



The Crane

Volume 55 Number 3 January February 2014

January and February Field Trips

Saturday, January 4, 9:00 am Family Birding at Paynes Prairie

Cranes and Winter Birds on the Prairie. Meet Neil and Joan McLeod at the La Chua Trail parking lot. This field trip is sponsored by Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. Call 352-466-4100 to register. Families and kids are encouraged to participate. More family birding field trips on February 1st and March 1st.

Saturday, January 4, 8:00 am La Chua Trail

Meet field trip leader Rex Rowan at the parking lot of the La Chua Trail trailhead, where Rex will lead a field trip out La Chua Trail to the observation platform that overlooks Alachua Lake. Expect to see waterfowl, wading birds, raptors, and perhaps even some of the rarities that have recently been reported.

Saturday and Sunday, January 11 & 12, 8 am St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Meet John Hintermister at the St. Marks visitor center (Saturday 8 am) for a trip to one of Florida's premier winter birding spots. Expect a large number and wide variety of birds on this field trip. Overnight option. Sunday's meeting time and location will be decided on Saturday. Call Wild Birds Unlimited [352-381-1997] to register. Limit 20 people. Difficulty 3

Saturday, January 18, 8:00 am Gainesville Ponds

Meet Ron Robinson at the Home Depot parking lot on Tower Road to search for waterfowl and other

birds at various ponds around Gainesville, including Chapmans Pond. Difficulty 1

Saturday, February 1, 8:00 Alligator Lake

Meet Jerry Krummrich at Alligator Lake Park parking lot in Lake City (enter from SE Country Club Rd.) for a site that has often provided new and unique birds. Difficulty 3.

Saturday, February 1, 9:00 am Family Birding at Paynes Prairie

Identifying Birds and their Songs. Meet Neil and Joan MacLeod at the Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park Visitors Center. This field trip is sponsored by the state park. Call 352-466-4100 to register. Families and kids are encouraged to participate.

Sunday, February 9, 8 am; Levy Lake Preserve

Meet field trip leader Adam Zions for birding at Alachua County's newest Public Use Natural Area. The 5,700-acre preserve of marsh and wet prairie provides excellent opportunities to see a wide variety of resident and wintering birds, and hopefully a western vagrant or two! To reach the trailhead, drive south on US-441 from GNV. Just before Micanopy and across from Lake Wauberg, turn right on Wacahoota Road. Go roughly 1 mile and turn left on SE 11th Dr. Continue south on SE 11th Dr. to the preserve trailhead and parking area. Bring plenty of sunscreen, water, and snacks as the trip is 7 miles round-trip. Difficulty: 3 (due to duration hike).

(Field trips continued on Page 8)

Trip Difficulty 1: Trip within easy access to the vehicle and/or level terrain one mile or less **2:** May involve uneven terrain one to two miles **3:** May involve elevation change, uneven terrain, and/or greater than two miles

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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 sustainable use of natural resources.

Content of **The Crane** is the sole responsibility of AAS and fulfills stated objectives and goals of AAS. Annual subscription to **The Crane** is included in AAS dues. Non-Audubon members may subscribe to **The Crane** for \$10 annually. All checks for subscriptions or changes of address should be mailed to Paul Moler, Membership Chairman: see back page for address. Submissions to **The Crane** are welcomed. **The Crane** is printed on recycled paper.

**Deadline for
Mar. Apr. Crane:
Feb. 15th**



Early winter is an exciting time for finding birds that aren't supposed to be here. Migrating flycatchers are especially known for wandering off course, passing through our area and even spending the winter here. The lovely little Vermilion Flycatcher that has been gracing the end of La Chua trail is a good example.

We also had a couple of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers visit briefly; one was reported Oct. 22 off Archer Rd. by Lisa Smith. It stayed several days and was enjoyed by many. Another was spotted by John Killian Nov. 22 along CR 241 but apparently left the next day. In recent winters we have regularly had at least one Least Flycatcher along Cones Dike. This year we may have had as many as three, reported Nov. 2 by Adam Zions. One of our regular strays is Ash-throated Flycatcher. John Hintermister and Howard Adams both reported one on Cones Dike Oct. 26, and there were a few other reports from other parts of Paynes Prairie as well. At least two Western Kingbirds visited our area, one seen along La Chua trail Nov 19 by Chris Hooker, and another in the yard of Vickie Boudeaux along CR 236. Both birds were "one-day-wonders."

The most exciting sparrow of early winter was a Nelson's Sparrow first reported by Adam Zions on October 20. Only the second record of that species in the county, it was easily viewed by many happy birders for several days before moving on. Another welcome visitor was a Clay-colored Sparrow, identified by Adam Kent Oct. 26 while leading an Alachua Audubon field trip. Another Alachua Audubon field trip, this one Nov. 6 at the Hague Dairy led by Rex Rowan, found several fairly rare species, including Dickcissel, Painted Bunting, Bronzed Cowbird, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. In recent decades Rusty Blackbirds have been pretty rare here, but over the last few years a flock has taken up winter quarters in the cypress swamp behind the Magnolia Parke shopping area. They returned again this year, first noted Dec. 1.

Loons are known to migrate in spring along a route that takes them from the Atlantic to the Gulf in a flight path right over Gainesville. Apparently this happens somewhat in reverse in early winter, as we had a rash of fly-over loon sightings in late October and early November. Most of these were Common Loons, but Andy Kratter and Gina and Adam Kent picked out two rare Red-throated Loons as well.

Waterfowl started returning in earnest by November. As usual, Paynes Prairie attracted large flocks of Green and Blue-winged Teal, with smaller numbers of Shovelers, Gadwalls, and Wigeon. Ruddy Ducks, which typically prefer (Continued on Page 13)

Kids' Christmas Bird Count
Sponsored by
The Alachua Audubon Society

Join us for an exciting morning of bird surveys followed by a tally session & pizza.

Who: Kids under 17, accompanied by an adult*

When: Saturday, January 18, 2013: 9:00 A.M.-2:00 p.m.

Where: Teams meet at assigned locations; locations provided when you register

Questions and to register: Contact Emily Schwartz at: emilysgfl@gmail.com or 352-372-0754

This event will take place unless there is heavy rain. If you need binoculars, please let us know when you register. Following the bird count, teams will meet from 12:30-2:00 p.m. at Mill Pond Condominiums Clubhouse (240 NW 48th Blvd.) to tally the number of birds seen.

Pizza & drinks will be provided by AAS.

*Parents are asked to attend and help with transportation, but please leave the bird watching to the kids!

Kids' Bird Camp at Tusawilla Prairie

Alachua Audubon sponsored the kids' birding camp on November 3rd at the beautiful Alachua Conservation Trust site at Tusawilla Prairie on the south side of Micanopy. This year a dozen elementary students and their families participated in the bird camp.

Helen Warren welcomed the young birders and their families to the bird camp and introduced the Alachua Audubon volunteers. Adam Kent presented the "The Bird Detective" power point presentation, which helped familiarize young birders with bird identification. Sharon Kuchinski introduced young birders to a variety of bird guides, and birders practiced using binoculars and spotting scopes with Joan MacLeod and Ted and Steve Goodman. Birding by ear was one of the favorite activities and was led by Jonathan Mays.

A special thanks to all of the AAS volunteers who made this event possible. And a special thanks to young birders, Steve Goodman and Sam Ewing, for sharing their birding experiences and describing how they became involved in birding.

By Sharon Kuchinski

More Family and Kid's Birding Field trips listed in the Field Trip Section starting on Page 1.

Happy New Year and
Thanks to All!

The Holiday Social and Silent Auction at the Mill Pond Clubhouse was joyful and well attended and continues to provide a warm gathering of friends. Thanks to Barb Kerkhoff for her harp music and to Kathy Haines for the holiday decorations. Thanks to Helen Warren, Emily Schwartz, Scott Flamand, Felicia Lee, Ron Robinson, and Debbie Segal for collecting *almost 100* donations for the silent auction. *And thank you to all who graciously donated items for our important fund raising event.* And a special thank you to Emily Schwartz for performing the lion's share of work in organizing and setting up for the Holiday Social.



Photograph taken by Jonathan Mays at the Kid's Bird Camp at Tusawilla Prairie Park in Micanopy on November 3rd. Hey, is that Adam Kent standing on a picnic table looking at birds through the spotting scope?

Gainesville Christmas Bird Count

The 56th annual Gainesville Christmas Bird Count (actually the 55th annual, because we skipped what would have been the second one, in 1958) was held in fairly miserable conditions on Sunday, December 15th. Rain before dawn kept the owl activity damped down, so to speak (only four screech-owls!), and the rain continued and intensified during the valuable hours right after sunrise. There were other handicaps as well: the nearest, and thus most easily viewed, portion of Alachua Lake was nothing but a mat of weeds, while the Kanapaha Prairie was flooded across more than half its expanse and therefore largely inaccessible. All in all, a tough day. So how, then, did we come up with 157 species, our second-best total ever? We're just that good, I guess.

A number of notable birds were found by our Counters. A Greater Scaup, far from its normal saltwater haunts, was found in the ponds connected with the Paynes Prairie Sheet-flow project at the northwest corner of Paynes Prairie, and a White-faced Ibis and an Ash-throated Flycatcher, two western strays, were seen in the same area. A few stakeouts proved fruitful: a Red-breasted Nuthatch that had apparently enjoyed last year's irruption and had returned for a second Florida winter near Westside Park; a wintering Summer Tanager at a home in southeast Gainesville; and four Painted Buntings in a single back yard just north of the Prairie. Hummingbirds were more common than usual, with two Rufous and three Ruby-throateds counted. And rare-ish warblers included two Black-throated Greens, one at Powers Park and one at Windsor, plus a Wilson's that seems to be wintering at Lake Alice.

One of the most surprising results was the count of 17 Limpkins, by far our best ever. It was entirely due to the invasion of Newnans Lake (where 16 of the 17 were tallied) by the exotic Island Apple Snail. First discovered there in 1997, this large aquatic snail is now in every part of the lake, and is moving into its tributar-

ies – which means that it will soon colonize Paynes Prairie – which, in turn, means more Limpkins and probably the occasional Snail Kite!

At the other end of the scale were birds we often see but missed this year. Of a few northern species that we sometimes get – Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Brown Creeper, Pine Siskin, Golden-crowned Kinglet – not one made an appearance this year. And other big misses included Long-billed Dowitcher and Common Loon.

The final totals: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 312; Snow Goose 1; Muscovy Duck 207; Wood Duck 346; Gadwall 22; American Wigeon 1; Mallard 17; Mottled Duck 121; Blue-winged Teal 757; Northern Shoveler 20; Northern Pintail 7; Green-winged Teal 97; Red-head 2; Ring-necked Duck 602; Greater Scaup 1; Lesser Scaup 15; Bufflehead 8; Common Goldeneye 3; Hooded Merganser 75; Ruddy Duck 96; Northern Bobwhite 16; Wild Turkey 52; Pied-billed Grebe 78; Horned Grebe 8; Wood Stork 54; Double-crested Cormorant 618; Anhinga 220; American White Pelican 22; American Bittern 26; Great Blue Heron 115; Great Egret 402; Snowy Egret 216; Little Blue Heron 206; Tricolored Heron 40; Cattle Egret 260; Green Heron 28; Black-crowned Night-Heron 45; White Ibis 2,010; Glossy Ibis 516; White-faced Ibis 1; Black Vulture 481; Turkey Vulture 1,160; Osprey 9; Northern Harrier 38; Sharp-shinned Hawk 6; Cooper's Hawk 8; Bald Eagle 65; Red-shouldered Hawk 141; Red-tailed Hawk 27; King Rail 9; Virginia Rail 8; Sora 97; Common Gallinule 127; American Coot 465; Limpkin 17; Sandhill Crane 2,984; Killdeer 346; Spotted Sandpiper 1; Greater Yellowlegs 18; Lesser Yellowlegs 2; Least Sandpiper 60; Wilson's Snipe 242; American Woodcock 15; Bonaparte's Gull 8; Ring-billed Gull 699; Herring Gull 3; Forster's Tern 28; Rock Pigeon 13; Eurasian Collared-Dove 75; White-winged Dove 4; Mourning Dove 585; Common Ground-Dove 7; Barn Owl 1; Eastern Screech-Owl 4; Great Horned Owl 19; Barred Owl 45; Eastern Whip-poor-will 2; Ruby-throated Hummingbird 3; Rufous Hummingbird 2; Belted Kingfisher 43; Red-headed Woodpecker 12; Red-bellied Woodpecker 222; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 63; Downy Woodpecker 105; Northern Flicker 64; Pileated Woodpecker 83; American Kestrel 39; Merlin 5; Peregrine Falcon 2; Least Flycatcher 2; *Empidonax*, sp. 1; Eastern Phoebe 408; Vermilion Flycatcher 1; Ash-throated Flycatcher 1; Loggerhead Shrike 38; White-eyed Vireo 110; Blue-headed Vireo 70; Blue Jay 277; American Crow 492; Fish Crow 229; crow, sp. 40; Tree Swallow 12; Carolina Chickadee 242; Tufted Titmouse 290; Red-breasted Nuthatch 1; Brown-headed (Continued on Page 5)

Melrose Christmas Bird Count

On December 19th, 35 participants from Santa Fe Audubon, Alachua Audubon, and others fanned out in boats, cars, and on foot to survey all the birds that could be seen and heard for the 23rd annual Melrose Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This dedicated effort resulted in locating 117 species of birds—a large increase from the 98 species that was tallied last year. The Melrose CBC covers a 15-mile radius circle that encompasses parts of Clay, Putnam, Alachua, and Bradford Counties. Many bird-rich natural areas occur in this circle and include Lake Santa Fe, Santa Fe Swamp, Gold Head Branch State Park, the Ordway Preserve, and numerous lakes.

At the end of the day-long survey, participants congregated at Betty's Pizza in Melrose to tally the results, to share stories of the day's birding highlights, and of course to feast on the local cuisine. Jim Swarr, the CBC organizer, compiled the list of birds that were surveyed by the seven birding groups. Some of the birding highlights included 49 Horned Grebes, 29 Common Loons, 29 Bonaparte's Gulls, and 1 Laughing Gull from Lake Santa Fe; a Least Bittern, Purple Gallinule, and two Henslow's Sparrows from the Ordway Preserve; a Peregrine Falcon seen swooping down on a flock of Eastern Meadowlarks; a Brown-headed Nuthatch from Santa Fe Swamp; and a Grasshopper and Vesper Sparrow in a farm field on CR 219A.

Christmas Bird Counts provide important insight into the health of the environment. Since birds are the most visible of our wildlife and the easiest to survey, bird survey data provide an indication of the overall health of the less visible wildlife species. An abundant and diverse avian community can reflect healthy ecological habitats, while declining bird populations can signify disturbing trends in our land development patterns and their detrimental effects to natural areas. Results from the Melrose CBC combined with data from hundreds of other CBC surveys throughout the country allow ornithologists to assess bird trends on a national and international scale.

By Joyce King and Debbie Segal



Photograph of Helen Warren (left), Laura Berkelman (center), and Joyce King (right) searching for birds from the shore of Crystal Lake during the Melrose CBC. Photograph taken by Ida Little.

Gainesville CBC (continued from page 4)

Nuthatch 4; House Wren 146; Sedge Wren 27; Marsh Wren 52; Carolina Wren 396; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 419; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 422; Eastern Bluebird 251; Hermit Thrush 34; American Robin 654; Gray Catbird 104; Brown Thrasher 29; Northern Mockingbird 220; European Starling 87; American Pipit 13; Cedar Waxwing 134; Ovenbird 9; Northern Waterthrush 2; Black-and-white Warbler 95; Orange-crowned Warbler 98; Common Yellowthroat 175; Northern Parula 4; Palm Warbler 1,259; Pine Warbler 190; Yellow-rumped Warbler 2,365; Yellow-throated Warbler 40; Prairie Warbler 3; Black-throated Green Warbler 2; Wilson's Warbler 1; Eastern Towhee 136; Chipping Sparrow 952; Field Sparrow 27; Vesper Sparrow 62; Savannah Sparrow 294; Grasshopper Sparrow 8; Henslow's Sparrow 7; Song Sparrow 4; Lincoln's Sparrow 4; Swamp Sparrow 581; White-throated Sparrow 55; White-crowned Sparrow 22; Summer Tanager 1; Northern Cardinal 784; Painted Bunting 4; Red-winged Blackbird 3,307; Eastern Meadowlark 143; Rusty Blackbird 5; Common Grackle 325; Boat-tailed Grackle 750; Brown-headed Cowbird 137; Baltimore Oriole 19; House Finch 120; American Goldfinch 257; House Sparrow 40.

By Rex Rowan

Ichetucknee, Santa Fe, O'Leno Christmas Bird Count

The Ichetucknee/Santa Fe/O'Leno Christmas Bird Count (FLIS CBC) held its fifth annual event on December 17th. The 15-mile wide count circle, centered near the town of Fort White, encompasses many natural and state-owned properties, including Ichetucknee Springs State Park, O'Leno State Park, the Ichetucknee River, 25 miles of the Santa Fe River, wildlife mitigation lands, and private, residential, and agricultural areas.

Five birding groups, consisting of 28 people, participated in this CBC, and included members of Four Rivers Audubon, Alachua Audubon, Florida Park Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and even a couple from Jacksonville. Three of the five birding groups concentrated their efforts on state lands; specifically in Ichetucknee Springs and O'Leno State Parks, and on state conservation lands. Birds were even searched for while paddling down the Santa Fe and Ichetucknee Rivers. Other groups searched for birds in pastures, croplands, and rural residential areas—a great place for sparrows!

Although this particular December morning started cold and frosty (the mist off of the warmer water provided a beautiful sight!), the sun ventured out to warm up the birds for their chattering. By the end of the day, 89 bird species were recorded, including four new high records and six species new to the count circle. Record high counts were observed for Little Blue Heron, Sora, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Ring-necked Duck. The new species recorded in the circle included Black-throated Green Warbler, Canvasback, Redhead, Wilson's Snipe, Vermillion Flycatcher, and a fortunate sighting of a Clay-colored Sparrow. Two more species were added as count week birds, bringing the total to 91.

The 6,228 individual birds on this count were only half as many as were seen the first three years, likely due to fewer participants. Fortunately, 444 more individual birds were seen this year over last year. Observing the six new species to this area's CBC was definitely rewarding. The five years'

worth of data are beginning to exhibit trends which note this area's common and unique species this time of year. This CBC is especially rewarding given the natural jewels in north-central Florida—the springs, rivers, state parks, and other conservation lands.

By Ginger Morgan



Photograph of the beautiful Santa Fe River as seen by Debbie Segal, Bob Simons, and Bob Knight while birding the CBC and paddling the river. Photograph taken by Bob Knight.



Photograph of Sandhill Cranes, Snow Goose, and Ross' Goose taken by Jonathan Mays at the UF Beef Research Unit.



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Crane Courtship

Tara Tanaka took this lovely photograph of a Sandhill Crane courting another crane in Tallahassee. The photograph was selected for the cover of the summer, 2013 edition of *Defenders of Wildlife* magazine. Tara graciously donated an enlarged and matted copy of this photograph to Alachua Audubon's silent auction.

The photograph was taken using a technique called digiscoping, a process that uses a camera mounted on a spotting scope. Equivalent focal lengths of 1000 mm and greater are achieved using this method. Congratulations Tara for having your photograph showcased on the *Defenders of Wildlife* magazine and for sharing your lovely photograph with Alachua Audubon!

Field Trips *(Continued from Page 1)*

Saturday, February 15, 6:30 am; NE Florida Coast

Meet trip leader John Hintermister at the Tag Agency and carpool to the east coast. We will start at Fernandina Beach and work our way south. Possible Purple Sandpiper and scoters at Ft. Clinch State Park. Then to Amelia Island for Red-throated Loon, scoters, grebes, and gulls. And finish at Huguenot Park for shorebirds and other winter birds. Expect a full day of birding and some walking at various coastal and intercoastal sites. Bring a lunch and warm clothes. Diff. 3

Sunday, February 16, 8 am; Sparrow Walk at Paynes Prairie

Call Wild Birds Unlimited [352-381-1997] to make a reservation. Limit 15 people. Join local sparrow guru Adam Kent and park ranger Howard Adams to search for sparrows at either Persimmon Point or Sparrow Alley, depending on where the sparrows are most likely to be. Difficulty 3

Saturday and Sunday, February 22—23; Tall Timbers Research Station Sparrow Banding and the Wade Tract Call Wild Birds Unlimited (352-381-1997) for details or to make a reservation. Overnight Saturday in 'TTRS' comfy bunkhouse, and leave early the next morning for a day of birding in The Wade Tract, a 200-acre stand of old growth longleaf pine. Jim Cox and Adam Kent will be the leaders. Come see how Florida looked 200 years ago. Difficulty 2 *(Field trips continued on Page 9)*



What birds are coming to your feeder? Martha Sue Hill photographed these Sandhill Cranes feeding from the bird feeder in her front yard.

Field Trips (Continued from Page 8)

Saturday, March 1, 8 am; Mill Creek—CLEP

In 2002, the Alachua County Forever program made its first conservation land purchase—the 1,190 acre Mill Creek Preserve. Meet leader Steve Hofstetter at the parking lot of Hitchcock’s Grocery Store in Alachua on the south side of US 441, and carpool to Mill Creek Preserve to bird through the pine and hardwood forests. Difficulty: 2

Saturday, March 1, 9:00 am Family Birding at Paynes Prairie

Attracting Birds to your Backyard. Meet Neil and Joan MacLeod at the Lake Wauberg boat ramp at Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. This field trip is sponsored by the state park. Call 352-466-4100 to register. Families and kids are encouraged to participate.

Sparrowing

we fan
out in

a human
line and

scrabble
through

shrubs and
high grass

and keep
our eyes

skinned
for little

brown
explosions

which might
mean Vesper
or Grasshopper
Savannah

or Song
depending on

eye ring
or size

on brow
streaked

or unstreaked
on color

bright or
duller

and habit--
an Easter-

egg hunt
for the grown-up

set
a feast

of conundrum
sans rabbit

By Sidney Wade
MFA@FLA Creative Writing Program in the English Department at UF and AAS member. Published in the *Atlanta Review*.

Receive the Crane Electronically

Help Alachua Audubon reduce our costs of paper, printing, and mailing by receiving the Crane electronically. You will receive only one email per newsletter that will contain a link to the Alachua Audubon Website. To start receiving the Crane electronically, send an email to AAS-thecrane@att.net. In the subject line put the word Newsletter and include your name & address.

**Third Alachua Audubon
Back Yard Birding Tour
Saturday February 8, 2014, 9AM -3PM**

**Explore six of Gainesville's premier backyard birding
habitats in a self-guided tour
LEARN HOW TO ATTRACT BIRDS TO YOUR YARD!**

- See colorful winter visitors such as orioles, goldfinches, hummingbirds and many others
- Learn how the masters of backyard birding attract birds to their backyard habitats
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- Learn how to choose and present foods that attract birds and keep them healthy
- Learn what vegetation to plant and where to plant it in your own yard to attract more birds
- Learn how to provide water so birds can quench their thirst and bathe in safety

Starting Jan. 1st, Tickets available \$10.00 ea. at
Wild Birds Unlimited,
4212 NW 16th Boulevard, next to The Flying Biscuit

Springs Eternal Museum Exhibit and Legislative Project

Have you toured the *Springs Eternal: Florida's Fragile Fountains of Youth* exhibit at the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville? If not, you better hurry. It is only here until January 5th! Through John Moran's spectacular photographs, the exhibit chronicles the story of our springs—their beauty, ecology, and the people who are drawn to them. The exhibit also focuses unflinchingly on the changes that many of us have seen, with a 30-year collection of then-and-now springs photos that offer compelling evidence that we are a long way from “getting the water right.”

The Springs Eternal Project and Florida Springs Institute have partnered to print 1,000 oversized catalogs of John Moran's then-and-now photographs of the springs. These catalogs—called the Springs Eternal Project catalogs—will be delivered to every Florida legislator, water management district governing board member, the Governor and DEP secretary, and other key state and local decision makers.

The survival of our springs depends on public advocacy. ***Our springs are world-class treasures, and they deserve world-class protection.*** You can be a voice for our springs. The Florida Springs Institute and Springs Eternal Project are funded only by private donations. Your donation will help to continue the efforts of these springs advocacy efforts. Please donate now by visiting the homepage of FloridaSpringsInstitute.org

You can learn more about the Springs Eternal Project, which also includes Lesley Gamble's Urban Aquifer bus wrap project and Rick Kilby's *Finding the Fountain of Youth* exhibit, view the Springs Eternal exhibit panels in greater detail, and make a helpful donation at SpringEternalProject.org

By Karen Ahlers

Birding Class Offered

Santa Fe College's Community Education Program, in collaboration with the Alachua Audubon Society, is offering a 4 week course in Field Bird Identification. The next class begins Jan. 25th and continues for three consecutive Saturdays. Classes are on Saturday mornings and last 2 hours. The final class will be a longer trip to Cedar Key. Each class is led by a local birding expert. This class will benefit both beginning birders and more advanced birders. We will visit local natural areas to identify birds in their natural habitat.

Cost is \$49 and generates revenue for AAS. Registration is through SFC. For more information and registration, go online to Santa Fe College Community Education or call (352) 395-5193. Registration for the class begins on January 8th and you must be at least 18 years old to register. This class receives great reviews and many students have returned for additional instruction. Limit 12 students, so register early, as this class fills quickly. Hope to see you in class. Barbara Fennelly, Class Coordinator

Save the Date! Gainesville “Old Florida” Birding and Nature Festival; April 18—20

The first annual Gainesville “Old Florida” Birding and Nature Festival will be held April 18—20 at the downtown Gainesville Hampton Inn. The festival will showcase Gainesville and north central Florida's unique natural areas, including nearby springs, rivers, and Alachua Sink at Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. Guided birding field trips and nature photography field workshops will be offered.

For more information, please visit www.GainesvilleBirdingandNatureFestival.com, like us on Facebook at GainesvilleBirdingAndNatureFestival, and follow us on Twitter at GvilleBirdFest.



**A SWALLOW-TAILED KITE'S 10,000 MILE JOURNEY:
a black and white odyssey**

Paintings by Margo McKnight

Poetry by Christine Cock

Photography by Jim Gray

and

Avian Research and Conservation Institute

Oct. 12, 2013 - Apr. 13, 2014

Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville, Florida

It's all Happening Now at the Museum!

Through paint, photos, and poetry, experience the beauty of Swallow-tailed Kites and the story of their annual 10,000-mile round-trip migration from Florida to South America. "A Black and White Odyssey" immerses visitors in the fascinating journey of these imperiled birds.

Artist Margo McKnight teams with Ken Meyer of the Avian Research and Conservation Institute to share the complex life of these rare and beautiful birds of prey in intimate detail, highlighting the institute's efforts to track and study them. Using satellite telemetry, the institute is studying the birds' perilous migration. The data collected from adults and nestlings tagged with VHF transmitters are used to help protect Swallow-tailed Kites and other rare and imperiled bird species. The work lays a foundation for action by advising government agencies, training wildlife professionals, and promoting public appreciation for science-based conservation.

McKnight's work spans between science and fine art, and her intrigue with wildlife and wilderness has taken her around the world.

Sometimes it is not enough to simply enjoy painting, photography, or the written word. We are changing our world more quickly than wild things can adapt to it, and so we must act now. Swallow-tailed Kites need our help. Through art and science, I hope to share my passion to save quickly disappearing wildlife and places. Conserving the wild world also conserves humanity and all that makes us human.

--Margo McKnight

Did you Know?

- ... The U.S. range of the Swallow-tailed Kite is now a third of its historic size.
- ... Kites nest near the tops of the tallest available trees.
- ... Avian Research and Conservation Institute staff members climb trees to mark young and install artificial nests—which requires skill, nerve, and faith in ropes!

Make a difference in the future of Swallow-tailed Kites by submitting your observations to Avian Research and Conservation Institute. See you at the Florida Museum of Natural History!

Sharon Kuchinski and Expressions 2nd Graders Win EPA Contest

Alachua Audubon member Sharon Kuchinski and her second grade students at Expressions Learning Academy charter school won the Environmental Protection Agency's Rachel Carson "Intergenerational Sense of Wonder Contest." The contest was created to bring people of different age groups together to increase the number of people working towards the EPA's mission to protect human life and the environment. The students danced an original composition choreographed by Sharon that represented the movements of Whooping Cranes, while Sharon narrated by reading Eileen Spinelli's "*Song for the Whooping Crane*". The dance and narration were videotaped and uploaded to the EPA website, where the winner was determined by votes from the public.

Congratulations to Sharon and her students!

By Anne Casella

your mailbox or inbox, the Christmas Count will have taken place, and no doubt other great birds will have been discovered. I look forward to that and to another great year of birding in Alachua County. Thanks to those who shared their sightings through Dec. 15.

Legacy Campaign A Success!

Alachua Audubon volunteers spent hundreds of hours over the last year collecting signatures for the Water and Land Legacy Campaign. And the hard work paid off. Out of 240 groups, AAS collected the highest number of signed petitions at 7,088!

The Legacy Campaign just exceeded their goal of 910,000 signed petitions by collecting 948,600, through a combination of volunteers and paid petition gatherers. The signature verification process is now in progress, and the amendment will be placed on the 2014 state ballot when 683,149 signed petitions have been validated, and when specific congressional district requirements are also met. *We are one BIG step closer to having Florida's critical environmental lands protected and preserved.* Thanks to all who volunteered to collect signatures, and to all of you who signed the petition.

Around the County (continued from page 2)

the deeper and more open waters of Newnan's Lake, were especially common on the prairie this year. There were also several Bufflehead in the large pool outside the new Sheetflow project. Benjamin Ewing picked out a couple of hen Common Goldeneyes in the pond behind the Harn Museum. This is the second year Goldeneyes have chosen to winter there. Late November is when the Sandhill Cranes return in numbers, and a good place to see them up close is at the UF Beef Teaching Unit along Williston Rd. It's also a good place to look for Snow Geese that often accompany the cranes. The Ewing family checked there on Nov. 27 and found an even rarer Ross's Goose. Within a few days a Snow Goose arrived and often foraged side-by-side with the Ross's, allowing great opportunities for comparing the two species. The same day the Ewings found the goose, they also found a nice collection of ducks, including four Canvasbacks, at Bivens Arm Lake.

By the time this issue of the Crane reaches



This is how Alachua Audubon collected so many signatures. Photograph taken by Barbara Shea of AAS's booth at the Lube Foundation Halloween Festival, where AAS collected almost 400 signatures.

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