



The Crane

Volume 66 Number 23 January – February 2025

FIELD TRIPS

Note: For the most current information on field trips and other events, please check our website calendar and/or our Facebook page.

**New Years Big Day – Sweetwater and Beyond
Jan. 1, 2025, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm, Sweetwater
Wetlands Park, 325 SE Williston Rd., Gainesville**

On New Year's Day, kick off your birding year with our free guided Alachua County Big Day! Meet trip leader and Alachua Audubon chapter vice president Tim Hardin for the first birding trip of the year! Tim is the Alachua County Big Year record holder (282 total species in 2023) and an eBird reviewer for Alachua County.

We'll first meet up at the parking lot of Sweetwater Wetlands Park and bird the wetlands to start your year list off with a bang. Although we will begin the day there, participants are invited to continue with us to a series of other great local birding hotspots based on input from Tim and the group. The most likely follow-on destinations include Boulware Springs, La Chua trail, Hague Dairy, and the Gainesville area's other hottest birding hotspots – including finishing out the day at Bolen Bluff for special nocturnal species like Short-eared and Barn Owl and Woodcocks.

Tim anticipates that trip participants of this free guided birding trip can tally at least 100 different bird species by the end of the day, but don't be surprised if we end up with 120+ bird species seen or heard throughout the day. Last year's (1/1/2024) version of this event tallied 127 total species for the day! View the trip report [here](#).

**First Day Hike at Dudley Farm Historic State Park
Sunday, January 1, 2025, 9:00 – 11:00 am
18730 West Newberry Rd., Newberry**

All 50 states offer First Day Hikes in state parks throughout the country. Join Tedd Greenwald and Mary Ellen Flowers for a walk through the historic homestead and beautiful property of Dudley Farm. Meet in the parking lot by the Visitor Center. Wear close-toed shoes. Bring your binoculars and/or camera. \$5 entrance fee.

**Little Awesome Preserve
Sunday, January 12, 2025, 8:00 – 11:00 am
5682 SW County Road 138, Fort White**

Meet Danielle Zukowski in the parking lot. [Little Awesome Preserve](#) just opened to the public on December 6th. Alachua Conservation Trust outbid developers to preserve this 195-acre forest along the Santa Fe River. Here is a [checklist](#) from an afternoon walk. Difficulty: 2 We will take Camp Spring Trail (0.3 miles) and Beaver Trail (1.2 miles). The trail begins with dirt/sand covered in leaves and is relatively flat. Continuing, there are tree roots and bits of limestone with minimal elevation change.

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St. Mark's National Wildlife Refuge—DAY 1

**Saturday, January 18, 2025, 9:00am – 5:00pm,
1255 Lighthouse Road, St. Marks, FL**

AAS is excited to have Don Morrow as our field guide on the first day of this field trip. [This article](#) goes into some detail that explains why we are so fortunate to have him do this for us.

Meet up at St. Marks NWR Visitor Center parking lot. There is an entrance fee of \$5 per vehicle. The refuge honors federal passes and duck stamps. We will be carpooling from the visitor center to limit our carbon footprint. We may briefly break for lunch (you must bring food for the day and plenty of water, as there is no potable water in the park).

January is prime duck & shorebird time at St. Marks. Based on current conditions, we will be trying to maximize sightings of duck and shorebird species, while also including other wintering birds at the refuge. Target species will include American Black Duck, Vermilion Flycatcher, and White-faced Ibis. We will drive the thirteen-mile round trip from the Visitor Center to the Lighthouse, making stops based on the conditions. One stop may include a one-mile hike. The remaining stops should have minimal walking.

Mid-January weather can be freezing to warm, often during the same day. Dress in layers. Bring optics, lunch, water, sunscreen, and a joyful attitude. Expect to see between 50 and 75 species during the field trip. This will be a great day of birding.

St. Mark's National Wildlife Refuge—DAY 2

Sunday, January 19, 2025

This second day will be group-led, with help from attendees who have birded the area, and the itinerary is open depending upon what birds have been seen in the area. We could explore St. Mark's more (including Bottom's Road) or venture a bit to the west to see what we can find at Mashes Sands Beach or Bald Point. Bald Point State Park has an entrance fee of \$4 per vehicle and honors state park passes.

Lake City Treatment Wetlands with Four Rivers Audubon

**Saturday, January 18, 2025, 8 – 10:30 am,
3990 SW Sisters Welcome Road; Lake City**

Join Four Rivers Audubon for a field trip to the Lake City Wetlands, a treatment wetland that was constructed to treat Lake City's wastewater. The wetlands attract a wide range of waterfowl, wading birds, and

other species. Meet at the entrance to the wetlands.

This site is not open to the public and the gate will be closed after we enter, so please don't be late.

Difficulty: 3 (walking 2-3 miles on cleared berms). For questions, contact Valerie Thomas at 386-466-2193 or v.thomas57@gmail.com.

Huguenot Memorial Park

Saturday, January 25, 2025, 8 am – noon

10980 Heckscher Drive, Jacksonville

Maggie Paxson and Tim Hardin from Alachua Audubon and Jessica Dyszel from Duval Audubon will be co-leading a trip to Huguenot Memorial Park. Meet at the parking lot (30.4122718, -81.4196489) to consolidate cars and head to the beach. 4WD will be preferable for beach driving to get to the north side of the park. Please only drive on the beach with appropriately equipped vehicles.

Winter birding can be especially productive with excellent diversity of birds and much lower traffic on the beach. Targets include overwintering gulls, terns, waterfowl, and shorebirds, including the rare-in-Florida Purple Sandpipers and the rare but local Salt-marsh Sparrows. Other potential targets include scoters, Northern Gannets, Piping and Snowy Plovers, Nelson's Sparrow, and Ash-throated Flycatcher.

Park entry is \$5 per vehicle. Participants should bring water, sunscreen, binoculars, and comfortable footwear for walking in soft, sometimes wet, and uneven sands. Waterproof footwear recommended.

If you choose to stay after Huguenot, we will then break for lunch – bring your own food or eat at a nearby restaurant, such as Billy Jacks (BBQ). There are multiple options nearby for afternoon trips, including Big Talbot/Spoonbill Pond, Little Talbot, Fort George Island/Kingsley Plantation, Heritage River Road within a 15-minute drive radius. Spoonbill Pond may have a chance for Marbled Godwit and Marsh Sparrows during high tide. Fort George Island is a nice drive through for Painted Bunting. A ferry ride (\$6 per person) can also take you across the river or you can drive around for access to Hanna Park, Jacksonville Arboretum, Theodore Roosevelt Park, Spanish Pond, and Fort Caroline. Jax Pier is a further drive but a good location for sea ducks.

AAS Year End Review

Alachua Audubon celebrated the season with a festive holiday social on December 6th at the lovely Matheson Museum in downtown Gainesville. With over 60 guests, the room was filled with joy, conversations, and delicious food and beverages.

During the social, I shared some of AAS's accomplishments and highlights. Most notably, Audubon Florida awarded Alachua Audubon with the *Best Chapter Conservation Award*. With six nominations for outstanding conservation projects by large chapters throughout the state, AAS was selected as the 2024 winner for our long-term kestrel conservation project. *Thanks to **Eric Amundson** for running this complex conservation project, and for the many volunteers who have assisted.* Many of you know that **Bob Simons** started this project 30 years ago, and for three decades he dedicated himself to the conservation of the Southeastern American Kestrel. Sadly, Bob passed away on June 23rd this year, but his legacy continues through Audubon and the kestrel conservation project.

Continuing with the theme of conservation and partnerships, AAS continues to contribute to the successful nesting of Purple Martins through the installation of nesting gourd systems. Our most successful nesting site is the Lake City Wetlands where we had over 150 martins fledge in 2024. At Sweetwater Wetlands Park, Purple Martins nested in all of the gourds this year, so we have expanded with a second gourd system there. And through a partnership with Alachua Conservation Trust, we have added new gourd systems at two new locations – Prairie Creek Preserve and Orange Lake Overlook. *A special shout-out to some of our awesome volunteers who continue to make the PUMA project a success – **Winnie Lante, Rick Williams, Tedd Greenwald, and Mary Ellen Flowers.***

Alachua Audubon has long been recognized for our abundance of birding outings. This year, we offered even more field trips – a field trip schedule on steroids! With the weekend field trips, weekly Wednesday bird walks at Sweetwater Wetlands, the Santa Fe College birding classes, monthly Birds and Brews, the Bird Rambles, weekly birding strolls with Rawlings Elementary School students, other outings with grade school classes as requested, and now the new Flock outings led by board member, Ellen Frattino, **this is over 150 bird walks annually!** *This schedule is possible only because so many of you have so generously given of your time and expertise to guide these walks. You are sincerely appreciated for sharing your knowledge and love of birds, and inspiring others to care about conservation and birds.*

Our evening program series is back, *live and in person*, and **Glenn Israel** is doing a superb job of organizing and scheduling these monthly programs at Cypress and Grove Brewery, including the most recent presentation on December 5th with Adam Kent and an upcoming program on January 9th with Dr. Andy Kratter. . *Thank you, Glenn.*

The hugely popular Backyard Bird Tour is returning on February 1st and tickets are now on sale at Wild Birds Unlimited (WBU) and online. This event will be a self-guided tour to 4-6 homes where you will view and learn from the homeowners about different landscaping and feeding techniques for attracting birds to your yard. *A shout-out to **Tonya Becker and Danielle Zukowski** for organizing this huge event, and to WBU for their partnership.* We may have room to include another yard on this tour, so if you are interested in offering up your yard, please talk to Tonya or Danielle. **Also, we will need 20 or so volunteers to cover a 3-4 hour shift per house, so please consider signing up with Tonya or Danielle to be a much-appreciated volunteers.**

Alachua Audubon's conservation advocacy continues to track important conservation issues. We were quick to respond to the state-wide threat to our state parks by opposing the proposed ill-fated developments. We will continue to ensure that Alachua Audubon's voice is heard whenever there is a threat in our local community to nature, conservation, and birds. ***A robust membership elevates our voice when working on conservation issues, so if you are not already a member of AAS, please consider joining.***

There are many behind-the-scenes tasks that are required to keep an organization running, and these volunteer board members deserve special recognition: ***Karen Brown** for producing our stellar bi-monthly newsletter, keeping track of membership, and assisting with social media; **Elizabeth Mance** for upgrading and*

running our complex accounting system; **Felicia Lee** for secretarial and chapter documentation tasks; and **Gary Gossman** for overseeing insurance requirements and other tasks that we birders tend to avoid. **Anne Casella** helps in so many ways that we can't mention them all here, but a huge thanks for everything she does.

We are sincerely grateful to all of you who contribute to our organization – through leading field trips, assisting in multiple conservation efforts, helping to staff the AAS festival booth, and donating to AAS.

I would like to recognize a few volunteers who have been particularly generous and devoted to Audubon-sponsored programs:

Lee Bloomcamp and **Sherri Amundson** for maintaining the native plant garden at Prairie Creek Preserve; **Andy Kratter** and board member **Anne Casella** for running the Gainesville Christmas Bird Count (**Bob Carroll** has stepped down after many years as co-compiler); and **Michael Brock** for leading the monthly Birds and Brews walk and for maintaining our website.

During the holiday social, **Katie Sieving** introduced **Dr. Mark Hostetler** and **Dustin Stephany** and presented them with an award for their role in making buildings at UF safer for birds (*see article below*). Bird collisions are one of the major causes of bird mortality and this is a huge step in the right direction and sets an important example to other universities across the nation.

Ellen Frattino ended the evening by thanking the many volunteers who helped staff the AAS festival booth during the fall festivals. To show her appreciation, she drew names and awarded several randomly selected volunteers with appreciation gifts.

From all of us at Alachua Audubon, we wish you and your family a safe, healthy, joyful, and nature-filled new year.

By Debbie Segal

AAS Salutes UF's New Bird-Safe Building Initiatives

For years, bird-loving Gators walking past the campus's glassy high-rises would be greeted by a heartbreaking sight: dozens of dead birds, including migrating warblers and winter residents such as Cedar Waxwings, all victims of window strikes. In certain light, the windows' reflections of the sky and nearby trees appear all too real to birds, who fly at them at full speed believing clear skies to lie ahead.

But two UF employees – Mark Hostetler, a professor of Wildlife Ecology, and facilities planner Dustin Stephany – have stepped in to solve the problem and have successfully advocated for bird-friendly features as both retrofits to existing buildings and built-in features in new construction. These steps have made UF the first major university in the U.S. to implement bird safety standards into its construction codes. In recognition of their efforts, AAS presented both with awards for their service at its annual holiday party on December 6.

Driven to action by the disturbing number of strikes, Hostetler, with the help of student volunteers, compiled an [iNaturalist database of campus bird strikes](#), identified problem buildings, and advocated for mitigation measures such as [Acopian BirdSavers](#), unobtrusive vertical cords that break up window reflections.

Collaborating with Hostetler, Stephany worked to educate UF's grounds staff about bird strikes and how to report them. He also worked with building designers to ensure new construction at UF would not only meet industry-wide green building standards (such as LEED certification) but incorporate window treatments to help prevent bird strikes.

Chief among his success stories is [Malachowsky Hall](#), an imposing 236,000 square foot engineering center that opened in 2024. Situated near a wooded area and clad with large banks of tall glass windows, it's precisely the type of structure that could become a death trap for birds were it not for the subtle dot patterns on the glass. While they allow humans inside a clear view out, they're conspicuous enough from the outside to warn birds away.

Alachua Audubon counts many UF faculty, staff, students, and alums among its membership, and as both Gators and bird lovers, we're proud to honor Hostetler and Stephany's leadership and the example it sets for other institutions.

By Felicia Lee

Evening Programs

Our popular evening programs are once again meeting in person! Our new venue is Cypress & Grove Brewing at 1001 NW 4th Street, Gainesville. Please join us!

Andy Kratter presents *Changing Bird Names*

Thursday, January 9, 2025, 6:45 – 8:15pm at Cypress and Grove Brewing



For 130 years, the American Ornithological Society (AOS) has determined the official names, both scientific and English, for North America's bird species. The AOS announced this fall that it is embarking on a process to change the common names of birds that are named after people.

Birds with eponymous names can be found in every section of a field guide, from the Bullock's Oriole to the Ross's Goose and Wilson's Plover. Among sparrows alone, 11 different species are named after people.

The AOS changes will encompass approximately 152 North American birds and 111 South American birds.

Dr. Andy Kratter has been Collections Manager at the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville for the past 27 years. For 25 of these years, he has also been a member of the North American Classification Committee,

the arm of the AOS that has traditionally determined the taxonomy and nomenclature of North American birds. Andy will give a summary of the controversial proposal to change hundreds of bird names from his perspective on the front row of bird nomenclature.

Andy's wide experience includes field work in Peru, Trinidad, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Guyana, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Nepal, New Zealand, Italy, Australia, and most of the U.S., particularly Florida, California and Louisiana. Each spring, he watches the loons crossing over Gainesville from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean, and oversees the Loon Watch program.

Deborah Greene presents *How Important Are Caterpillars for Birds? Critical!*

Friday, January 31, 2025, 6:45 – 8:15pm at Cypress and Grove Brewing

Most birders and native plant gardeners know about berries sustaining songbirds in winter and in migration, but the importance of insects to the lives of songbirds seems to be a little obscure. One group of insects, the small caterpillars known as microlepidoptera, are the most valuable players. How they tie in to warbler migration to our wonderful deciduous forests of the Eastern United States is an amazing story that Deborah Green loves to share, invoking the work of Scott Weidensaul and Dr. Doug Tallamy. How the timing of migration ties in with the leafing out the forests illustrates the complexity of our natural world. Deborah will share her suggestions of how we can help, from not using pesticides to growing specific native plants for these caterpillars.

Deborah earned her Ph.D. in entomology from University of California, Berkeley, nearly 45 years ago with a community ecology study involving caterpillars. At that time, she was a member of the California Native Plant Society and, moving back to her home state of Florida, she joined the Florida Native Plant Society in the late 1980s. Deborah is working to make her home landscape in Central Florida 100% native and has the pleasure of seeing some great song-



Pine Warbler with caterpillar. Photo: Robert Sena

birds in her own yard. She is a big fan of Dr. Doug Tallamy, who promotes the importance of insects as the “little things that run the world,” and she simplifies Tallamy’s message for us locally here in Florida, emphasizing the caterpillar connection. Deborah grew up in Gainesville, and although she has lived for the past 40 years in the Orlando area, she still has family here and has shown up at Alachua Audubon events over the years. Deborah is president of Orange Audubon Society and chairs the North Shore Birding Festival which is the first weekend in December.

**Ernesto Reyes Mouriño presents *Birding From the Caribbean to Central and South America*
Thursday, February 13, 2025, 6:45 – 8:15pm at Cypress and Grove Brewing**

Ernesto Reyes Mouriño will talk about the value of Cuba as a biodiversity hotspot in the Caribbean, the National System of Protected Areas including the areas nominated by UNESCO as Biosphere Reserves, and the threats for most of our Cuban birds with focus on those that are under some of the IUCN categories (CR, EN, TH, LR) especially Cuban endemic birds. He also will talk about the positive impacts of the birdwatching in Cuba and include a short history from the past to the present and his experiences contributing to work with ornithologist and local groups to do social science (eBird for example) and the impacts in the knowledge about Cuban birds. His talk will be illustrated by photos of Cuban birds, as well as a selection from Columbia and Brazil.



Cuban Trogon

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BACKYARD BIRDING TOUR

HOSTED BY

**ALACHUA
AUDUBON
SOCIETY &**



**February 1st, 2025
9:00 am - 3:00 pm**

Tickets: \$15

About Our Event

You are invited to join us on a self-guided tour of some of Gainesville's premiere backyard birding habitats, where ordinary homeowners have turned their yards into a birding paradise.

Education

Learn how to attract birds to your yard using native plants, water features, and feeding stations.

See Amazing Birds

Enjoy viewing colorful winter visitors such as Baltimore Orioles in the gardens and feeders of our host homes.

Protect Birds

Learn ways to help birds by preventing window strikes, providing safe habitat for migration and breeding, and turning off lights during critical seasons.

Tickets on sale December 1, 2024
@ Wild Birds Unlimited: 4212 NW 16th St. Gainesville
or via: <https://alachuaaudubon.org/donate/>



Ichetucknee / Santa Fe / O'Leno (FLIS) Christmas Bird Count

The 16th Ichetucknee/Santa Fe/O'Leno Christmas Bird Count (FLIS CBC) was held on Tuesday, December 17th, 2024. This year's 15-mile-wide circle, centered near the town of Fort White, involved 43 participants (10 new to the count) who birded by car, foot, and canoe/kayak. Participants included birders from the Four Rivers Audubon, Alachua Audubon, Florida Park Service, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and many also participated in the Gainesville CBC two days prior.

The FLIS CBC covers many natural and state-managed lands including Ichetucknee Springs (ISSP), O'Leno, River Rise Preserve, and Gilchrist Blue Springs State Parks, Fort White Wildlife and Environmental Area, multiple Suwannee River Water Management District properties, the lower Santa Fe River, the entire Ichetucknee River, and private lands of varying uses (commercial, residential, agricultural, and silvicultural). Three of the five teams concentrate their efforts on public lands while the other two focus on the remaining rivers, uplands, private lands, and neighborhoods. The greater number of volunteers this year allowed for increased effort in the area covered. At the end of the day, the count up supper was held at the O'Leno State Park Dining Hall and the birders enjoyed telling stories, bringing together their counts, and having dinner.

This year's participants experienced moderate to heavy fog with cloudy weather that cleared in the early afternoon. The weather station at ISSP recorded a low of 65.2° F and a high of 85.1° F. Surface winds were mostly light-breezy and variable, ranging from 0 to 9 mph from NE and E.

The FLIS CBC recorded 6,813 birds, up from 6,401 last year. A total of 93 species were observed, with two of these recorded during count week. The total included 1 high record, 2 tied records, and 2 species new to the count. A high count was observed for the Green Heron (4). Species with tied records included the Black Crowned Night-Heron (2/'17, '18, '20, '21, '22, '24) and the Winter Wren (3/ '20, '22, '24). Participants were excited to see the first occurrences of the Mottled Duck (1) and the Common Goldeneye (1).

Many thanks to the dedicated Team Leaders and birders who continue to make the FLIS CBC a success! We are super thankful for a GREAT group of volunteers who schedule this day into their active holiday season. Please mark your calendars for Tuesday, December 16th, 2025 to join us on our 17th anniversary!!

Sarah Nauman, FWC Volunteer

Bird Watching Class Offered

Develop your skills in identifying the birds in our region. Whether you are a beginner or have some experience in birding, **Introduction to Birds and Birding** will increase your knowledge. Santa Fe College Community Education partners with Alachua Audubon to offer this bird watching course on consecutive Saturday mornings from February 22 through March 15. The course consists of 4 field trips to local natural areas, guided by experienced birders. Field trips begin at 8:30 AM and last 2-2.5 hours. There will also be a second class running from March 29 through April 19. Register online at the [Santa Fe College Community Education website](#). For assistance, call 352-395-5193 and mention the course name above. Course Fee: \$49.00.

Note: Must be at least 18 yrs old to register. Bring binoculars. Please register early as this class fills quickly.



*Red-headed Woodpecker.
Photo by Deena Mickelson.*

AAS Wins Best Florida Audubon Chapter Conservation Award

We are excited to announce that the Alachua Audubon Society was awarded the *Best Chapter Conservation Award* at the recent state-wide Audubon Assembly that was held in Daytona Beach in November. Eric Amundson and Debbie Segal accepted the award on behalf of AAS. Audubon Florida presents two conservation awards annually – one to a small chapter (under 500 members) and one to a large chapter (over 500 members). With six nominations for outstanding conservation projects by large chapters throughout the state, AAS was selected as the 2024 winner for our long-term and greatly expanded kestrel conservation project. This project is revealing important nesting and fledging information regarding the threatened Southeastern American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius paulus*).

The American Kestrel has experienced a disturbing and steady population decline throughout its entire range, which includes most of the United States



Debbie Segal and Eric Amundson accepting the award from Audubon Florida



Southeastern American Kestrel

and Canada. The exact causes of the regional and national declines are unknown, although likely factors are loss of upland open-pine forests, suppression of wildfire, insufficient prescribed burning in fire-adapted communities, and the commercial development of farm and pastureland. Causes specific to the Southeast include the severe decline of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker whose abandoned cavities can become kestrel nesting sites, elimination of dead trees and the cavities they provide, and the decline of large insects (grasshoppers, etc.), the kestrel's preferred prey.

Initially started 30 years ago by the late Bob Simons, AAS's kestrel project was expanded two years ago by partnering with the non-profit, Avian Research and Conservation Institute ([ARCI](#)) to tag and track soon-to-fledge

kestrels. Several goals of the project are to determine the survival rates of first year birds, dispersal distances to their first breeding sites, landscape-scale habitat requirements, and home ranges of breeding males. Transmitters and bands are placed on juveniles just prior to fledging. By tracking these birds, we expect to find potential new nesting areas that can lead us to forge the best conservation strategies for Florida's vulnerable and imperiled population of Southeastern American Kestrels. Additionally, by discovering new potential nest sites, we can seek permission from landowners to deploy nest box arrays that extend beyond our west Alachua County sites.

A secondary challenge of this project is disentangling the local demographic processes with migratory processes. The American Kestrels in Florida include the resident (non-migratory) Southeastern American Kestrel and the migratory American Kestrel, which winters annually in Florida from about October through April.

While contributing to kestrel conservation has been the primary goal of this project, Alachua Audubon has also directly trained and inspired numerous students to pursue careers in conservation biology and resource management. If future funding allows, a Masters-level wildlife ecology student could potentially use this data for a thesis research project.

To date, we have tagged or color banded 22 juvenile kestrels and observed these fledglings in their home territories as they learned to hunt with parents. They are eventually encouraged by adults to seek other hunting areas. One young male attempted to establish a territory proximal to his natal area before moving on, while others traveled longer distances than expected. AAS, in part-



Miguel Olvera, ARCI.

nership with ARCI, will continue to work on long term data collection and analysis, contributing to our understanding of the demography of this unique sub-species of the American Kestrel and its landscape use here in Florida.

Other partners besides ARCI that have allowed us to expand this important conservation project include The Wagmore Foundation, UF Department of Biology, Alachua County Department of Land Conservation, and private and public landowners who continue to allow AAS and ARCI researchers to access their property.

By Debbie Segal and Eric Amundson



Kestrel checks inside their nest box.

An Avian Pool Party

I followed the rocky creek bed upstream, easily dodging the pockets of water that had settled in the lowest grooves. Although I wasn't hearing or seeing birds, I was savoring the natural beauty of this newly discovered creek next to Lake Superior in northeastern Minnesota. And then a chip and a subtle answer. I paused and searched and soon realized that the most mesmerizing avian show was about to begin, just a room's width in front of me and with no trees or bushes to impede my view.



I tried to constrain my chest-pounding excitement so I could steady my camera on that colorful collection of bathing birds. As birders, we all have our memorable birding moments and this will be a long-remembered one for me.

By Debbie Segal



First a White-throated Sparrow flitted down to a puddle in the creek. As it splashed two warblers – a Nashville and Mourning – joined in. Next a Northern Parula, Tennessee Warbler, Black-capped Chickadee, and a second Nashville joined the pool party. I slowly raised my camera and pushed the video button and watched the party grow. A skittish Golden-winged Warbler flitted down to the water briefly, retreated, and returned. Four Chestnut-sided Warblers, a Cedar Waxwing, and another Nashville Warbler arrived. The Chestnut-sided, all hatch year birds, splashed with gusto, while an American Redstart, the final bird to arrive, explored the venue.

When I reviewed my two videos later that evening, I realized that seven species of warblers – Mourning, Nashville, Golden-winged, Chestnut-sided, Northern Parula, American Redstart, and Tennessee – were all attracted to that watering hole, and that the majority of those 11 individual warblers were hatch-year birds.

2024 John Hintermister Gainesville Christmas Bird Count

In 2022 a late afternoon thunderstorm gave us a good soaking and in 2023 an entire morning of bluster and squalls dampened our spirits. This year, the 2024 John Hintermister Gainesville Christmas Bird Count had dry skies, mild temperatures, and happy birders. The birds themselves put on quite the show this year: we tied our all-time high record of 175 species! And, for the first time, we topped 100,000 individuals, with 106,204 birds tallied! We should maintain our solid positions as one of the highest inland counts in the United States, and as tops for species number in Florida.

Our intrepid observers were dispersed among eleven teams, each with a team captain. As we ran through the tallies of the regularly occurring species at the compilation on Sunday evening, anticipation mounted with each addition (see below) and with each species missed (Horned Grebe, American Pipit, Wilson's Warbler, Field Sparrow, and Indigo Bunting). Excitement peaked as each team captain read the rare species found in their sector on count day. Three new species were recorded for the first time on this CBC: a **Bell's Vireo** on the edge of Payne's Prairie (Team 1), a **Cape May Warbler** visiting a suburban feeder in NE Gainesville (Team 10), and a pair of **Red-throated Loons** on Newnan's Lake (Team 11). The day's rarities were nicely distributed in all sectors, and included: **Team 1:** Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Cinnamon Teal, 3 Gray-headed Swamphen, Least Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo; **Team 2:** Common Goldeneye, Ash-throated Flycatcher; **Team 3:** Yellow-crowned Night Heron, 5 Golden-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, 2 Bachman's Sparrow, **Team 4:** Red-breasted Merganser, Barn Swallow; **Team 5:** Ash-throated Flycatcher; **Team 6:** 5 Golden-crowned Kinglets Tropical Kingbird, **Team 7:** Ash-throated Flycatcher, Black-throated Green Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, **Team 8:** Magnolia Warbler (had only been seen once before in 1990); **Team 9:** Western Tanager, **Team 10:** Golden-crowned Kinglet, Cape May Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow; **Team 11:** Red-throated Loon. With those last additions, and a final perusal of documentation, we had reached our previous record, set in 2019.



*Red-throated Loons on Newnan's Lake.
Photo by Tedd Greenwald.*

The bread and butter of a Christmas Bird Count, however, is determining the population status of the area's more common species, which can aid in determining conservation planning for our mostly declining avifauna. For our 2024 count, our 120 + observers reached new all-time high counts for 16 species: Northern Pintail, American Bittern, Northern Harrier, Barred Owl, Eastern Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Gray Catbird, House Wren, American Robin, House Finch, Black & White Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Swamp Sparrow. Especially notable were numbers of fruit eaters like American Robin (42,692!), Gray Catbird, and Cedar Waxwing. The numbers of flocking woodland species were also high, with records for Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Black-and-white Warbler, and Orange-crowned Warbler. Thankfully, Alachua County, with its expansive network of protected areas, woods, lakes, and prairies, continues to harbor important wintering populations of a wide assortment of bird species.

Species list (bold-faced species = rarity; bold-faced count = high count):

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 4213, **Fulvous Whistling-Duck 1**, Snow Goose 5, Muscovy Duck 206, Wood Duck 229, Gadwall 33, American Wigeon 7, Mallard 10, Mottled Duck 283, Blue-winged Teal 1056, **Cinnamon Teal 1**, Northern Shoveler 24, Northern Pintail 985 (**HC**), Green-winged Teal 2890, Redhead 1, Ring-necked Duck 9863, Lesser Scaup 85, **Common Goldeneye 1**, Bufflehead 27, **Red-breasted Merganser 3**, Hooded Merganser 220, Ruddy Duck 76, Northern Bobwhite 24, Wild Turkey 125, Pied-billed Grebe 60, Rock Pigeon 24, Eurasian Collared Dove 2, Common Ground-Dove 17, Mourning Dove 491, White-winged Dove 1, Whip-Poor-Will 6, Ruby-throated Hummingbird 5, **Rufous Hummingbird 1**, King Rail 14, Virginia Rail 35, Sora 124, Purple Gallinule 4, **Gray-headed Swamphen 3**, Common Gallinule 577, American Coot 619, Limpkin 168, Sandhill Crane

1842, Killdeer 242, Least Sandpiper 31, Wilson's Snipe 220, Long-billed Dowitcher 3, American Woodcock 6, Spotted Sandpiper 2, Greater Yellowlegs 27, Lesser Yellowlegs 12, Bonaparte's Gull 8, Laughing Gull 18, Ring-billed Gull 259, Herring Gull 2, Forster's Tern 31, Common Loon 8, **Red Throated Loon 2**, Wood Stork 133, Double-crested Cormorant 788, Anhinga 409, American White Pelican 130, American Bittern **33 (HC)**, Least Bittern 27, Great Blue Heron 227, Great Egret 262, Snowy Egret 177, Little Blue Heron 234, Tricolored Heron 102, Cattle Egret 309, Green Heron 38, Black-crowned Night-Heron 217, **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron 1**, White Ibis 2271, Glossy Ibis 419, Roseate Spoonbill 6, Black Vulture 451, Turkey Vulture 1399, Osprey 25, Snail Kite 112, Bald Eagle 143, Northern Harrier **111 (HC)**, Sharp-shinned Hawk 7, Cooper's Hawk 17, Accipiter, sp. 2, Red-shouldered Hawk 235, Red-tailed Hawk 40, Barn Owl 6, Eastern Screech-Owl 24, Great Horned Owl 42, Barred Owl **81 (HC)**, Belted Kingfisher 61, Red-headed Woodpecker 32, Red-bellied Woodpecker 526, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 101, Downy Woodpecker 234, Northern Flicker 67, Pileated Woodpecker 179, American Kestrel 73, Merlin 3, Peregrine Falcon 1, Eastern Phoebe **602 (HC)**, Vermilion Flycatcher **7 (HC)**, **Least Flycatcher 1**, **Tropical Kingbird 1**, **Ash-throated Flycatcher 5**, Loggerhead Shrike 33, White-eyed Vireo 75, Blue-headed Vireo 82, **Bell's Vireo 1**, Blue Jay 240, American Crow 813, Fish Crow 131, Crow, sp. 67, Tree Swallow 698, **Barn Swallow 1**, Carolina Chickadee **582 (HC)**, Tufted Titmouse **686 (HC)**, Brown-headed Nuthatch 22, **Brown Creeper 1**, House Wren **331 (HC)**, **Winter Wren 1**, Sedge Wren 117, Marsh Wren 54, Carolina Wren 595, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 548, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 728, **Golden-crowned Kinglet 11**, Eastern Bluebird 325, Hermit Thrush 65, American Robin **42692 (HC)**, Gray Catbird **384 (HC)**, Brown Thrasher 23, Northern Mockingbird 194, European Starling 15, Cedar Waxwing 2038, House Sparrow 31, House Finch **173 (HC)**, American Goldfinch 333, Ovenbird 9, Northern Waterthrush 12, Black-and-White Warbler **175 (HC)**, Orange-crowned Warbler **182 (HC)**, Common Yellowthroat 326, American Redstart 3, Northern Parula 4, **Magnolia Warbler 1**, **Cape May Warbler 1**, Palm Warbler 1197, Pine Warbler 221, Yellow-rumped Warbler 2364, Yellow-throated Warbler 57, **Black-throated Green Warbler 1**, Prairie Warbler 3, Yellow-breasted Chat **5 (HC)**, Eastern Towhee 69, Chipping Sparrow 834, Vesper Sparrow 8, Savannah Sparrow 204, Grasshopper Sparrow 12, Henslow's Sparrow 4, **Bachman's Sparrow 3**, Song Sparrow 43, **Lincoln's Sparrow 1**, Swamp Sparrow **610 (HC)**, White-throated Sparrow 28, White-crowned Sparrow 3, Summer Tanager 3, **Western Tanager 1**, Northern Cardinal 726, Painted Bunting 25, Red-winged Blackbird 7517, Eastern Meadowlark 84, Rusty Blackbird 125, Common Grackle 1382, Boat-tailed Grackle 1872, Brown-headed Cowbird 351, Baltimore Oriole 42.



*Common Yellowthroat.
Photo by Tedd Greenwald.*



Andy Kratter on the 2024 Christmas Bird Count. Photo by Tedd Greenwald.

By Andy Kratter

AAS Fall Intern Reports

Kayla Bain, UF Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Department

It is with great sadness that my internship with the Alachua Audubon Society is coming to a close, but as I look back on the experience, I can't help but smile. From the beginning, I already knew I was in for a wonderful experience, but I have come out even more excited about my career path in conservation and the prospects of utilizing the skills I acquired.

To start, the board created a welcoming atmosphere that made it clear they were eager to help us achieve our desired outcomes from the experience, and they established a level of comfortability to ask them questions. This encouragement made the opportunities provided more approachable, which created a better learning environment.

On that note, the experiences I participated in were ones I'll never forget. One of my favorites was joining Kate Hellgren, Felicia Lee, and Sharon Kuchinski on Friday morning bird walks at Rawlings Elementary. Seeing the children have fun being in nature and learning as the weeks went on was extremely heartwarming. It made me hopeful for future generations and solidified the importance of public outreach for the cause of conservation, especially in younger demographics who are future leaders, voters, and potential environmental advocates. The excitement the kids had about identifying birds and teaching them how to use a Peterson bird guide was extremely rewarding. I felt this same excitement when volunteering with Ellen Frattino and other interns at the festivals to spread awareness about Alachua Audubon. Being able to talk to visitors about bird-safe windows, native gardens, and the experiences they've had bird watching made me realize how much I love public outreach and building a community on the love of birds.

As far as conservation projects, participating in kestrel nest box maintenance and purple martin gourd installations was insightful and fun to help with. Assembling the purple martin nesting gourds was my first time using hardware on a project as large as this, which has subsequently made me more comfortable with handling tools that will be necessary in my future career goals as a natural resource manager. It has also taught me greater patience, as I cannot wait to see how many of the purple martins will use these nests this spring! Equally as fun was the walk I took with Debra Segal at Orange Lake afterwards. Her guidance and insight was much appreciated. Kestrel nest box maintenance was an interesting process that I acquired a great deal of helpful knowledge from, including the types of habitats kestrels prefer and how to keep the areas around their nest boxes safe, such as radially placing fire ant bait around the area (who would've thought?).

To close, I am immensely grateful for this experience and would do it a million times again! It was very special to share this Fall semester internship with the other interns who were nothing but kind and extremely hard-working people.

Brynn Fricke, UF Environmental Science Department

The internship with Alachua Audubon Society allowed me to meet some amazing people and birds from around Alachua County, and I learned so much about birds throughout this semester.

I had the opportunity to help Miguel Olvera and Eric Amundson with their American kestrel project through maintenance of the nest boxes. The first trip I took was to Watermelon Pond, and Miguel taught us a lot about the kestrels, including how to differentiate between male and female, kestrel diets, how to protect the boxes against predators, and more. We also got to see the burrowing owls, which was the first time I have ever seen them! The second trip I took was to Hague Dairy, and we saw lots of kestrels and got close to some, too. In the first box, there were bluebird eggs, and in the second box, there was a pair of bold jumping spiders! Eric and Miguel taught



us how to protect the nest boxes from fire ants and more about kestrel behavior. Both trips were so much fun!

Another amazing opportunity I had as an AAS intern was helping with bird walks at Rawlings Elementary School with Felicia, Sharon, Kate, and Tammy. Rawlings has a great biodiversity of birds, and the elementary schoolers were very excited to see them, which was a lot of fun to witness. Many of the students were skilled at using the binoculars and finding birds, and they were interested in learning the names of the species. I really enjoyed working with them and seeing their excitement. I also learned a lot from Felicia, Sharon, Kate, and Tammy about working with younger kids. This was a great experience!

Lastly, attending field trips with various AAS board members and members was really fun! It is so cool to see how many Alachua County residents are interested in birds! The most memorable field trip I went on was to the Natural Area Teaching Lab on campus, led by Christine Zamora and John McVay, and Tim Hardin was also there to help with finding birds. I got to see my first Magnolia Warbler, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and Orchard Oriole! Another field trip that was awesome was Birds and Brews. One time, Adam Kent and Gina Kent found a clay-colored sparrow in the rain, which was so cool! Through these field trips, I learned a lot about identifying birds and making birding accessible to all levels of birders.

Thank you, AAS, for giving me this wonderful opportunity to learn and bird! For my future career, I would like to be an avian conservationist, so the communication skills I learned from these experiences will help me reach my goals. Furthermore, the natural history information and identification skills will be useful, especially if I end up working in Florida. All in all, this internship makes me excited for my future career around ornithology and working with the public!

Sasha Karlsson, UF Wildlife Ecology and Conservation Department

A large part of what the Alachua Audubon interns worked on was related to community outreach and education on conservation. This took place through field trips, walking with kids at a local elementary school, and festivals. The field trips I helped at included ones at Sweetwater Wetlands Park, Birds and Brews, and Rawlings Elementary. These trips provided information for individuals to expand upon their bird identification skills and come together to appreciate the different local species around us. The festivals that the Audubon Society had tables at were useful for getting the local community more involved in conservation practices, such as educating them on how they can help birds around their own house and yard. All of these methods of outreach and education expanded my knowledge and experience in working with the public and environmental education. I especially enjoyed working with the kids at Rawlings Elementary and helping them identify birds around their school. I hope that they have been able to learn more about the natural world around them and have their interests in the environment and birds grow.

The bird banding lab at Prairie Creek was an especially rewarding experience that we took part in as interns. I learned a lot of new skills and information that will definitely be beneficial in future work. We learned about how the mist nets used to catch birds work as well as how to carefully extract the birds from the nets. The birds then got put into cloth bags to keep them calm until we were able to band them. Because of the hurricane season, we also got experience in taking the mist nets down to keep them protected from the storms. Additionally, we learned



how to actually band birds and take information down about them to learn more about the species richness and abundance of the area. After putting a unique band on one of the bird's legs, we would make sure to identify the species, sex, and age (if we could, given the time of the year) of the bird. Before safely releasing them, we also measured the wing chord and weight of each bird so we could keep track of the health of recaptured birds over the years.

Another important part of our internship involved maintaining the nest boxes and sites for both the South-eastern American kestrels and the Purple Martin Gourds. When going to nesting sites for the kestrels, we were able to see them up close and observe their behaviors. We also learned a lot more about their life history traits and how they live. By cleaning out their boxes and making sure they were usable, we helped ensure their reproductive success, fitness, and survival. Overall, the Audubon internship was a very rewarding experience that gave me opportunities to meet lots of new interesting people. It gave me the chance to be more involved in my local community and help educate people on conservation and birds in hopes of building more understanding. I know I will benefit from this experience for years to come with the skills I was able to gain and expand upon and I am excited to pursue other conservation work in my future with the help of what I acquired with Alachua Audubon.

Olivia Spinola, UF Biology Department

Throughout my time in the internship, I was able to engage in various activities to help carry out the goals of the Alachua Audubon Society. These included attending Audubon field trips, assisting in projects such as bird banding and kestrel nest box monitoring, as well as engaging with the public at festival events. Each of these experiences has deepened my understanding of what it's like to not only partake in conservation strategies but promote these efforts in awareness to the local community.

My time helping in the bird banding and kestrel nest box monitoring re-affirmed my love for working in the field, and it was in these experiences that I learned skills that will greatly benefit my research goals in the future. Being able to be out in the early morning and seeing these skills in action furthered my understanding of avian ecology. Additionally, I greatly enjoyed interacting with others during field trips and festival events as I learned how much I enjoy participating in outreach with my community. I also enjoyed getting to learn from field trip leaders and observing their knowledge of local bird species. One morning I will remember fondly is being out at the Eagle Watch and Newman's Lake Berm, where others and I slogged through a cypress swamp to spot nesting bald eagles – definitely a unique experience that I will never forget.

Although my internship has come to a close, I can say confidently that these experiences have furthered my passion for bird conservation and have motivated me to pursue it in my future career goals. Being a part of this team has been an especially valuable experience, as the passion Alachua Audubon has for serving its community in protecting local species has been truly inspiring. I leave this experience feeling more driven than ever to develop a career in avian ecology and conservation, with a renewed focus on contributing to the preservation of bird populations and their habitats.



More Nesting Gourds Await the Return of Purple Martins

Purple Martins are one of many bird species that has declined in recent years. As aerial insectivores, Purple Martins – like swifts, nightjars, flycatchers, and other swallow species – capture their insect prey in flight. But unlike other aerial insectivores, Purple Martins are dependent on us to provide their nesting structures. This charismatic species is also a colonial nester and prefers to nest in the close company of other martins.

Alachua Audubon has been contributing to the nesting success of Purple Martins for seven years, first at the Lake City Wetlands where over 150 martins were successfully raised and fledged in 2024 from the nesting gourd systems that AAS and Four Rivers Audubon installed, and then at Sweetwater Wetlands Park where all seven gourds were occupied by nesting martins.

Riding on this wave of conservation success, Alachua Audubon has increased the availability of nesting sites for Purple Martins by adding an 8-gourd system at Prairie Creek Preserve and a 6-gourd system at Orange Lake Overlook Preserve. Both sites are owned and managed by Alachua Conservation Trust, and this conservation initiative was made possible through the generous partnership with ACT.

Alachua Audubon is planning to install a third martin gourd system this year in preparation for the 2025 nesting season. This additional gourd system will be located at Sweetwater Wetlands Park next to the existing nesting array in the southwest corner of Cell 1. It is our hope that when the Purple Martin colony returns to their Sweetwater nesting site, more martins will accompany them where they will discover eight additional nest sites.

Funding for the new gourd systems at Prairie Creek Preserve and Sweetwater Wetlands Park was provided by AAS, while the gourd system at Orange Lake Overlook was generously donated by Bubba and Ingrid Scales. A huge shout-out to AAS volunteers, Winnie Lante and Rick Williams, who researched and ordered the nesting systems, organized and installed the arrays, and engineered solutions to make the systems safer and more functional.



Winnie Lante, and interns Kayla Bain, and Sasha Karlsson with the newly installed Purple Martin Gourd system at Prairie Creek Preserve.

By Debbie Segal



Join your local wildlife rehabilitation community at First Magnitude Brewing Company for the 11th Annual Pints and Predators educational festival and fundraiser featuring live birds of prey, creatures of the night, and more. Wildlife rehabilitators do the hard work of rescuing sick and injured wildlife. Many of those birds and other animals live through their trauma but are not healthy enough to be released back into natural environments and become educational ambassadors that rehabilitators and educators care for indefinitely. Pints and Predators is an opportunity for you to see ambassador birds of prey like Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel and creatures of the night like Virginia Opossum and bats. There

will be a spider exhibit, an American Alligator, and there are always a few snakes including a venomous rattlesnake in a fully-locked safety enclosure. Vendors will also be exhibiting their wares at this family-friendly event. After expenses, all proceeds are donated to the participating rehabilitators and educators.

Ticketing website: <https://events.humanitix.com/pints-and-predators-2025-11th-annual> or scan the QR code



Melrose Christmas Bird Count

Seventy-two birders with binoculars, telescopes and cameras took to the roads, fields, forests, and lakes on December 20, 2024 for the 35th annual Melrose Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Covering over 175 square miles in a circle centered at the intersection of SR 100 and CR 219 in Melrose, the same area has been surveyed by local volunteers on a single day each December since 1990 as a part of a National Audubon Society project that “constitutes the longest running and geographically most widespread survey of bird life in the Western hemisphere.”

This extraordinary example of citizen science began in 1901 when many of Florida’s iconic water birds were hunted nearly to extinction in the name of sport and fashion. Melrose, interestingly, had one of the earliest counts, led by the Rev. Walter I. Eck in 1907. However, consistent annual local counts began in 1990, when 35 species and 1,145 individual birds were recorded in our circle by far fewer observers with much less sophisticated equipment than today’s optics.

This year 121 species and 41,786 individuals were tallied. It was the fourth highest number of species ever counted locally and the second highest number of individual birds.

It is unusual to have any one species found by all the teams in the circle. Last year only Northern Cardinals were reported by 17 of the 19 teams. This year all nineteen teams reported Turkey Vultures, Mourning Doves, Pine Warblers, Carolina Wrens, American Crows and Eastern Phoebes. In addition, 18 teams reported Sandhill Cranes, Black Vultures, Tufted Titmice and Red-bellied Woodpeckers. Even Common Loons, normally found in only one location, were spotted in three territories this year!

The American Robin, with 25,828 birds tallied, set a local record for most individuals identified during the 2024 CBC. A distant second was the 1,635 total for the Ring-Billed Gull.

A White-crowned Sparrow as well as two Barn Swallows were recorded, both for the first time in the 36-year modern history of the Melrose CBC. For only the second time in local Christmas count history – and the first since 2008 – a Summer Tanager was identified.

The CBC has grown continuously from its initial 25 to nearly 2,000 count circles across the US and its territories, southern Canada and, increasingly, Latin America. It provides valuable long-term data for researchers studying winter bird populations and for other agencies making decisions related to birds. More than 300 peer-reviewed articles have already resulted from analyses of the information gathered by over 50,000 observers who contribute their time.

Santa Fe Audubon Society thanks all participants, including employees at some restricted properties, and volunteers from the wider region – Gainesville, High Springs, Penney Farms, and others – who join local observers. Thanks, also, to the many private property owners who allow us to cover their properties from parts of Gold Head Branch State Park and Camp Blanding to the Lake Region from Keystone Heights, Florahome, Melrose, Earleton, and Grandin to Melrose Landing.

More information on the Christmas Bird Count is available [here](#).

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is an annual census of birds administered by the National Audubon Society. CBCs are intense, day-long surveys by experienced birders but anyone may volunteer to assist. Each count takes place in an established 15-mile diameter circle and is organized by a count compiler. Volunteers identify and tally all birds they see and hear along their specified routes or within their designated zones. It's not just a species tally—all birds are counted all day, giving an indication of the total number of birds in the circle that day.

By Laura Berkleman, Santa Fe Audubon

Sweetwater Wetlands Park & Alachua Audubon Society

Present

Wednesday Bird Walks at the Wetlands



When: Every Wednesday @ 8:30 am from September - May

Where: Sweetwater Wetlands Park - Entrance Pavilion

Walks are free with park admission fee (\$5/vehicle) Bring water, binoculars, sunscreen, and walking shoes



Florida Young Birders Club



The Florida Young Birders Club is welcoming people ages 9 - 17 in Florida who have an interest in birds or birding. We have active chapters in Tampa Bay, Orlando, and St. Augustine plus new chapters forming in Sarasota, Charlotte Harbor and Gainesville.

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Monthly Birds and Brews

The AAS Birds and Brews event continues to be popular with both new and experienced birders. Meet the first Sunday afternoon of the month at First Magnitude Brewery, 1220 SE Veitch St. Arrive early as parking can be scarce. There will be an Alachua Audubon table set up and **loaner binoculars will be available**. It is a lovely time of day for a leisurely stroll around the Depot Park ponds to look for birds. Then we'll return to First Magnitude for an optional brew and conversation.

All birding skill levels are welcome!

Next event: Sunday, January 5th at 4:15 p.m.





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Check out the Paynes Prairie Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society [here](#). Meetings take place on third Wednesdays – September through May (excluding December) – 7:00 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship at 4225 NW 34th Street, Gainesville in Phillips Hall. The public is welcome to attend. Join their chapter to attend monthly field trips.



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Alachua Audubon (AAS) is an official chapter of **National Audubon** and **Audubon Florida**. If you belong to National Audubon and live in this area, you are automatically a member of AAS.

To join National Audubon, please go to AlachuaAudubon.org/Join/ where you will be directed to their membership page.

A portion of your introductory membership will be credited to our local chapter and you will become an annual member of the [National Audubon Society](#), [Audubon Florida](#) and [Alachua Audubon](#), with one-year subscriptions to National *Audubon* magazine, *Audubon Florida Naturalist* magazine, and Alachua Audubon's bi-monthly newsletter, *The Crane*. To **renew** your National membership, click [here](#).

Please send any membership questions to AlachuaAudubonMembership@gmail.com

Alachua Audubon offers all our neighbors respect, inclusion, and opportunities to participate and be heard in our organization. Please read the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement on our website [here](#). Comments and suggestions are welcomed.

Alachua Audubon is a 501(c)3 organization. A copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Division of Consumer Services by calling toll-free (800-435-7352) or visiting their website at fdacs.gov/Consumer-Resources. The state registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.

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

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.

Submissions to ***The Crane*** are welcomed.
Deadline for the March – April issue: February 15th.
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