



The Crane

Volume 67 Number 2 November–December 2025

FIELD TRIPS

NOVEMBER

Cofrin Nature Park

Saturday, November 1·10:30am—12:00pm:

4810 NW 8th Avenue, Gainesville

Join trip leader Taylor Zeglam at the trail entrance near the playground for our first November field trip in partnership with Blackadder Brewery who is sponsoring AAS as their charity of the month..

After the walk, we'll have a casual meet-up at Blackadder where we will receive \$1 off on drafts!

This site, once a horse farm, is steadily returning to a mesic hammock habitat, rich with deciduous trees along a creek and surrounding seepage wetlands. A memorial garden near the entrance showcases a variety of native plants. It has been a favorite hotspot for fall migration this season—don't miss the chance to explore it!

Difficulty: 1 (easy), about 0.5 miles of unpaved trail, shady, with little to no elevation change

Tour the Museum Bird Collection with Dr. Kratter:

Saturday, November 8. Members only—sign up only event. Stay tuned for information on how to sign up on the AAS Facebook page and website calendar. There will be two time slots with 8-10 people each.

Ornithologist Dr. Andy Kratter's specialties include the classification, taxonomy and nomenclature of birds. This collection of ~3,000 species may be the fifth largest in the world, and includes extinct rarities like the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Dusky Seaside Sparrows, Passenger Pigeons, and Carolina Parakeets.

Participation limit: 8-10 per session. This is a NAS/AAS member ONLY event. Join on our website [here](#).

Young Birders Club (YBC)—Bolen Bluff

Saturday, November 8, 9:00—11:30am

Join trip leader Maggie Paxson in the parking lot for a walk through diverse habitats. Located along the southern rim of Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, Bolen Bluff trail hugs the southern rim of the prairie's rise, offering great views of the wetlands. We'll walk first through upland hardwood forest where we're likely to spot migrating songbirds and the park's wild horses before transitioning to the lowland basin where grassland and wading birds are possible depending on water levels. We hope to see at least 40 species of birds and lots of other wildlife!

This is a longer trail at about 2.5 miles round trip, so students should wear sturdy walking shoes. Please bring water and wear sunscreen. The YBC is open to students aged 9-18, but parents and younger siblings with parental supervision are always welcome.

Questions? Contact gnvyouthbirding@gmail.com

NON-YBC MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

Sparrow walk at Boulware Springs Nature Park

Sunday, November 9, 8:00—11:00am:

3300 SE 15 St., Gainesville

Join Mia Keriazes and Preston Ballard for a sparrow

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walk at Boulware Springs Park. Meet in the larger parking lot by the pavilion. Our walk will cover the sandhill restoration portion of Boulware Springs. This is a great spot for birds year-round, but gets even better as winter rolls around and sparrows begin to arrive. Our focus birds will be primarily sparrows – with targets like Swamp, Savannah, Grasshopper, Field, and Lincoln’s Sparrow. But other birds such as Red-headed Woodpeckers, American Kestrels, and various buntings may be present!

Let’s Go Birding Together at Depot Park!

Saturday, November 15, 5:00—6:30 pm

Alachua Audubon is proud to offer our second annual beginner and family-friendly guided birding walk rescheduled from Pride Month due to rain. Join trip leader Maggie Paxson at the sidewalk roundabout of the Cade Museum (between the parking and the lake). We'll stroll through Depot Park and around the lake looking for birds, alligators, and other wildlife while talking about the history of the park and how it contributes to downtown stormwater management.

While this walk celebrates LGBTQ+ pride, affirming individuals of all identities are welcome. Birders of all ability levels and non-members are welcome.

Loaner binoculars will be available.

Lundgren Moccasin Creek Preserve

Sunday, Nov. 16th, 2025, from 8:00—11:00 a.m

County Road 225 about 5 miles west of HWY 301 (email for coordinates).

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Alachua County Forever Program, the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department has invited AAS to participate in this family-friendly guided hike. **It is limited to 25 people. Participants should RSVP by emailing anatwick@alachuacounty.us**

Participants will encounter some of the local flora and fauna while also learning about the Alachua County Forever Program. The preserve contains 9 distinct natural communities including 1.5 miles of Moccasin Creek. We will walk through a mix of habitats that is mostly under a canopy of trees.

Burrowing Owls at Watermelon Pond – Metzger Tract, Saturday, December 6, 7:30 am.

Sign up only event.

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Alachua County Forever Program, the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department has invited

Alachua Audubon Society to participate in a guided hike at Watermelon Pond, the only place in Alachua County with Burrowing Owls! Alachua Audubon's Eileen Ahlquist will co-lead this trip with environmental specialist Anastasia Utley. **This hike is limited to 50 people. Participants should RSVP by emailing autley@alachuacounty.us**

We'll meet at the county gate on SW 250th Street and be guided half a mile into the viewing area. This area is typically not publicly accessible. The surrounding area is good for birds such as American Kestrel, Northern Bobwhite, and Bachman's Sparrow. Difficulty: Ground may be uneven and wet depending on weather conditions. 1-2 miles of walking.

DECEMBER

December multiple dates TBD: pontoon boat trips with Captain Karen. Stay tuned for dates and information on how to sign up.

Gainesville Young Birders Club at Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park

Saturday, December 21, 2026 from 9—11:30am.

Details forthcoming but we'll explore the Visitor Center, climb the observation tower where wild horses and bison are often spotted, and walk part of Cones Dike.

The YBC is open to students aged 9-18, but parents and younger siblings with parental supervision are always welcome. No experience or equipment needed--loaner binoculars will be available. Questions?

Contact gnvyouthbirding@gmail.com

JANUARY

Thursday, January 1st, 2026

New Year's Big Day—details to come. This is a NAS/AAS member ONLY event. Join [here](#)!

Please check the full field trip schedule on our website [here](#) for the most current information.

Important News

Alachua Audubon recently created a Code of Conduct to foster a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment for all. This policy outlines expected conduct at field trips, meetings, and events and provides a process to submit reports of misconduct to ensure everyone can enjoy and learn together. You can view the full document on our website [here](#).



ALACHUA AUDUBON SOCIETY

2025 HOLIDAY SOCIAL

MATHESON HISTORY
MUSEUM

513 E. UNIVERSITY AVE

DECEMBER 5TH
6:30 - 8:30 PM

JOIN US IN A FESTIVE CELEBRATION OF
BIRDS, CONSERVATION, AND FRIENDSHIPS.
BRING A DISH AND BEVERAGE TO SHARE (NO RED WINE)

OPTIONAL: BRING NATURE THEMED BOOKS AND ITEMS
AS DONATIONS FOR AN AAS FUNDRAISER

• FOOD • DRINKS •
• BIRD AND NATURE ITEM
DONATION TABLE •

alachuaaudubon.org





BACKYARD BIRDING TOUR

HOSTED BY
**ALACHUA
AUDUBON
SOCIETY &**



**February 21st, 2026
9:00 am - 3:00 pm**

Tickets: \$15

About Our Event

Join us on a self-guided tour of some of Gainesville's premier backyard 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.

Stay tuned for ticket purchasing information.
alachuaaudubon.org

Backyard Birding Tour 2026

February 21, 2026

We're looking for a few homes to showcase the benefits of creating habitat for birds in our yards.

- Are you passionate about cultivating a welcoming space for birds in your yard?
- Do you create or manage a variety of habitats for birds in your yard?
- Do you offer a variety of food sources, including bird feeder systems?
- Do you have water features or any other unique attractions in your space?
- Do you have diverse species that visit your yard?
- Do you want to show off your hard work and the rewards you reap?

If you'd like your property featured on our tour, contact:

Tonya Becker at TLBecker@gmail.com
Danielle Zukowski at Daniellebirding@gmail.com
or Wild Birds Unlimited at (352) 381-1997



Birding Class Offered



REGISTER
NOW!

BIRD WATCHING COURSE

with Alachua Audubon and
Santa Fe College



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 and experience.

Santa Fe College Community Education in partnership with Alachua Audubon is offering this bird watching course on Saturday mornings from February 7–28. A second course will be held from April 4–25. 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.

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. Bring binoculars; they are essential for birding. Please register early as this class fills quickly.

Florida Keys Hawkwatch Celebrates 25 Years

The Florida Keys Hawkwatch (FKH) is the southernmost raptor migration monitoring station in the USA. It has operated during fall migration nearly continuously since the late 1990s at Curry Hammock State Park, near the town of Marathon in the Middle Keys. Its location makes it unique because the Florida peninsula acts as a funnel to concentrate birds flying southbound. The Keys are the last bit of land that raptors see as they prepare to cross either the Gulf of Mexico to Central America or the Florida Straits to Cuba.

Consequently, the FKH is positioned to collect critically important monitoring data, including the largest annual counts for Peregrine Falcons and Swallow-tailed Kites at any migration station in North America. In addition, FKH also provides insights into the seasonal distribution and abundance of some of Florida's uncommon resident raptor species, including Short-tailed Hawk, Snail Kite, and White-tailed Kite.



*Peregrine Falcons at the Florida Keys Hawkwatch.
Photos by Mariah Hryniewicz.*

FKH is known as the "Peregrine Falcon Migration Capital of the World" because it holds the world record for a single day migration. On 10 October 2015, an incredible 1,506 Peregrine Falcons passed over the hawkwatch! This date has been deemed "Día de los Peregrinos" or "Day of the Peregrines" at FKH ever since.



This project continues thanks to annual financial support from many partners, including the Florida Ornithological Society, Tropical Audubon Society, Florida Keys Audubon Society, and Kowa Optics. Operating the Hawkwatch requires paying stipends to a seasonal team of expert counters and providing them with housing in an expensive real estate environment. On behalf of our FKH team, we thank the Alachua Audubon Society Board of Directors for a generous donation towards our operating expenses in 2025!

You can see daily sightings for the current season or look at data from previous years [here](#). Please go to the FKH website [here](#) if you would like to support this important project. Visit Curry Hammock State Park between August and early November to view the spectacle of raptor migration for yourself!

By Karl E. Miller and Jeffrey Bouton





Blackadder Brewery Company will be partnering with Alachua Audubon as their nonprofit charity for the month of November!

Join us for these special events:

Bird Walk at Cofrin Park – Saturday, November 1, at 10:30 am, followed by a meet-up at the brewery.
Trivia Night – Wednesday, November 5. 10% of draft sales benefit AAS.

Charity Bingo Night – Thursday, November 20.

618-A NW 60th Street
 Gainesville, FL 352.339.0324

Discover Central Florida's 20,000-Acre Lake Apopka North Shore • 377+ Bird Species
 Affordable Birding and Photo Field Trips

ORANGE AUDUBON
 A Chapter of National and Florida Audubon Societies

NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL

December 11-15, 2025
NorthShoreBirdingFestival.com

Photos: Mark Hainen, Sam Mitcham, Joyce Stefancic

The NORTH SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL highlights the St. Johns River Water Management District's 20,000-acre Lake Apopka North Shore, one of the top eBird hotspots in Florida. Most of the 70 field trips are for birding but a number are tailored for photographers. Field trips have excellent local and out-of-town leaders, and include a Young Birders trip, birding by bicycle, birding by kayak, and search for Black Rail, Crested Caracara, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and overwintering northern-breeding ducks and others for your life list. The festival is a project of Orange Audubon Society and all proceeds go toward its nature and environmental education center on the Lake Apopka North Shore. Visit our website northshorebirdingfestival.com. If you have any questions, please email festival@orangeaudubonfl.org or call 407-637-2525.

Bald Eagle Monument to be Unveiled

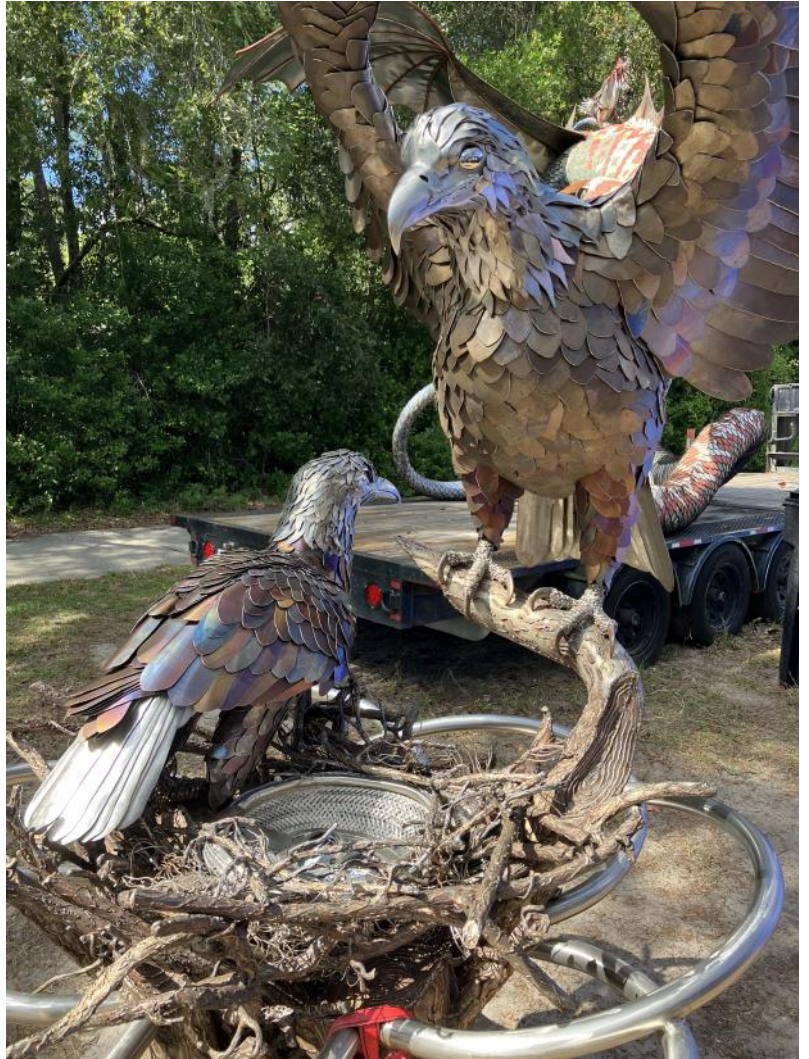
While conducting research for a book I was writing on the Bald Eagle, I came across a reference to a Bald Eagle restoration program in Florida. Digging deeper into sources and tracking down people involved in the initiative revealed that the University of Florida and the George Miksch Avian Research Center (Sutton Center) in Oklahoma launched an experimental egg translocation program in 1984 in Alachua County. Decades of habitat destruction and DDT use left most of the southern states without nesting pairs. To restore their populations, wildlife experts turned to Florida's Bald Eagles, whose numbers had remained comparatively stable.

Over the next eight years, UF scientists culled 275 eggs from nests in Alachua and five surrounding counties and shipped them to the Sutton Center. The eggs were removed early enough for the females to lay a second, replacement clutch. All of those relocated to Oklahoma were successfully hatched beneath Cochin hens. When the eaglets were eight weeks old, they were moved to hack boxes located across the South. Remaining in the hack boxes—which resembled lion cages on stilts—until they fledged at around 14 weeks, the young eagles imprinted on their surroundings. In their minds, they were looking out over their natal territory, the place to which eagles instinctively return when they reach breeding age. The program achieved its goals, and today, Bald Eagles are thriving in all the southern states.

Here was a model environmental success story, I thought, that deserved public acknowledgement. With the goal of creating a monument to honor Florida's Bald Eagles, I secured a grant from Duke Energy Florida, with Alachua Audubon serving as custodian of the funds. I then approached John Andrews, who has several public wildlife statues around Gainesville, to design the monument. We envisioned a domestic scene with two eggs in a nest and the parents alongside it. Next, I reached out to Alachua Conservation Trust about placing the monument at its newly acquired Orange Lake Overlook property. It was an ideal location, and the ACT board, along with Alachua Audubon and Duke Energy, agreed. Many of the eggs had been taken from around the lake, and the property has recently become home to an active nest.

In October, John completed a nine-foot, 800-pound statue out of repurposed stainless steel, and on December 6, ACT, Alachua Audubon, and Duke Energy will hold an unveiling ceremony open to the public from 10am to noon.

By Jack Davis



Bald Eagle monument by John Andrews. Photo by Anne Casella.

PRCA Releases Morningside Management Plan

The Gainesville Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs held a public information meeting on October 28 to share information about the newly developed Morningside Nature Park management plan. The plan has seven goals and objectives for each goal.

Goal 1 is to restore and maintain native habitats and communities, with prescribed burns and removal of invasive species being the primary objectives to achieve it.

Goal 2 relates to providing opportunities to the public for education and recreation.

Goal 3 is to preserve and restore hydrology.

Goal 4 is to manage forest resources through an ecosystem level approach.

Goal 5 is to protect and preserve cultural resources.

Goal 6 relates to infrastructure and

Goal 7 relates to personnel and fiscal resources.

The Alachua Audubon board is very pleased that three of the top four goals relate to habitat preservation and improvement.

By Anne Casella

2025 Christmas Bird Counts

Gainesville CBC – Sunday, Dec. 14. To sign up, contact Andy Kratter at kratter@flmnh.ufl.edu

The following CBCs need volunteers:

Ichetucknee – Santa Fe – O'Leno CBC – Dec. 16. To sign up contact Ginger Feagle at

Ginger.Feagle@myfwc.com

Lake City CBC – Wednesday, December 17. To sign up contact Valerie Thomas at v.thomas57@gmail.com or Debbie Segal at Debbie.Segal@gmail.com

Melrose CBC – Friday, December 19. To sign up contact Laura Berkelman at lberkelman@windstream.net

Learn more about the Christmas Bird Count on the AAS website [here](#).

What's Up with WhatsApp?

AAS has recently received some questions about how to be added to our WhatsApp account. Unfortunately, the internet is infested with scammers and automated bots that are constantly searching for ways to hack into accounts or put spam in front of people via social media, email, or other forums like WhatsApp. For this reason, the link must be changed intermittently; if it stayed the same, scammers would be continually requesting to be added to the group. For addition to our WhatsApp account, please contact Field Trip Committee member [Danielle Zukowski](#) until further notice. Thanks for your understanding!

Tim Hardin

The AAS Holiday Social

Come celebrate birds, conservation, and the holidays with the Alachua Audubon Society! The social will be held at the Matheson History Museum on Friday, December 5, from 6:30-8:30. There is parking on site, in the lawyer's office to the east, and at the Kirby Smith building across the street. Please bring a dish and/or beverage (*no red wine, please*) to share with your birding friends or make new friends if you're joining us for the first time. And please donate unwanted bird and nature-related items that others might enjoy. Others may purchase these items for a donation of any amount to AAS. Call 352-256-5960 to have your items picked up or you can bring them to the social. Let's celebrate another year of exciting activities with Alachua Audubon.

Stormy Weather Produces Exciting Birding Conditions

Kudos to the Alachua Audubon Field Trip Committee for organizing creative outings like the recent Birdability field trip to Devil's Milhopper and the Big Sit at three locations – Palm Point, Sweetwater Wetlands Park, and Tuscaawilla Prairie. Likewise, exciting locations have popped up on AAS's events calendar like Guana-Tolomato-Matanzas Research Reserve in St. Johns County just north of St. Augustine. GTM is well-known for its superb fall migration birding. The expansive maritime forest serves as a stopover site for songbirds, while raptors, wading birds, gulls, and others follow the coastline during their journey southward. When storms collide with heavy migration activity the result can be an abundant and exciting array of birds, with the most extreme being fall-out conditions.

AAS board member Tonya Becker spent many hours planning a field trip to GTM for October 11th to coincide with fall migration and to celebrate World Migratory Bird Day. She and her husband George scouted the site the weekend before to be familiar with the trails, parking area, docks, restroom locations, and other features.

A few days before the Saturday field trip, predictions of severe weather began appearing on the weather apps. And true to the predictions, a nor'easter developed in the Atlantic and delivered heavy rains and strong winds along the east coast from Florida to North Carolina. The rains began on Friday afternoon and persisted until early Saturday morning, miraculously ending just before our meeting time at 8 am.

Twelve participants braved the stormy weather predictions and gathered at the GTM Visitors Center early on Saturday. With a clear view of the Guana River, we saw numerous American Oystercatchers foraging along the estuary (including a tagged one on the dock); gulls, terns, and shorebirds resting on the nearby dock; Ospreys hunting the shallow waters; Brown Pelicans gliding over the estuary and beach; and Merlins and Peregrine Falcons winging south along with flocks of White Ibis and egrets also flying southward. Throughout the day, there were birds to observe, identify, and admire.

Our second stop was a short drive to the Guana trailhead, where several hiking trails radiate outward and traverse an extensive maritime forest. The parking lot proved to be so birdy that we remained focused on the forest edge where we observed numerous warblers (Cape May, American Redstart, Bay-breasted, Black-and-White, Common Yellowthroat, and Palm), a Scarlet Tanager, Painted and Indigo Buntings, a Clay-colored Sparrow, Gray Catbirds, a Swainson's Thrush, and numerous other species. Merlins and Peregrines continued their flight



Cape May Warbler



Swainson's Thrush



Black-throated Blue Warbler.

overhead.

After lunch, we slowly strolled along several wet trails where we observed one feeding flock after another. Just along a one-mile loop, we encountered 16 species of warblers, with the most abundant being American Redstart, Magnolia, Cape May, Northern Parula, Ovenbird, and Black-throated Blue. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were also numerous as we discovered them feeding in the low canopy.

We are hugely grateful to Tonya Becker and her husband George for their many hours of preparation and for sticking to the game plan when the weather conditions appeared ominous, and to the brave souls who drove a couple of hours from Gainesville through rain and wind to reach GTM, where to our delight, we were greeted with surprisingly pleasant weather and birds galore. It wasn't a fall out but it was spectacular birding.

Like others, I was buzzing by day's end after discovering such abundant, diverse, and easy-to-view birds.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak

By Debbie Segal

Photos by Tonya Becker and Debbie Segal

EVENING PROGRAMS

New Zealand & Australia: A Bit of Birding During a Road Scholar Tour with Glenn Israel

Tuesday, November 18, 2025, 6:45 – 8:15 pm at Cypress and Grove Brewing, 1001 NW 4th St, Gainesville

Glenn Israel shares a visual journey “down under” focusing on birds that are native or endemic to New Zealand and Australia during March and April 2025. New Zealand is best known for its iconic Kiwis but it also boasts many other beautiful and/or rare species. I was fortunate to see a number of these, including the Tui, Kereru, and Takahe, while visiting some breathtakingly beautiful places. Likewise, Australia is endowed with an array of beautiful parrots, lorikeets, rosellas, cockatoos, and more. One of my favorites was the Flame Robin that is endemic to Tasmania. There is also an amazing diversity of black and white birds in different shapes and sizes. The trip even included a snorkeling adventure to a nesting colony on the Great Barrier Reef and a penguin parade! Please join me for ideas about your next trip abroad.

Bird watching - What's the Deal?

With Adam Kent

Tuesday, December 9, 2025, 6:45 – 8:15 pm at Cypress and Grove Brewing, 1001 NW 4th St, Gainesville

What's with all the bird watching in the news these days? Is there a difference between bird watching and birding? Does it matter? What's so fun about birding? Can you do it while you drink a beer? How do you get started? Are there any downsides? Come join us as we try to answer those questions and any others you might have.

Affiliated program offering

Friday, January 9, 2026, 7 pm at Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 4225 NW 34 St., Gainesville.

LoraKim Joyner will lecture and share slides and videos about [One Earth Conservation's](#) efforts to end parrot poaching and deforestation in the Americas in collaboration with indigenous peoples. Alachua Audubon members and their guests, as well as the public, are invited to attend.

Maronda Homes Development

Maronda Homes has requested a zoning change from the County Commission to allow construction of 134 homes on the rim of Paynes Prairie just off 441 south of Williston Rd. The Alachua Audubon Board is opposed to this development for a number of reasons. Paynes Prairie is one of Gainesville's greatest natural assets—a unique landscape of statewide ecological significance. It plays a vital role in filtering and cleansing the water that recharges the Floridan aquifer, the source of our community's drinking water. It is also critical habitat for countless species of wildlife, many of which are sensitive to changes at the landscape level.

The proposed development threatens the prairie's ecological health. Runoff from residential areas, including fertilizers, pesticides, and other pollutants, all easily moving through the porous and permeable karst topography of the prairie, will degrade water quality and harm native ecosystems. The loss of natural buffer zones will fragment habitat, disturb wildlife movement, and diminish the overall integrity of this protected landscape. The prairie was Florida's first designated preserve, in recognition of its complex resources, specifically protecting the health of the basin and the animals that rely on it.

Steve Collins, an environmental engineer who has developed habitat restoration and stormwater management designs and birds the area of the Prairie adjacent to the proposed development for the Christmas Bird Count, has written a letter to the County Commission describing in greater detail why this development is ill-suited for this site. He has given Alachua Audubon permission to print it in this newsletter.

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing in opposition of the proposed zoning change requested by Maronda Homes, LLC east of US441/SW 13th Street and Paynes Prairie State Preserve. The proposed density of residential housing is incompatible with the Preserve's mission, with maintaining the function of wetlands on site, and with preserving water quality of ground-water and adjacent wetlands. I would like to preface my opposition based on my experience in landscape ecology (I have published on the importance of linking wetland habitats and have presented at the International Association of Landscape Ecology conference), based on my experience as a professional engineer involved in the development of both habitat restoration and stormwater management designs, and my intimate knowledge of this parcel that comes from years of birdwatching as viewed from the adjacent portions of Paynes Prairie State Preserve as part of the annual Christmas Bird Count.

Many of the ecological benefits of wetlands and their buffer zones are only realized when there are undeveloped wetland and upland connections between them. Many wetland organisms require this undeveloped "matrix" to as part of their foraging strategy, to breed, and to maintain genetic diversity. Preserving wetlands and buffers without considering how the functional integrity of the wetland habitats will be maintained is short-sighted. Development as proposed by Maronda Homes may meet regulatory requirements of some permitting agencies, but it cannot meet "best environmental practices and provide adequate measures for protecting natural resources." The wetlands will become islands, and their genetic and ecological diversity will diminish over time. Furthermore, development such as is proposed will reduce the "core" protected habitats of Paynes Prairie State Preserve, will increase the amount of edge habitat, and will allow for invasive species to flourish.

With respect to water quality, the proposed stormwater management basins on the property would decrease water quality of adjacent wetlands they discharge to and to the groundwater beneath and adjacent to the property. The proposed conceptual layout does not appear to consider the new stormwater rule in Florida (S.B. 7040) that requires additional water quality treatment and BMPs in series. This type of treatment usually requires much more acreage devoted to stormwater management than is currently depicted. Additionally, sinkholes are present on the property and nearby. The developer would need to demonstrate that the stormwater will not adversely affect groundwater or cause subsidence. Since the rim of Paynes Prairie is a karst geology, and sinkholes are known on site, it will be difficult or impossible for the developer to show they are not allowing contaminated stormwater to drain to and contaminate groundwater.

As a long-time birdwatcher and participant in the annual Gainesville Christmas Bird Count, I have had the

opportunity explore the eastern edge of this property as viewed from Paynes Prairie State Preserve. This portion of the preserve is usually off-limits to the public. The mesic hammock here supports a wide variety of birds (such as the locally rare Yellow-breasted Chat), and I have always been impressed by the southern live oaks present on this property. The photo of the southern live oak below, taken by me in 2022, may be within the proposed development or it is immediately adjacent to it. Trees such as this that are hundreds of years old would be impacted by the proposed development. These trees host entire communities of epiphytes (ferns, bromeliads, and orchids) on their bows, and locally rare birds such as Eastern Whip-poor-wills winter on them. This mesic hammock community also provides a critical supply of insect food for wildlife. Migrating warblers and sparrows have been using these habitats along the edge of the Prairie for eons, and it is imperative that the forested corridor along this part of the prairie, known locally as “Rocky Point,” is preserved or maintained as low-density residential in perpetuity. Because of its position on the landscape, the ecological value of this property is unique. I urge you to maintain the existing zoning and not allow this parcel to be rezoned for increased density development.



A southern live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) on or near the private parcel boundary for the proposed development. There are many other large and impressive oaks on the private parcel. Photo by Steven Collins.

Sincerely,

Steven Collins

Steven Collins, PhD, PE

First “Big Sit” Trip Report

On October 4th, 2025, Alachua Audubon had our first “Big Sit.” We birded from 6:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. at three different locations but, unlike our usual trips where we walk around seeking birds, we sat in one spot to see how many bird species we would see!

Adam Kent led the Tusawilla Prairie location, recording 51 species. This group was greeted by a morning chorus of catbirds and thrashers. There was an almost constant swirl of chimney swifts over the prairie. Some other highlights included Indigo Bunting, migrating American Kestrels, and a Bank Swallow.

Gina Kent led at Palm Point Park, recording 54 species. The point was very windy much of the day so no nocturnal flight calls or morning chorus. There was a good variety of warblers. In addition to the list below, an Indigo Bunting, Painted Bunting, Hooded Warbler, Canada Warbler and Worm-eating Warbler were just outside of the count circle!

Maggie Paxson led the Sweetwater Wetlands group, recording 65 species. In addition to people from AAS, visitors to Sweetwater also stopped by the pavilion and we were able to show them the birds we had seen. Some of the highlights were an Anhinga that sunned nearby us for most of the day, a Bald Eagle family, a Merlin flyby, and a Green Heron finally arriving as the count finished up.

By Danielle Zukowski

Total: 85 Species

American Crow	Chimney Swift	Least Bittern	Red-tailed Hawk
American Kestrel	Common Gallinule	Limpkin	Red-winged Blackbird
American Redstart	Common Grackle	Little Blue Heron	Rock Pigeon
American White Pelican	Common Yellowthroat	Merlin	Roseate Spoonbill
Anhinga	Cooper's Hawk	Mourning Dove	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Bald Eagle	Double-crested Cormorant	Northern Cardinal	Sandhill Crane
Bank Swallow	Downy Woodpecker	Northern Flicker	Short-tailed Hawk
Barn Swallow	Eastern Bluebird	Northern Harrier	Snowy Egret
Barred Owl	Eastern Phoebe	Northern House Wren	Tennessee Warbler
Belted Kingfisher	Fish Crow	Northern Mockingbird	Tree Swallow
Black Vulture	Forster's Tern	Northern Parula	Tricolored Heron
Black-and-white Warbler	Glossy Ibis	Northern Waterthrush	Tufted Titmouse
Black-crowned Night Heron	Gray Catbird	Osprey	Turkey Vulture
Blue Grosbeak	Great Blue Heron	Ovenbird	Western Cattle-Egret
Blue Jay	Great Egret	Palm Warbler	White Ibis
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Great Horned Owl	Pied-billed Grebe	White-eyed Vireo
Boat-tailed Grackle	Green Heron	Pileated Woodpecker	Wild Turkey
Brown Thrasher	Indigo Bunting	Prairie Warbler	Wood Stork
Brown-headed Cowbird	Kentucky Warbler	Purple Gallinule	Yellow Warbler
Cape May Warbler	Killdeer	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Carolina Chickadee	King Rail	Red-shouldered Hawk	Yellow-throated Warbler
Carolina Wren			

**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.


Our club offers:


- Unique field outings
- Monthly virtual guest speaker events
- A chance to communicate with other young birders in a secure space
- Member discount on Vortex optics



**Scan the code
to join!**








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Each backpack contains:

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- Birding field guide book





Reserve a kit online for pick up at your preferred library branch. Kits check out for 14 days.

www.aclib.us/birdingkits

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, December 7th, at 4:15 pm





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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.



**Boutique Lodging & Events
in Historic Gainesville**

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La China Cottage, Jimmy Ho Photography



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Special thanks to Cypress & Grove Brewing Company for the complementary use of their event space (*and extraordinary beer!*)

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in Gainesville!

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Mon-Sat: 2-10

Sunday: 2-8

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Join Alachua Audubon!

Benefits of membership include expert-led field trips, programs for adults and youth, *The Crane* newsletter, conservation advocacy with local & state legislators, & much more.

Gift Memberships Available!

Annual Membership Levels

Choosing a higher level provides additional support for our conservation & education efforts.

Student	\$10	Individual	\$25
Family	\$35	Limpkin	\$50
Purple Gallinule			\$100
Swallow-tailed Kite			\$250
Sandhill Crane			\$500
Whooping Crane (lifetime membership)			\$1,000

Sliding scale memberships welcome. Send what you can afford.

Donations are always appreciated! Donate [HERE](#).

Join online with PayPal at AlachuaAudubon.org/join/ or send your application (print from the website) and check payable to **Alachua Audubon Society** to PO Box 140464, Gainesville, FL 32614-0464. Include your name, address and email. *The Crane* is distributed via email. Your email address will not be shared with other organizations.

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.

Your introductory membership amount 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](#). The state registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.

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AAS Website AlachuaAudubon.org

Facebook facebook.com/AlachuaAudubon/

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Contact us at contact@AlachuaAudubon.org

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 Jan – Feb issue: December 15th.

For advertising information, contact the editor at

Contact@AlachuaAudubon.org