds; maybe they're one of yours, too. These "flying cigars" start returning to our area from Chile, Peru, and Brazil by the end of March, so they are probably zooming around making their little twittering calls right now.

Before European settlement, Chimney Swifts made their nests in large hollow trees, but that sort of housing has become

increasingly difficult to find and today they depend almost exclusively on chimneys for nest sites. Often several pairs will nest colonially together in a chimney, so a single chimney can have a lot of activity. This is especially true if it's one used by postbreeding flocks, which can number in the thousands. I remember about ten or fifteen years ago seeing such a flock using the big chimney in the old Kirby Smith School in northeast Gainesville. At dusk all the birds circled around sort of randomly for a few minutes. Then they increasingly centered on the chimney and eventually turned into a whirling tornado of birds disappearing into the chimney. It was truly an amazing sight, the sort of thing that might turn non-birders into birders. Unfortunately, soon thereafter the school officials decided to cap the chimney, and despite pleas from Alachua Audubon, it remained capped.

So I am delighted to be able to tell you of a second chance we have to do something for Chimney Swifts. Alachua Audubon and Florida Wildlife Care are working together to set up a registry of active Chimney Swift nest sites in the area. Florida Wildlife Care is a non-profit organization of volunteers who care for injured and orphaned animals. In their experience, Chimney Swifts have proved quite difficult to hand rear, as the unique needs of these birds and the stress of human contact make them more susceptible to illness and "failure to thrive." Accordingly, when Florida Wildlife Care gets a call about a fallen Chimney Swift, they try to put it back where it came from, or if that is impossible, try to locate a surrogate nest, as Chimney Swift parents often accept young which are not their own. Knowing where active nests are is one reason why having a registry of active chimneys is important.

Do Chimney Swifts use your chimney? You'll know if they do by the aerial acrobatics around your house and the chattering in the chimney. Not all chimneys were created equally. Those with a metal flue generally can't be used by swifts as the walls are too slippery. On the other hand, if you have a real stone or brick chimney which is open at the top, it can be a safe nesting place. During the nesting season, you should keep the damper closed, or if you don't have a damper, you can place a large piece of foam rubber into the bottom of the chimney to seal it.

When we have our heavy summer rains, the humidity can cause the nest — which is attached only saliva — to fall. The damper or foam will stop the fall, and the parents will continue to come to feed the nestlings as they cling to the wall of the chimney. When they are old enough, they crawl out. Obviously, having a chimney cleaned during the nesting season is a terrible idea. Cleaning shouldn't be done until the birds have left, sometime in October.

Would you like to help with this project or register your chimney? If so, call Evelyn Perry at 331-2223 or Mike Manetz at 377-1683.



## Request for Sighting Reports:

### • Swallow-tailed Kites •

by Ken Meyer

We are seeking information about potential nesting areas of Swallow-tailed Kites in central and northern Florida.

This is the 10th year of a series of studies on the species' nesting ecology, demography, and migration — work which has been funded mainly by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission's Nongame Wildlife Program with additional support from the U.S. National Park Service, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and private donors. Until now, these studies have focussed on southern Florida, the Swallow-tailed Kite's center of abundance (Florida harbors about two-thirds of the remaining U.S. population, which probably numbers no more than about 5,000 individuals).

In order to understand kite biology statewide and, especially, to develop a long-term monitoring and conservation plan for Florida, we are expanding this work to the central and northern portions of the state.

Even under the best of conditions, the nests of Swallow-tailed Kites are difficult to find. Nest-searching will be particularly challenging in central and northern Florida because of the lower density of kites, the more expansive forests, and the higher proportion of private land. First-hand reports from knowledgeable observers will provide a significant advantage to our searching efforts.

Please include the date, the number of kites, the location (as specific as possible), a brief description of what you saw, your name and phone number, and mail to the address below. If your observations are particularly suggestive of nesting (e.g., carrying nest material, vocalizing, diving at other birds, copulating, or simply repeated sightings in the same small area), I would appreciate it very much if you would contact me as soon as possible (e-mail address and phone number below).

If your report results in the location of a nest, I will be happy to inform you of the outcome of our observations, including the fate of the nesting attempt and the tracking results for any kites that we radio-tag at the site.

Thank you very much for your interest and assistance.

Ken Meyer, Ph.D.  
Research Biologist  
National Park Service  
Big Cypress National Preserve

Mailing address: 101 N.E. 9th Street  
Gainesville, FL 32601

e-mail: ken\_meyer@nps.gov  
Phone (voice): 352-377-4094

## Florida's Deadliest Road

by David &  
Elizabeth O'Neill

Here it is Spring again, a season that we normally greatly anticipate with all its stirrings. There are migrants in the air, a flush of wildflowers

on the ground, and new leaves on the trees. This year, however, we are greeting Spring with a felling of mixed emotions because we know that along with all of the pleasantries of the season is the beginning of an annual event that we have come to dread.

You see, Spring is also the time that much of Florida's wildlife shakes off winter doldrums and becomes restless. At Paynes Prairie State Preserve, just south of Gainesville in Alachua County, it means that they begin wandering the wet meadows and marshes of the prairie searching for food, mates, or maybe more suitable territory. In their wanderings, many of them will find themselves face to face with the prairie's deadliest predator — U.S. Highway 441. Built in the 1920s, the highway cuts a two-mile path directly across the prairie basin with lethal consequences. When confronted with this deadly obstacle, many prairie animals make the futile attempt to cross four lanes of heavy automatic traffic. There is little chance of any of them making it across alive, and so begins the annual wildlife slaughter at Paynes Prairie.

What starts as a trickle turns into a crescendo of dead bodies littering the roadway. In the short two-mile section of U.S. 441 that crosses the Paynes Prairie basin, biologists have documented that more than 35,000 animals of 82 species have been killed just since 1989. Estimates of the actual number killed range as high as 500,000 animals over the last five years. In a single night, 10,000 Southern leopard frogs were killed as they tried to make their way to breeding ponds. On another evening, 400 snakes were killed when hurricane floodwaters triggered a mass movement across the prairie. Otter, bobcat, round-tailed muskrats, marsh rabbits, owls, alligators, and turtles all can be found on the lost of unfortunate victims. It is one of the deadliest roads in North America for wildlife and has earned the infamous title of 'Florida's Deadliest Road.'

It is truly ironic that the greatest wildlife roadkill in Florida occurs within a state nature preserve — land set aside to nurture and protect wildlife and habitat. But irony is too light a description. Tragedy is more fitting. What makes this tragedy especially exasperating is that it is completely senseless. Paynes Prairie does not have to be 'roadkill alley,' as Jim Tunstall of *The Tampa Tribune*





termed it. Measures can be taken to make the highway 'wildlife-friendly,' so to speak. Wildlife barriers can be constructed along the highway that would prevent animals from reaching the road and being killed. So as not to completely interfere with the natural movements of animals across the prairie, the barriers could be connected to a series of wildlife underpasses. The underpasses would allow animals to travel safely beneath the road from one side to the other. At Paynes Prairie, a number of large concrete box culverts already exist under U.S. 441 and could be easily adapted to this purpose. Similar wildlife protection systems are being used around the world to protect everything from salamanders and toads to bears and panthers.

The construction of a wildlife protection system on Paynes Prairie is not a new idea. For almost twenty years, concerned citizens and biologists have been urging the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to create such a system. However, beginning last summer, there has been renewed interest in the problem. After a series of meetings held in the fall, the FDOT is showing a more encouraging level of commitment to resolving the problem. Ken Morefield, the Lake City District Secretary, has for the first time authorized funding for the development of engineering plans for the wildlife barrier. However, the FDOT has yet to set aside funding for the construction of the barrier.

The future of Paynes Prairie is showing signs of hope, but is not secure. It will take the continued effort of concerned citizens to constantly remind the FDOT that the wildlife slaughter at Paynes Prairie is unacceptable and must be stopped. Without continued public involvement, it is likely that the new construction plans will languish on a shelf like another good intention.

Archie Carr once called Paynes Prairie "about the best thing to see on U.S. Route 441 from the Smoky Mountains to the Keys." For years Paynes Prairie was known around the world for its bountiful wildlife. It is unfortunate that today it is better known for its wildlife slaughter. Hopefully that will soon change. With good fortune and continued support, Paynes Prairie can regain its rightful fame.

The Paynes Prairie Wildlife Coalition was formed specifically to address the roadkill issue at Paynes Prairie and is actively pursuing a permanent solution to the problem. If you would like more information about the roadkill problem at Paynes Prairie or would like to know how you can help, write to the Coalition at P.O. Box 141934, Gainesville, Florida 32614-1934, visit their web site at <http://nervm.nerdc.ufl.edu/~bitis/ppwc.html>, or call (352) 466-3397. The Paynes Prairie Wildlife Coalition has created an information display on the bulletin board kiosk next to the boardwalk along U.S. 441 on Paynes Prairie. The display describes the roadkill problem and solutions. Please take a look.

## Field Trip Report

by Rex Rowan

March is not usually a very good month for birding — winter's birds are leaving, spring's haven't arrived — so the purpose of March's field trips was to acquaint people with two little-known local spots, so that they can revisit them when the birds *are* here.

On March 1, we went to Lochloosa Conservation Area, a large tract of land at the southern end of Lake Lochloosa. Much of this is planted pine, but there are hardwood swamps and hammocks, marshes, and a short stretch of cypress-lined lakeshore. As expected, the birding was fairly slow — a **Bald Eagle**, **Ospreys** courting and building nests, a pair of **Sandhill Cranes**, a **Bonaparte's Gull** — but we made up for it with some botanizing, butterfly-watching, and dip-netting. We enjoyed the milky scent of flowering Staggerbush, collected a Peninsula Newt and some beautiful Golden Topminnows (sea-green, speckled with gold glitter) from the marsh and found several butterflies, including Pearl Crescent, Buckeye, and several swallowtails.

On the 16th we visited Gum Root Park and Gum Root Swamp, which comprise 741 acres but are divided in two by SR-26. The upland side, Gum Root Park, is primarily oak woodland, but there's a pretty little stream, and the trail culminates in a huge open field in the center of which is a collapsed, but still living, Live Oak. We saw **Cedar Waxwings**, a **Yellow-throated Warbler**, and singing **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, among other things. Then we crossed the road to the lowland side and walked along Hatchet Creek to the north shore of Newnans Lake. We didn't see the spring birds we were hoping to see, but there were **Hermit Thrushes**, a **Solitary Vireo**, and, at the lakeshore, a roost full of **Black Vultures**. A sandy side trail was less birdy, but we did see more butterflies — mostly swallowtails, but one striking Great Purple Hairstreak (black, orange, and electric blue) — and a Southern Fence Lizard. We were dismayed to see how active the illegal artifact hunters had been in the area; there were several pits along the trail.

Thus we whiled away March and are now looking forward to April, when the spring migrants begin to arrive in earnest. The next month's field trips should be the year's most productive, next to September and October, and the best for beginners. Please join us, and bring a friend. Non-members are always welcome.

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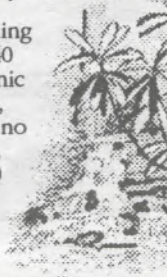
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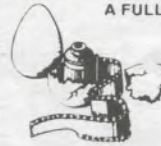
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*The Crane*

April, 1997



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# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

*Volume 38 Number 10, May 1997*

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Saturday, May 3, 7:30 a.m. Bolen Bluff Trail**

Meet at the Bolen Bluff parking lot on US-441 4.3 miles south of Williston Road. Although interior Florida's spring migration is rather piddling, there should be some locally-nesting birds on this popular split-level trail. Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Red-eyed Vireos, Great Crested Flycatchers, and Summer Tanagers reside in the upland portion, while the lowland section, along which we will walk onto the Paynes Prairie basin, is home to Indigo Buntings and Blue Grosbeaks. Bring sunscreen and something to drink for this half-day walk.

### **Saturday, May 10, All Day North American Migration Count**

This is the sixth annual NAMC. Good birders are needed for this county-wide bird survey which is similar to Christmas Bird Counts in that participants spend the day counting birds in a specified area and keeping track of hours and miles on foot, by car, or any other form of transportation. However, we count within the entire county rather than just within a circle of 15-mile diameter. For questions or to sign-up, call Barbara Muschlitz at 372-4638.

### **Wednesday, May 14, 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting**

This is the first board meeting of the AAS 1997-98 year. It's practically essential for board members and open to all members and the public. Location is the conference room at the Florida Museum of Natural History, on the UF campus.

### **Saturday, May 17 OR Sunday, May 18 Pelagic Trip**

If you're interested in this foolish escapade, call Rex Rowan RIGHT AWAY at 371-9296. As *The Crane* goes to press we're uncertain whether we'll hitch a ride on a Port Canaveral fishing boat at \$35-40 per person and subject ourselves to a captain who will ignore birds, or charter the boat ourselves at \$55 per person and chase any birds we find (the latter option will require 60 interested birders). From the dock we'll head due east about 25 miles, towards the Gulf Stream. Our luck could be good — shearwaters, storm-petrels, jaegers, and pelagic terns are all possible — or it could be disastrous — we might literally go all day without seeing a bird, or, like last year, arrive at the dock to find the trip scrubbed due to bad weather. But it's an adventure unlike any other, and if you don't get sunburned (bring sunscreen) or seasick (take Dramamine, eat lots of saltine crackers during the trip) you might end up having a pretty good time, whether we see birds or not.

### **Saturday, June 7, 9:00 a.m. Colclough Pond Sanctuary**

Our Colclough Pond Sanctuary on S. Main Street needs some cleaning up. The trails are in pretty good shape; they are not too over-grown nor littered with much trash. But vagrants took up residence in one section of the sanctuary and have left behind a collection of shopping carts and assorted junk. We've set June 7 as the date for clean-up. We'll meet at the south entrance on S.E. First Way (9 a.m.) With a crew of willing workers, we can get everything picked up and in a Dumpster in an hour or so.

Please help.



## Kanapaha Report

by John Winn

This year's Alachua Audubon booth at the Spring Garden Festival at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens was our most financially successful. We sold over 30 T-shirts and several of Jeff Ripple's original photos, taking in nearly \$500. Unfortunately, not all that is net profit — there's the fee for the booth, the cost of the T-shirts, and we had to replace the display which was ruined by the rain at last year's festival. Still, it's the best we've done in the three years we've been selling T-shirts.

My thanks to all who helped make it a success. Staffing the booth were Rex Rowan, Pat Newman-Wolfe, John Garrett, Barbara Muschlitz, Margaret Green, Gloria Comstock, Alice Tyler, Pat Burns, and Gordon and Bonnie Gotlieb. Bryant Roberts provided materials on the Allen's Hummingbird. Jeff Ripple generously donated his photos. (There are a couple left, by the way; call me if you'd like one.) Evelyn Perry put together a special issue of *The Crane* for us to give out. A special thanks goes to Reed Pedlow who constructed our new display and overcame many obstacles to get it done in time for the festival.



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

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

## Whoo's Got the Cutest Little Baby Face?

Heinz does, according to the Florida Audubon Society's Center for Birds of Prey!

Heinz is a Great Horned Owlet who was only three weeks old when he was found in February in Lake County with his left wing broken near the elbow joint.



The location of the wing fracture prevents full extension, rendering him flightless. He will be raised in captivity at the Center in Maitland to help educate people about his species.

You can meet Heinz and other baby birds of prey **Saturday, May 10**, at the 12th Annual Baby Owl Shower being held at the FAS Center for Birds of Prey. This great event celebrates spring and Mother's Day and will include a children's craft workshop, educational programs featuring wildlife rehabilitation techniques, a sneak preview of the Center's exciting renovation plans, and a drawing for a framed wolf print by Bonnie Marris, titled "Catch the Wind," valued at \$500.

This is the only time of the year the little owlets can be viewed by the public. The Baby Owl Shower will be held from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Center at 1101 Audubon Way in Maitland. Admission is free, and guests are encouraged to bring "baby owl shower gifts," including items such as Pinesol disinfectant, cleaning supplies, paper towels, garbage bags, laundry detergent, or cash donations.

For more information, call (407) 644-0190.

## Around the County...

by Mike Manetz

With most of our breeding birds in place by the middle of April, a birdwatcher's attention naturally turns to the search for "true" migrants: those birds that neither breed nor winter here, but merely pass through our area on their way north. Many of these species allow only the narrowest window of opportunity for us to see them, and without a passing cold-front to slow them down, finding these migrants can be hard work. This was the case through late April. We all delighted in the beautifully mild and dry weather, but reported migrant warbler sightings were few. Going back to late March, two early **Prairie Warblers** were reported at Bolen Bluff and Palm Point, respectively, by Barbara Muschlitz and Tom Hoctor. Greg McDermott found an early **Cape May Warbler** March 28 at Palm Point, and Dan Cimbaro had the first reported **Northern Waterthrushes** (2) and



a **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, also at Palm Point, on April 8. Greg McDermott, while leading an Audubon field trip April 13 at San Felasco Hammock, found a rare spring **Black-throated Green Warbler**. By April 20, Cape May Warblers were regularly findable at Palm Point, but only one of the usually common **Blackpoll Warbler** had been seen there. That bird was reported April 18 by Rex Rowan. As of April 20, no one, to my knowledge, had seen a **Louisiana Waterthrush**, an **American Redstart** or a **Scarlet Tanager** in the county.

Karen Johnson had the good fortune to have two **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** visiting her feeder in mid-April. Uncommon in fall, they are considered rare here in spring. Adam Kent and I heard one calling at Newnan's Lake April 20 but could not find the bird. Mary Landsman found a lone male **Bobolink** singing along LaChua Trail on April 16, which may be an early spring record in the county for that species.

The Kanapaha Sewage Treatment Plant overflow pond was generously low enough to attract shorebirds by mid-April. Rex Rowan phoned on the 16th to report four **Stilt Sandpipers**, along with several **Solitary Sandpipers**, and dozens of **Yellowlegs**. Stilt Sandpipers, once considered extremely rare in our county, have been appearing more regularly during the past few years. **Glossy Ibis** had been frequenting the Kanapaha pond as well, and the Alachua Audubon birding class counted no less than 42 of them on April 19. Mud flats along LaChua Trail continued to look promising for shorebirds, but a quick check April 18 revealed only a few **Killdeer**.

As spring migration draws to a close, we should keep eyes and ears open for our rare breeders. We are always happy to hear of any **Wood Thrushes** during breeding season. **Yellow-breasted Chats** have been present and have probably bred on Payne's Prairie in recent years, and may again this year. The **Swallow-tailed Kite** and **Hairy Woodpecker** are two other breeders that are rare and seldom encountered. If you see any of these species, please give me a call at 377-1683.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through April 20.

## Plants for Hummingbirds

Bryant Roberts has compiled this list of flowering plants to best attract hummingbirds. If you have questions, you can call him at 376-7472.

- \* Firespike (*Odontonema strictum*) Aug-Nov (30°)
- \* Shrimp-plant (*Justica brandegeana*) Oct until frozen (26°)
- \* Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*) Oct until frozen (30°)
- \* Firebush (*Hamelia patens*) Oct until frozen (30°)
- \* Yellow Sage or Forsythia Sage (*Salvia madrensis*)

Oct until frozen (32°)

- \* Scarlet Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) Late winter and throughout year (low 20's)
  - \* Java Plant (*Clerodendron speciosissimum*) Sept until frozen (30°)
  - \* Coral Bean (*Erythrina herbacea*) March and April
  - \* Columbine (*Aquilegia sp.*) March and April
  - \* Soap Moe (*Aloe saponaria*) Fall and spring
  - \* Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*) March and April
  - \* Trumpet Creeper (*Campsis radicans*) Summer through fall
  - \* Four-o'clock (*Mirabilis jalapa*) Late summer
- Bryant has personally seen hummers at the above plants; some others that he says are reported to also attract are: Cross Vine (*Bignonia capreolata*), Flowering Maple (*Abutilon sp.*), Pineapple Sage (*Salvia splendens*), Tropical Sage (*Salvia splendens*), Mexican Cigar (*Cuphea micropetala*), and Bottlebrush (*Callistemon sp.*)

## Do You Have Chimney Swifts?

by Evelyn Perry

They're back! These wonderful little insect eaters have returned to us from places like Peru, Chile, and Brazil, where they spent our winter. Migration, to me, is one of the most amazing things in nature, and I love seeing (and hearing) the spring arrival of "my" Chimney Swifts back to my chimney year after year.

In last month's *Crane*, you read about a project in which AAS is joining with Florida Wildlife Care to locate Chimney Swift nests. So far my chimney is the only one that's been reported to me by me! If you are one of the lucky ones who has a nest or if you know of neighbors who do, call me at 331-2223 (daytime) or 371-2917 (evening) or Mike Manetz at 377-1683. The two of us are keeping a log and will ask you simple questions like the location, your name, telephone number, and brief description of the chimney or other site they may be using. The main purpose is to give the information to Florida Wildlife Care just in case nestlings need a new home if their nest becomes damaged or destroyed or if someone brings nestlings to FWC that have simply fallen into a fireplace.

Chimney Swifts are very difficult to raise — I know this from first-hand experience — and they do best if they can be (re)placed in a nest. Swifts nest in colonies of two or more pairs and will be fed by adults even if not their parents.

There are many very interesting things to learn about Chimney Swifts, and the Florida Wildlife Care group is also attempting to educate people about them. If you would like to know more or if you would like to help Florida Wildlife Care with this project, call Leslie Straub at 378-9546.



## President's Column

by John Winn

National Audubon has a program called "Adopt-a-Forest" in which local chapters keep an eye on a nearby state or national forest to help protect it. Your board has decided that adopting Goethe State Forest is the best way for Alachua Audubon to participate.

Goethe is about 10 miles southwest of Williston and was acquired by the state in 1992. It contains what is likely the largest acreage of contiguous longleaf pine flatwoods in the state and 20-something active Red-cockaded Woodpecker clusters. Prior to state acquisition, the area had not been specifically managed for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, i.e., there was no prescribed burning. Now the Division of Forestry managers are making a special effort to enhance Goethe for this increasingly rare bird.

But there are problems. If you read the newspaper, you've probably already heard of the main one. The turnpike is slated to be extended from Wildwood to Lebanon Station, and the Department of Transportation's preferred route is right through Goethe. The rationale is that since the state already owns the land, there will be that much less right-of-way to be bought. Already there's been such an outcry that DOT realizes that they are almost certainly going have to find an alternative route. So far so good. But don't celebrate yet, because there are still some problems.

Have you heard about how the population of Florida panthers has shrunk so much that it may now not be genetically viable? Goethe's woodpeckers could end up in the same condition, although for different reasons. Goethe contains over 47,000 acres, but due to the years of fire suppression, not all of that is currently suitable habitat for the woodpeckers. Even after the whole forest is made acceptable to them — something which the Division of Forestry is working on, but which will take a number of years — Goethe apparently simply won't be big enough to support an isolated population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers indefinitely. Studies indicate that the minimum acreage needed in that situation would be closer to 65,000. There is still enough undeveloped land near and around Goethe that could be acquired to get the size of the forest up to what is probably needed. But if the turnpike extension has been routed through these additional lands or in some other way cuts them off from the main part of the forest, it will be difficult or impossible for the forest administrators to manage for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. Frequent prescribed burning is essential if the habitat is to be suitable; the dictates of smoke management near a major highway would severely limit prescribed burning. Obviously, the highway itself would be a hazard for wildlife, perhaps not so much so for woodpeckers, but certainly for fox

squirrels, another species the Goethe managers are trying to help.

So what needs to be done? The whole concept of a turnpike extension seems to me to be a poor idea. But if the powers-that-be are bound and determined to have it, then they should be persuaded at least to route it far enough away from Goethe and lands which might be added to the forest to minimize its impact. The Department of Transportation, local legislators, and anyone who's willing to listen should hear that from you.

## Birding in San Diego County, California

by Colin Bludau

A recent trip to Coronado, CA, adjacent to San Diego, provided an opportunity to do some birding in a variety of Lower California habitats: coastal, foothills of the Peninsular Ranges, and the arid Imperial Valley around the Salton Sea.



Around the pleasant, scenic, well-managed city of Coronado, on a peninsula across from San Diego, beaches, harbor, and the extensive complex of mud flats and shallow waters at the south end of San Diego Bay and nearby Tijuana Slough supported a variety of permanent, over-wintering, and migrating species. **Herring, Western, Ring-Billed**, and the dark-bodied **Heermann's Gull** occupied the usual gull habitats. Bobbing on and diving in the bay waters were **Common Merganser, Common Loon, Surf Scoter, Eared, Horned**, and the similar **Clark's** and **Western Grebes**. **Mallards, Pintails, Lesser Scaup, Widgeon, Bufflehead, Gadwall, Shoveler**, and **Ruddy Ducks** dotted shallower waters. Initially I ignored the dark, nondescript waterfowl furthest from the shore, assuming they were more of the same. Looking at them closely, I was pleasantly surprised to see they were **Brant**, a species I'd doubted I'd ever encounter.

At the Tijuana Slough NWR, brushy areas around the Headquarters attracted **White-crowned** and **Song Sparrows**, and **Anna's** and **Costa's Hummingbirds**. A search of marshy areas produced one of the refuge specialties — **Belding's** race of **Savannah Sparrow**. On the mudflats, there and around the bay, were many sandpipers, especially larger species: **Whimbrel, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Curlew, Willet, Avocet, Stilt, Marbled Godwit** were very numerous. A solitary wader among smaller peep was a **Black-bellied Plover**. **Brown Pelican, Belted Kingfisher, Black-crowned Night Heron, Common Raven, Black Skimmer**, and **Harrier** appeared overhead or along the shore. At least a dozen species of peep, gulls, and terns defied my



attempts at identification.

Just beyond the eastern edge of SD County lies the Salton Sea, in the arid Imperial Valley. We paid a visit to the Salton Sea NWR at the southern end. Flocks of **Snow Geese** and **White-faced Ibis** could be seen flying over nearby agricultural areas. **Burrowing Owls** stood by their holes in the sides of irrigation ditches. The Salton Sea has increased in size due to increased amounts of runoff irrigation water and has inundated most of the original NWR; dikes protect the rest. Taking advantage of the dense vegetation around the Headquarters, to the delight of the few other birders, was a **Long-eared Owl**. **Abert's Towhee**, common here, made appearances. A walk along the shore produced **Yellow-headed Blackbird**, **Rough Winged Swallow**, **Moorhen**, **White Pelicans**, and large numbers of gulls, terns, herons, ducks, grebes, and others. At other locations **Green-winged Teal**, **Cinnamon Teal**, and many varieties of shorebirds were seen. **Black Phoebe** were abundant.

Several visits to Goodan's Ranch County Park provided an opportunity to bird in the chaparral-covered slopes and wooded creekbeds characteristic of many areas of the foothills. In the chaparral, **Rufous-sided** and **Brown Towhees**, **Kestrel**, **Red-tailed Hawk**, **Sage Sparrow**, **Dark-eyed Junco**, **Western Kingbird** and **Lark Sparrow** were seen. Several **Scrub Jay** appearances gave me my best-ever look at this elusive species. The well-wooded bottomlands produced **Cooper's Hawk**, **Common Yellowthroat**, **House Wren**, **Western Bluebird**, **Common Goldfinch**, **Rufous-crowned Sparrow**, **Flicker**, and **Acorn Woodpeckers**, as well as **Nuttall's Woodpecker**, a small ladder-back with a conspicuously black face. Here too, **Black Phoebe** were abundant.



### **Volunteer Opportunity**

Dr. David Steadman, Assistant Curator of Birds at the Florida Museum of Natural History, maintains one of the most comprehensive collections in the world of journals, articles, books, original research notes and photos of the birds of the South Pacific. He is currently seeking a volunteer for 5-7 hours a week to assist him with the maintenance of these files and to answer the numerous telephone and e-mail inquiries he receives for information. Interested volunteers should enjoy working with the public and have an interest in the birds and geography of the South Pacific. Please call David Steadman at 392-6571 for more information.

## **Opening Soon!**

### ***The Great Alachua Savanna: A Visual History of Paynes Prairie***

The Santa Fe Gallery at Santa Fe Community College announces an exhibit that will open on June 7, entitled "The Great Alachua Savanna: A Visual History of Paynes Prairie." The Gallery has been awarded a grant from the Florida Humanities Council to organize this exciting exhibition, which will display more than 150 objects, including paintings, photographs, drawings, maps, and numerous artifacts focusing on the history of Paynes Prairie.

While the natural history of the Prairie has been the subject of much scholarly attention, the history of the Prairie's human inhabitants and their long interaction with the special environment of the savanna remains less studied. Over the centuries, the Prairie has been used by generations of Floridians, from the Indians of the Pleistocene to the present day visitor to the Preserve's visitor center. Since 9,000 BC, at least nine different cultures have sought to inhabit the Prairie and exploit its resources. This exhibit will focus on the area's rich human and cultural history and will also encourage the public to reflect on the need to preserve the Prairie as a rich source not only of natural history but of human history as well.

The Gallery will borrow material from a number of museums, such as the Florida Museum of Natural History, The Matheson Historical Center, the Daytona Museum of Arts and Sciences, and the Museum of Florida History, as well as a number of individual artists and collectors. If you have any artifacts, photographs, postcards, memorabilia, etc. that may be appropriate to include in the exhibit, please contact Santa Fe Gallery Curator Mallory O'Connor or his assistant, Bobby Hom, at (352) 395-5621. From the other museums they have been supplied with a good assortment of lithic and fossil material but are in need of historic photos or other documents from the more recent past. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

The opening of the exhibit is June 7, from noon to 4 p.m. on the Santa Fe Community College campus, 3000 NW 83rd Street. There will be music and refreshments along with some "living history" to celebrate the occasion.

You are also invited to attend a symposium sponsored by the Florida Humanities Council and Santa Fe Community College on June 20-21 to explore the past, present, and future of Paynes Prairie.

If you need any additional information, please call 395-5621.





## Field Trip Report

by Rex Rowan

The Goethe State Forest field trip on April 5 served as an introduction to the habitats and problems of this large (over 40,000 acres) tract of Levy County. Our group met trip leader Vic Doig and Forest Manager Butch Mallett near Bronson, and proceeded to the south end of the property, not too far from Lebanon Station. Our first order of business was to find some **Red-cockaded Woodpeckers**, and this was accomplished quickly. We saw three — perhaps a mated pair and a helper — chasing around noisily through the pines, and on several occasions one or two alighted in nearby trees, allowing us to study them at close range. Their rather maniacal calls reminded me of the *peek!* of a Hairy Woodpecker, to which they are closely related.

Mr. Mallett showed us a lovely stretch of swamp, where a small creek meandered and a **Hooded Warbler** sang, and pointed out to us the second-largest cypress tree in the state, a marvelous massive thing nine feet in diameter which, alas, lost its top half many years ago; it must have been enormous! We visited two sites where he explained longleaf pine forest biology and the complications of an ecology based on regular forest fires. He also showed us the route proposed by the Department of Transportation for the new Florida Turnpike extension and explained why this seems a bad idea — increasing the danger to traffic from burning, increasing the danger to wildlife from traffic, and quashing any hope for a self-sustaining colony of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers.

Greg McDermott led the San Felasco trip on April 13. This spring's dearth of migrant birds didn't suddenly come to an end, I'm sorry to say; only one was seen, but that one was a locally-rare **Black-throated Green Warbler** (I've seen only one in spring during my eight years here). Otherwise, the birds they found were San Felasco residents: **Red-headed Woodpecker**, **Brown-headed Cowbird**, **Hooded Warbler**, **Red-eyed Vireo**, **Summer Tanager**, and **Great Crested Flycatcher**. These were fairly cooperative, and most of the participants had good looks at them.

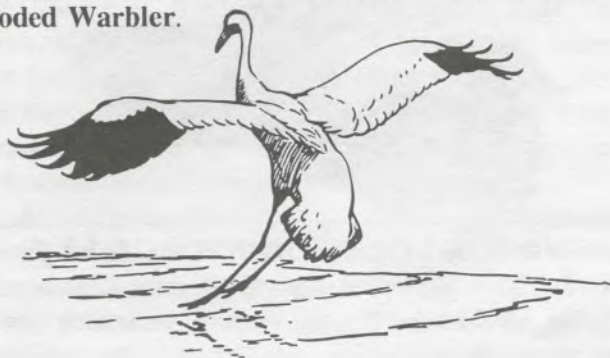
The Cedar Key trip on April 20 coincided with a spell of fair weather — bad news for birders in spring migration. Consequently we had a tough time finding birds in any numbers. The cemetery produced a few **Blue Grosbeaks**, an **Eastern Wood-Pewee**, and a couple flyover **Common Loons**, but the expected warblers just weren't there — with a couple notable exceptions. Lenny Santisteban found a male **Golden-winged Warbler**, quite rare in spring on Cedar Key, and a couple other birders were able to share his find. The cemetery also produced what was probably the best bird of the day, as Greg McDermott and John Winn got

a brief glimpse of what was probably a **Warbling Vireo**. Two attempts by the entire field trip — all 25 of us — to find the bird again was a particularly disappointing failure, not at all relieved by the grisly but nonetheless interesting spectacle of a Red-bellied Woodpecker carrying a tree frog into a pine tree and whacking at it for about ten minutes, the first instance I've ever seen of woodpecker predation on a vertebrate of any sort.

After a fruitless walk around Andrews Circle — the famous mulberry tree was filled with **Cedar Waxwings** this time — we went on to the museum. Here John Winn found a male **Scarlet Tanager** that generously allowed everyone to gaze at it for several minutes, and Lenny pointed out a **Gray Kingbird**, a **Prothonotary Warbler**, and a small group of **Orchard Orioles**. Our last "in-town" stop was at Hodges Hill, where two new houses have gone up and two more lots have been cleared; this favorite Cedar Key birding spot is all but history.

Our next stop was for **Florida Scrub-Jays**, and we had some trouble with these. The DEP had decided to turn one of the trails in the Cedar Key Scrub State Preserve into a road, and bulldozers had been hard at work tearing the place up. I was not surprised when our walk failed to find any jays. We did manage to locate one further north, and it cooperatively sat on a snag while we took turns looking at it through Terry Taylor's spotting scope.

Our final stop for the day was at Shell Mound, where a high tide prevented us from seeing any shorebirds. We walked over the old oak-grown midden in search of migrants, but saw nothing more interesting than a singing **Black-and-white Warbler** and a female **Hooded Warbler**.



### Have a Good Summer!

This is the last *Crane* until the August issue. Remember to stay posted on area birding news by calling **SunDial** at 335-3500 (ext. 2473 or BIRD) and AAS's website <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud/aud.htm>.

Thanks very, very much to all of you who have contributed articles (and compliments) to *The Crane* this past year! Keep 'em coming.

— Evelyn



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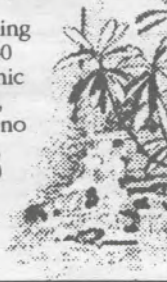
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