

Alachua Audubon Society
Board of Directors Orientation Manual
August 2025

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 are located on the AAS website [here](#).

Officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer

Executive Committee: Senior members selected by the president to discuss and advise on interim topics between board meetings as needed. Reports are then generated and presented at subsequent board meetings.

Board of Directors: The board is comprised of between 14 and 19 members consisting of four to six officers and the remaining directors. The by-laws allow for a single or co-Presidents, and a single or co-Vice Presidents. View the current officers and board members [here](#).

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 Cross Florida Barge Canal and the deterioration of the Ocklawaha River, still an ongoing conflict. In the early 1970's, AAS President Helen Hood and Bob Simons spent two years working on the state acquisition of 10 private parcels that now comprise San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park. Bob Simons, in particular, played a long and crucial role in numerous AAS conservation activities for over 50 years. Bob was honored in 2020 at the 60-year anniversary celebration of the founding of AAS. In ill health, Bob resigned from the Board in 2023 and passed away in June 2024, just two months after he was again honored by AAS for the conservation hero that he was. AAS continues to participate in conservation actions in Alachua County and North-Central Florida.

In April 1960, three months after its founding, AAS had 67 members. As of May 2025, there are approximately 1,000. AAS continues to attract new members with a full schedule of field trips, programs, and birding classes.

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

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 AAS received a bequest of \$50,000. AAS quickly formed an Investment Committee that researched safe investments. Those funds have grown considerably. The laborious fund-raising task of selling Christmas trees was soon abandoned and the holiday social silent auction was discontinued.

AAS received a few smaller bequests and then in 2022, we received two more sizeable bequests of \$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 in projects and initiatives that fulfill our mission statement.

Board Meetings

The Board of Directors meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month (except for June and July) at 6:30 pm. During the months that mark the active college internship program, a pre-board meeting is held with interns at 6:00 pm to discuss the internship activities. All board members are invited to attend the pre-board meeting.

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

Committee reports are requested 5-7 days prior to each board meeting. The President sends out an informational email 4-5 days prior to the monthly board meeting. The Committee Reports and president's email serve to update board members on current AAS activities in preparation for the upcoming board meeting. The meeting agenda is 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 expected to review the committee reports and the previous month's minutes in preparation for the board meeting.

A half-day annual planning meeting is typically scheduled in June, and the date is selected by polling the board members. The purpose of the annual planning meeting is to prioritize, plan, and budget for activities and expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year.

Committees and Related Projects/Goals

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

Below are the current committees and associated projects, tasks, and/or responsibilities. Each board member serves on one or more committees for the duration of their tenure. They are also encouraged to participate in other committee activities or AAS-sponsored initiatives.

Backyard Birding Tour:

- A tour of yards with exceptional bird attractions. 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.

Birding Classes:

- Four 4-week birding classes are provided through the Santa Fe College Continuing Education program.
- Classes consist of 4 sequential Saturday morning field trips led by experienced birders.
- Attendees register with the college at a cost of \$49.

Conservation:

- Review county developmental plans and state park management plans and advocate for protection of natural resources and native habitat.
- 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 multiple locations to help increase the local nesting population of this declining 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 (TNR) programs.
- Participate in Sweetwater Wetlands Park Stakeholders group and financially support ecological and educational upgrades to the park
- Participate in quarterly meetings of the Audubon Florida North Central Regional Conservation Committee (RCC) that is composed of representatives from each of the Northeast Florida Audubon chapters.

Eagle Watch Committee

Education:

- Maintain a student birding program at Rawlings Elementary School.
- Organize and maintain a local Young Birders Club
- Financially support the high school birding program at Gainesville High School and UF's GREBE student Audubon chapter
- Provide funding to transport 4th graders to Sweetwater Wetlands Park and Morningside Nature Center for nature programs in association with Friends of Nature Parks.
- Monitor with Alachua County Library District contact (ACLD) 10 birding kits consisting of binoculars, field guide, resource guide, and a backpack donated to the ACLD.
- 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:

- Maintain a monthly evening educational program by scheduling a speaker, reserving a venue, and advertising the programs through social media.
- Some past programs have been recorded and posted on the website and our [YouTube channel](#).

Festivals:

- Work with Volunteer Committee to recruit volunteers to help staff the booth at festivals
- Interface with festival organizers, attend festivals and interact with the public.
- Maintain inventory of printed materials provided to public; reprint as necessary.

Field Trips:

- Devise and schedule weekend trips to various local and sometimes out-of-town locations 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 via social media, printing a liability release form/sign-up sheet, collecting optional donations towards our liability insurance, and producing an eBird checklist to share 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, and a female birding club called The Flock
- Facilitate other field trips created by board members and others.

High School Scholarships

- Advertise and select senior high school students with an interest in conservation to receive a financial award with no restrictions.

Native Plant Garden:

- Assist Alachua Conservation Trust and volunteers with on-going maintenance of the native plant garden at Prairie Creek Preserve.

Student Intern Committee:

- Advertise and select 2-5 college interns for a semester-long internship program.
- Provide a list of programs for interns to participate in, such as staffing the festival booth at local festivals, attending AAS-sponsored field trips, assisting with kestrel monitoring, assisting with loon migration monitoring, participating in native plant garden activities, and other projects as they arise.
- Monitor their progress and activities at regular intervals and schedule pre-board meeting updates.

UF GREBE Audubon Campus Chapter Liaison

- Liase with student leadership and members to offer support and guidance.

Operations and Overhead

AAS Documents:

- By-Laws
- Orientation Manual
- Policy & Procedures
- Annual Report

- Code of Conduct/Ethics Manual

Proposals:

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

Finances:

- 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:

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

- Update and maintain the membership database using NAS membership roster
- Track payment of annual membership dues and send reminders to renew
- Send welcome email to new members and thank you emails to renewers
- Correspond with members regarding membership-specific questions/issues

Website and Social Media:

- 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.

Issues are published for 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 20th of the month prior to the edition (i.e., Feb. 20th is the deadline for an item to be included in the Mar/Apr edition).

- Produce a bimonthly newsletter and distribute to approximately 700 AAS/NAS members and other interested parties via email notification.
- Write and edit articles and solicit articles from others on birds and conservation-related topics.
- Announce outings, programs, and other activities of interest.
- Send email notifications to 700+ AAS and NAS members when new issues are posted on the website.
- Solicit and sell ads; send annual invoices and track payments.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Please read our DEI statement [here](#).

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 <https://www.instagram.com/alachuaaudubon>

Contact Information:

Email: contact@alachuaaudubon.org Emails to this address are monitored by several AAS board members and are either answered by one of those board members or forwarded to others who can better respond.

Mail: Alachua Audubon Society P. O. Box 140464 Gainesville, FL 32614-0464