



Alachua Audubon Society Board of Directors
Orientation Manual
February 12, 2023

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Alachua Audubon Society Board of Directors Orientation Manual

January 15, 2023

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

Affiliation: Alachua Audubon Society, Inc is one of more than 40 Audubon chapters in Florida and is chartered by the National Audubon Society and Audubon Florida. We are a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization.

By-laws: The by-laws, which were approved by the board at the August 2021 board meeting, are located on the AAS website [here](#).

Board of Directors: The board is typically comprised of 19 members consisting of four officers and 15 directors. Officers and directors serve until they choose to resign.

Officers for 2022/2023

President	Debbie Segal
Vice President	Tim Hardin
Secretary	Felicia Lee
Treasurer	Elizabeth Mance

Directors for 2022/2023

Eric Amundson	Christina Opett-Soistman
Karen Brown	Katie Sieving
Anne Casella	Bob Simons
Kayla Ehrlich	Pratibha Singh
Gary Gossman	Jonathan Varol
Zachery Holmes	Adam Zions
Meredith Kite	<i>Open Position</i>
Jose-Miguel Ponciano	

Brief History of the Alachua Audubon Society

The inaugural meeting of the Alachua Audubon Society took place on January 11, 1960. Among those present were Oliver Austin, Jr., Curator of Birds at the Florida Museum of Natural History, conservationist Marjorie Carr, and 16-year-old John Hintermister, whose involvement with AAS as President, board member, field trip leader, birding class instructor, and Christmas Bird Count compiler, continued uninterrupted for the next 59 years, ending only with his death in 2019.

When AAS was founded, Lake Alice was under threat of a three-foot drawdown; a bulldozer was on site and ready to begin its work. AAS rapidly negotiated a compromise with UF that preserved the lake. In 1969 two of our members, Marjorie Carr and David Anthony, formed Florida Defenders of the Environment to stop the Florida Barge Canal and the deterioration of the Ocklawaha River, still an ongoing conflict. We continue to involve ourselves in conservation actions in Alachua County and North-Central Florida. Bob Simons, in particular, has played a long and crucial role in all AAS conservation activities for over 50 years. Bob was honored in 2020 at the 60-year anniversary celebration of the founding of AAS.

In April 1960, three months after its founding, AAS had 67 members; currently (January 2023) there are 1,045. We continue to attract new members with a full schedule of field trips, programs, and birding classes.

Note: Copies of many print documents from before the Internet are archived at The Matheson History Museum in downtown Gainesville. They are available to review by appointment.

Board Meetings

The Board of Directors meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month (except for June and July) at 6:30 pm. Board meetings were historically held in-person at the Mill Pond Clubhouse until 2020. The board meetings switched to an online format (via Zoom) and have largely remained online since then. During the months that mark the active internship program, a pre-board meeting is held with interns at 6:00 pm to discuss the internship program and the interns' projects. All board members are invited to attend the pre-board meeting.

Directors and officers for the following fiscal year are elected during the April meeting. The fiscal year runs from May 1st through April 30th.

The AAS president typically sends out an informational email 4-5 days prior to the monthly board meeting to update board members on current announcements and activities. The meeting agenda is then emailed to board members 2-3 days prior to the meeting, followed by the minutes from the previous meeting recorded by the secretary. Board members are encouraged to send announcements, updates and meeting agenda items to the president prior to the monthly board meeting to facilitate an expedited discussion.

A half-day annual planning meeting is typically scheduled in June, and the date is selected based on polling the board members. This annual planning meeting has evolved from an in-person meeting, to an online meeting (via Zoom), to a hybrid in-person/online meeting. The purpose of the annual planning meeting is to prioritize and plan for activities and expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year.

Committees, Associated Committee Members, and Related Projects/Goals

Although the AAS operates as a singular entity, it is divided into several committees with each concentrating on a particular area of focus. Much of the work undertaken by the AAS is conducted through these committees, and each committee reports on the status of on-going work at our monthly board meetings.

Listed below are the active committees, current committee members, and associated projects, tasks, and/or responsibilities. Each board members serves on one or more committee for the duration of their tenure.

Backyard Birding Tour: Christina Opett-Soistman

- Annual tour of yards with exceptional bird attractants. The tour is designed to teach participants how to better attract birds to their yards, while promoting conservation and bird-friendly yards. The tour is a fund-raiser for AAS with tickets for the tour being sold.

Bird Banding Lab: Jonathan Varol, Katie Sieving, Felicia Lee, Eric Amundson

- Mist-netting and banding birds and collecting associated scientific banding data
- Training college undergraduate interns on mist-netting and banding techniques
- Educating volunteers and visitors about the scientific merits of bird banding
- Implementing and maintaining an adjacent native plant garden
- Providing educational features to promote and educate about native plants

Birding Classes: Gary Gossman

- Conduct four 4-week birding classes through the Santa Fe College Continuing Education program that are open to the general public. (Many attendees of this program have become active members of AAS.)

Conservation: Bob Simons, Anne Casella, Adam Zions, Jose-Miguel Ponciano

- Review county developmental plans and state park management plans and advocate for protection of natural resources and native habitat. Example projects include opposing the expansive Plum Creek proposed development east of Gainesville, advocating for keeping the entire Barr Hammock nature trail open for public use, opposing the wide-spread use of herbicides on Orange Lake, advocating for protection of the significant environmental features on the proposed Lee property development site, advocating for

a solar farm in western Alachua County, opposing the proposed development next to Tuscaawilla Preserve

- Install, maintain, and monitor a large network of kestrel nest boxes to help increase the successful reproduction of the threatened Southeastern American Kestrel
- Install, maintain, and monitor Purple Martin nesting gourds at the Lake City Treatment Wetlands and Sweetwater Wetlands Park to help increase the local nesting population of this declining aerial insectivorous species
- Install, maintain, and monitor a network of 40 Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes to help increase this declining forested wetland-dependent species
- Conduct bird surveys on various conservation properties as requested by local land trusts, governmental agencies, and other entities, and sponsor and participate in local Christmas Bird Counts
- Advocate for keeping cats indoors and opposing trap, neuter, and release programs
- Participate in Sweetwater Wetlands Park Stakeholders group
- Participate in Audubon Florida North Central Regional Conservation Committee which is composed of representatives from each of the Northeast Florida Audubon chapters who meet quarterly and have recently stated [these Regional Conservation Priorities](#).

Newsletter Editor/Ads: Karen Brown

- Produce a bimonthly newsletter and distribute to approximately 700 AAS/NAS members and other interested parties
- Write and edit articles and solicit articles from others on birds and conservation-related topics
- Announce outings, programs, and other activities of interest
- Solicit and sell ads; send annual invoices and track payments

Education: Felicia Lee, Meredith Kite

- Implement a birding program at Rawlings Elementary School – a Title I, low-income school
- Support the high school birding program at Gainesville High School
- Provide funding to transport 4th graders to Sweetwater Wetlands Park and Morningside Nature Center for nature programs
- Purchased and donated a collection of binoculars to Sweetwater Wetlands Park
- Assembled 10 birding kits consisting of binoculars, field guide, informational notebook, and a backpack and donated to the Alachua County Public Library
- Provide guided bird walks as requested by various groups such as cub scouts, home schooled students, visiting Audubon chapters, service clubs, college groups, and others

Evening Programs: Zachery Holmes

- Implement a monthly evening educational program by scheduling a speaker, reserving a venue and/or running an online program (via Zoom), and advertising the programs through various channels. Programs are recorded and posted on the website and our [YouTube channel](#).

Festivals: Eric Amundson, Pratibha Singh, Meredith Kite

- Design, produce, and organize educational information for our festival booth
- Recruit volunteers to help staff the booth at festivals
- Attend festivals and interact with the general public

Field Trips: Tim Hardin, Adam Zions, Anne Casella, Jose-Miguel Ponciano

- Devise and schedule weekend trips to various local and sometimes out-of-town locations from August through May, focusing on exposing beginner and experienced birders alike to areas with high diversity and abundance of bird species, and sometimes areas where harder-to-find or habitat-specific species may be located.
- Solicit and coordinate with volunteer field trip leaders to lead the outings
- Organize necessary field trip tasks including writing descriptions and advertising the outing, printing a liability release form/sign-up sheet, collecting optional donations towards our liability insurance, and producing an eBird checklist to sharing with participants
- Implement a weekly field trip at Sweetwater Wetlands Park on Wednesday mornings from September through May
- Implement a monthly Birds and Brews field trip on the first Sunday afternoon of each month at First Magnitude Brewery and Depot Park and manage AAS loaner binoculars
- Implement a periodic Bird Ramble field trip designed as a slower-paced and physically easier outing usually held during the week

Finances: Elizabeth Mance, Anne Casella, Debbie Segal, Gary Gossman

- Collect and manage mail from post office box on a regular basis
- Maintain physical and electronic financial records including QuickBooks file
- Record deposits and payables and reconcile 3 bank statements monthly
- Maintain multi-year budget of Board Approved contributions and expenditures
- Generate, review, and adjust financial statements and update the board on current finances at each monthly board meeting
- Pay invoices and distribute other payments as approved by the board
- Prepare and submit all applicable tax returns and forms annually

Membership: Karen Brown

- Update and maintain the membership database
- Track payment of annual membership dues and send reminders to renew
- Contact members regarding membership-specific questions/issues

Proposals: Adam Zions, Gary Gossman, Anne Casella, Debbie Segal

- Review proposals generated by board members and others, and provide recommendations for proposal revisions (if necessary) and approval or denial

Website and Social Media: Karen Brown, Tim Hardin, Kayla Ehrlich

- Maintain website and social media sites
- Advertise AAS events, activities, and outings

Newsletter

The Crane newsletter is published bimonthly on the website. It includes information on upcoming field trips and evening programs as well as various announcements, articles and notes submitted to the editor for publication.

The issues are: Jan/Feb, Mar/Apr, May/June, July/Aug, Sept/Oct, and Nov/Dec. To be included in a newsletter, articles and announcements should be sent to the editor by the 15th of the month prior to the edition (i.e., Feb. 15th is the deadline for an item to be included in the Mar/Apr edition).

An email notification is sent to 700+ AAS members and NAS members who live in the Alachua County area. A small number of members (<30) have requested a hard copy newsletter, so print copies are mailed to these individuals. This service is not offered to new members and we hope to ultimately discontinue it.

Membership

Membership categories include several levels with each providing a different amount of financial support. Dues are payable annually and due one year from initial payment. Members may join the AAS chapter only, or the [National Audubon Society](#) which automatically includes membership in a local chapter plus [Audubon Florida](#). Read more on the [Join](#) page of the website.

AAS Financial Status

Prior to 2012, AAS struggled to meet the financial demands of this nonprofit organization. Income was received primarily through memberships and supplemented by selling Christmas trees and sponsoring a holiday silent auction. But those limited income streams barely covered the annual expenses, the highest being about \$500 bimonthly to print and mail the newsletter to over 600 members.

In 2012, AAS's financial status abruptly improved when the brother of a board member left AAS a bequest of \$50,000 in his will. AAS quickly formed an Investment Committee that consisted of board members Mike Manetz and Dotty Robbins, and they researched growth-type mutual funds where much of the newly acquired money could be safely invested. Their selection of T. Rowe Price funds proved to be a very smart investment and those funds have grown considerably. The laborious fund-raising task of selling Christmas trees was soon abandoned and the silent auction was scaled back considerably.

AAS has received a few smaller bequests since the initial large \$50,000 inheritance in 2012. And then in 2022, AAS received two more sizeable bequests - \$31,000 and \$153,500. While AAS finds itself in its most financially secure position ever, the responsibility lies with the board to invest wisely on projects and initiatives that (borrowing from our Mission Statement) foster appreciation and knowledge of birds and other native wildlife, protect and restore wildlife populations and their habitats, and promote sustainable use of natural resources.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

An appreciation and understanding of the vast diversity of bird life is a cornerstone principle of birding. As a birding organization representing a community with a dynamic and diverse human population with a vast range of nationalities, lifestyles, and personal and professional backgrounds, Alachua Audubon recognizes a moral obligation to offer all our neighbors respect, inclusion, and opportunities to participate and be heard in our organization. We also recognize this obligation as an opportunity to energize and strengthen our organization and our environmental advocacy by ensuring our collective voice better reflects Alachua County as a whole. The urgent need to protect our natural world transcends political, cultural, and social boundaries, and we believe that new ideas and solutions from a diverse range of voices can make us a stronger and more effective organization.

While Alachua Audubon has always had an open door for all, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, politics, or income, we recognize a need to proactively invite and facilitate the participation of groups traditionally underrepresented in birding, including younger birders and people of color. Towards this end, we are undertaking the following initiatives:

1. Re-imagining the locations, times, and formats of some of our programs to make them more welcoming and accessible, as well as less intimidating, to audiences unfamiliar with birding.
2. Building strategic partnerships with public and non-profit groups, such as the county library system, to expand our ability to impact underserved communities.

Social Media Sites: AAS maintains the following social media sites where outings and activities are announced.

Website <https://www.alachuaaudubon.org/>
Facebook www.facebook.com/AlachuaAudubon/
Instagram [@alachuaaudubon](https://www.instagram.com/alachuaaudubon)

Contact Information:

Email: contact@alachuaaudubon.org Emails to this address are monitored by Karen Brown and Debbie Segal, and either answered by Karen or Debbie, or forwarded to others who can better respond.

Alachua Audubon Society
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Mail is picked up and reviewed by Elizabeth Mance.