



# The Crane

Volume 57 Number 4 March-April 2016

## March and April Field Trips

**Saturday, March 12, 8:00 a.m.**

**Prairie Creek Lodge:** The 500-acre Prairie Creek Preserve encompasses a variety of uplands and lowlands. Meet Ivor Kincaide at Prairie Creek Lodge (7204 CR 234, Gainesville) where he will lead us around the diverse habitats in search of birds. Wear rubber boots or old shoes you don't mind getting wet, as the trail can be soggy or even flooded. The resident birds should be singing. Difficulty: 2

**Saturday, March 26, 8:00 a.m.**

**Watermelon Pond:** Join trip leader Rex Rowan for a ramble over the grassy fields and marshy potholes of southwest Alachua County's interesting "upland wetland." Meet at the county park at the south end of SW 250th Street (directions on AAS web site). Difficulty: 2

**Saturday, April 9, 7:00 a.m.**

**Fort White Wildlife and Environmental Area:** Meet trip leader Rex Rowan at the Tag Agency (on NW 34th St. just south of US-441) and carpool to northern Gilchrist County to explore some of the most beautiful sandhills in North Florida. The resident breeding birds should be singing and there should be plenty of wildflowers to look at. This is the first AAS field trip to this location. Difficulty: 2

**Sunday, April 10, 8:00 a.m.**

**La Chua Trail:** Meet Felicia Lee at the trailhead on Camp Ranch Road to search for Yellow-breasted Chat, Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, and other

prairie-dwelling birds and migrants. Diff: 3

**Saturday, April 16, 6:30 a.m.**

**Cedar Key:** Meet trip leader Rex Rowan in the Target parking lot on Archer Rd. at I-75. The emphasis on this trip will be migrants – mainly warblers and shorebirds. We'll also look for some uncommon and/or coastal-nesting species: Gray Kingbird, Swallow-tailed Kite, and possibly Short-tailed Hawk. Some people stick around after the trip for lunch. Difficulty: 2

**Sunday, April 17, 12:45 p.m.**

**Cedar Key by Boat (sign-up required):** Join trip leader Scott Flamand and the Tidewater Tour crew on a canopied pontoon boat ride into some of the better known shorebird haunts of the Cedar Key area. Tidewater Tour owners offer a special Alachua Audubon price of \$25 per person for this trip. Call Wild Birds Unlimited (352-381-1997) to reserve a spot and for details on where to meet. Difficulty: 1

**Saturday, April 23, 8:00 a.m.**

**San Felasco Hammock (Millhopper Rd.):** Meet trip leader Debra Segal at San Felasco's Millhopper Road parking lot (entry fee \$4.00 per vehicle). Sandhills, meandering streams, forested slopes, and sinkholes set the stage for the diversity of birds we hope to find, such as Yellow-throated and Red-eyed Vireos, Hooded Warbler, and Acadian Flycatcher. Difficulty: 2

*Field Trips Continued on Page 5*

**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 the editor and fulfills stated objectives and goals of Alachua Audubon Society. Annual subscription to *The Crane* is included in National Audubon dues. See back page for subscription information. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed. *The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.

**Deadline for  
May-June Crane:  
Apr. 15<sup>th</sup>**



Notwithstanding a couple of sharp cold fronts in February, this was on average one of our warmest winters on record, and our local bird population seemed to respond accordingly. Several species that typically winter well south of us lingered in unusually high numbers, while a few others

normally present became more unpredictable. Most unusual was the number of warblers that tarried with us. Including all our regular winter residents, 18 species of warblers were accounted for in the county between December and February. Among the most unexpected were Worm-eating (1), Black-throated Blue (1), and Black-throated Green Warblers (2), plus record high numbers of Nashville (3) and Wilson's Warblers (6), Northern Parula (at least 11), and American Redstarts (at least 4). We might start thinking of a new name for Summer Tanager; they have been increasing in recent winters, but the 14 or so individuals reported this winter was certainly a record. Wintering Painted Buntings have also been increasing, but the presence of at least 7 Indigo Buntings was highly unusual. We also had three species of swallows, all at Sweetwater Wetlands Park, that generally do not winter here—Bank, Northern Rough-winged, and another that could not be identified to species but was either a Cave or Cliff Swallow.

A few good sparrows were around. Several Henslow's and a Fox Sparrow were found at Prairie Creek Lodge, and both Henslow's and Le Conte's Sparrows turned up at Hague dairy; but the normally fairly common White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows were painfully scarce. Alachua County is near the southern limits of both of their winter ranges, so perhaps they didn't push as far south as usual. Sandhill Cranes continued to re-draw their winter range, with the majority remaining well north of us this year. The remainder that wandered farther south into Alachua County didn't arrive until late December, nearly a month later than usual, and many of those were starting back north in early February.

Winter irruptives were understandably scarce, but there were two reports each of Pine Siskins and Golden-crowned Kinglets, and a Winter Wren lingered at O'Leno State Park. We especially enjoyed the Brown Creeper at Tuscawilla Prairie. It was the only one reported on eBird in the state outside the western panhandle! Several hummingbirds chose to spend the winter here, including 2 confirmed Rufous, seven Ruby-throated, and one male Black-chinned Hummingbird.

*(Continued on Page 9)*

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Drawing by  
Andre Frattino



### Kids' Christmas Bird Count a Success!

This year's Kids' Christmas Bird Count was held on January 16th at the Sweetwater Wetlands Park.. A whopping 28 kids participated in this year's count! The attendees, both youths and adults, were thrilled to see so many birds at a relatively close range. And the sight of a wild horse on the trail was an extra bonus. Some of the birding highlights were Limpkins, wading birds of all persuasions, lots of ducks, coots everywhere, and Tree Swallows winging over the wetland cells.

A pizza lunch at the Mill Pond clubhouse followed the bird count where results were tallied. This model of the adult Christmas Bird Count is proving to be a valuable teaching/modeling tool for youth!

Thanks to the AAS volunteers—Adam and Gina Kent, Sharon Kuchinski, Ted and Steve Goodman, and *especially* Emily Schwartz—who made this event possible.

Photograph of Kids' Christmas Bird Count at Sweetwater Wetlands Park. This photo shows the younger kids looking for birds on the back side of Cell 1. Photograph taken by Gina Kent.



### Family Birding at Paynes Prairie

Join volunteers Neil and Joan MacLeod for family birding events on the first Saturday of each month, November through April. These field trips are sponsored by Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. Register at 352-466-4100 or [www.PrairieFriends.org](http://www.PrairieFriends.org) Families and kids are encouraged to participate. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

**Saturday, March 5, 9:00-11:00 a.m. Attracting Birds to Your Backyard.** Meet Anne Casella and Emily Schwartz at the Lake Wauberg parking area at Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park and learn how to attract birds to your backyard with plants, water features, feeders, and birdhouses.

**Saturday, April 2, 9:00 – 12:00 Bird Migration and Keeping a Checklist.** Meet Neil and Joan MacLeod at the La Chua Trail trailhead. We will look for birds along the boardwalk and Prairie's edge. Learn about bird migration patterns and tracking the birds that you see.

### Kids' Urban Birding Event

Mark your calendars now—April 17th from 9:00 to 11:00—for the Kids' Urban Bird outing. Kids and accompanying adults will meet at the Thomas Center parking lot (302 NE 6th Ave.) to search for urban birds. To reserve loaner binoculars and for more information, send a message to [audubonyouthbirding@gmail.com](mailto:audubonyouthbirding@gmail.com).

## **Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Dinner Celebration and *Welcome New Board Members***

Come join us on Wednesday, April 13th at 6:30 pm for Alachua Audubon's annual pot luck dinner celebration and help us welcome our newest AAS Board Members. This event will be held at Bubba and Ingrid Scales' house at 3002 SW 1st Way, Gainesville, located in the Colclough Hills neighborhood between south Main Street and Wiliston Road. (Look for the AAS signs!) Bring some food to share and a drink of choice, and enjoy visiting with Alachua Audubon members and the Board of Directors. This will be a fun gathering and an opportunity to share our more recent spring migration observations!

The Alachua Audubon Society is a volunteer organization. The Board of Directors is comprised of four officers and 15 members. Officers of Alachua Audubon are: President: Anne Casella, Vice President: Scott Flamand, Secretary: Felicia Lee, and (new) Treasurer: Trina Anderson. Returning board members are Mike Manetz, Emily Schwartz, Dotty Robbins, Debbie Segal, Barbara Shea, Sharon Kuchinski, Bob Simons, Will Sexton, Katie Sieving, Charlene Leonard, Ted Goodman, Adam Zions, and John Sivinski. We would like to welcome our newest board members Steven Goodman, Kim Chaney, and Karen Brown. ***Please join us on April 13th as we celebrate Alachua Audubon and welcome our newest board members.***

## **Thank You Outgoing AAS Board Members**

Alachua Audubon sincerely thanks Rex Rowan, Bob Carroll, and Marie Davis for their invaluable service on the AAS board. Alachua Audubon has benefitted tremendously from their involvement, dedication, and commitment. And we extend a special thank you to Dotty Robbins for serving as AAS's long-time treasurer. Dotty is remaining on the board, but is turning over the financial reins to Trina Anderson.

## **The Birds and The Beans**

In the time it takes you to drink your next cup of coffee, acres of tropical forest will be lost. Along with it will go the diversity of birds and other wildlife that depend on it. Wouldn't it be gratifying to know that by choosing to buy shade-grown coffee, you'd be helping to conserve wildlife habitat?

"Shade-grown" refers to the way coffee traditionally has been farmed. For generations, coffee shrubs have been planted in the shade provided by tall trees, making these traditional coffee plantation excellent homes for birds and other forest-dwelling wildlife.

But over the past 30 years, more than half of the traditional shade coffee farms in Latin America have been converted to "sun coffee" farms to increase production. This newer method entails clearing the shade trees and growing coffee plants under full sun.

Unfortunately, the conversion from shade to sun coffee contributes to the decline of many birds that migrate to Latin America. Additionally, shade coffee plantations provide habitat for myriad insects, orchids, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Furthermore, shade trees protect fragile tropical soils from erosion, provide nutrients, and suppress weeds, thus reducing or eliminating the need for chemical herbicides and fertilizers and lowering farming costs. Farmers also harvest an assortment of fruits, firewood, lumber, and medicines from the shade trees. These products make farm families less vulnerable to coffee price fluctuations on the world market.

Sun coffee can generate higher yields and larger profits, so there is pressure on shade coffee farmers to abandon the traditional growing practices. The majority of farms that have not yet converted to sun coffee are owned by small-scale farmers. Unless these farmers are able to reap greater economic rewards from traditional coffee cultivation, there will be little incentive for them to maintain these important refuges for biodiversity.

Through the purchase of shade-grown coffee, we can reward farmers for their ecologically beneficial practices. What it will take is for more consumers to demand shade-grown coffee and for them to be willing to pay a bit extra for it. For just a few cents more, you can enjoy a great cup of coffee and you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you are supporting bird conservation, a healthy environment, and the livelihood of many small-scale farm owners. Buy coffee that bears the Smithsonian's Bird-friendly seal of approval. More information at <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/coffee/>

## Kanapaha Botanical Gardens and Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo Festivals

The Alachua Audubon Society will sponsor an informational table at two upcoming festivals—the Kanapaha Botanical Gardens Spring Garden Festival on March 19th and 20th, and the Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo Party for the Planet Festival on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. ***We need helpers at our table to share with others our excitement for birds, conservation, and natural areas.*** You don't have to be a birding expert, just friendly and enthusiastic. Please sign up for a morning or afternoon shift for one of those festival days by contacting Barbara Shea at 352-472-4650 or [acubarbarashea@juno.com](mailto:acubarbarashea@juno.com). And please let Barbara know if you can't do those dates but want to be called for other volunteer opportunities.

## Birding Class Offered

Would you like to learn more about bird identification? Santa Fe College's Community Education Program, in collaboration with the Alachua Audubon Society, is offering a 4-week course in Field Bird Identification. Classes are on Saturday mornings, starting on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and running through April 30<sup>th</sup>, and will last for two hours. The final class will be a longer trip to Cedar Key. Each class is led by a local birding expert.

The course costs \$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 March 16<sup>th</sup>.** Class is limited to 12 students, so register early as this class fills quickly. Hope to see you in class.

By Charlene Leonard, Class Coordinator

## Sign Up Now for AAS's New Electronic Information Alerts

Have you ever remembered an AAS event the day after it took place? Would you like to receive brief reminders via email of special AAS events such as guest speakers, bird counts, and youth programs? And would you like to be occasionally updated on important local conservation news? If so, please send an email to Karen Brown at [karenpbrown1953@gmail.com](mailto:karenpbrown1953@gmail.com). We will not inundate you with emails and you are free to withdraw your name from the distribution list at any time. So don't wait, send Karen an email today, and put "*Add Me to the AAS Email List*" in the subject line.

Thank you, Karen, for your wonderful suggestion and for offering to be the keeper of AAS's new email distribution list!

## Fieldtrips (continued from Page 1)

**Sunday, April 24, 8:00 a.m.**

**Bolen Bluff Trail at Paynes Prairie:** Meet trip leader Mike Manetz at the trailhead on US-441 at the south rim of Paynes Prairie. Bolen Bluff is one of Gainesville's perennial favorite birding locations, especially during the peak of songbird migration. Difficulty: 3

**Saturday, April 30, 6:00 a.m.**

**Jacksonville:** Meet trip leader Rex Rowan at the Exchange Publix at NW 13<sup>th</sup> St. and 39<sup>th</sup> Ave. to carpool to Jacksonville, where we'll look for shorebirds, gulls, and terns, all in their breeding plumage, at Huguenot Park (entry fee \$4 per vehicle + \$1 for each additional person), and migrant songbirds, including Painted Buntings, at Ft. George Island. Difficulty: 3

**Sunday, May 1, 8:00 a.m.**

**Powers Park and Palm Point:** Meet trip leader Barbara Shea at Powers Park to check for migrants in the trees along the boat channel and to scan the lake from the fishing pier. Then we'll travel to nearby Palm Point to search for more migrants like American Redstart, Cape May and Blackpoll Warblers, and Scarlet Tanager. Difficulty: 1

## Hundreds Rally for Paynes Prairie

On Saturday, January 23th, over 300 supporters of Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park rallied and marched up Main Street in protest of the Department of Environmental Protection's proposal to introduce grazing, hunting, and timbering on state parks. Supporters gathered at First Magnitude Brewery for live music by Whitey Markle and the Swamprooters and presentations about the parks. Keynote speaker Jim Stevenson, retired chief naturalist of Florida's state parks, Leslie Kemp Poole, author of *Saving Florida: Women's Fight for the Environment in the Twentieth Century*, and Pat Harden, long-time environmental advocate and coordinator of the Protect Paynes Prairie Coalition, described the plight of the state parks and gave a call to action. Following the presentation, supporters marched down Main Street to the intersection of University Avenue with banners and noisemakers to raise awareness and visibly show their support for Paynes Prairie and our other state parks. The rally was sponsored by the Protect Paynes Prairie Coalition of which Alachua Audubon is a founding member. For more information about the parks, go to the Protect Paynes Prairie website (<http://protectpaynesprairie.org/>) and Facebook page.

By Anne Casella



Photograph of Paynes Prairie rally marchers taken by Dana Moser.

## first green flare

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Poem by Sidney Wade

Photograph by Sandra  
Marrafinno



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## Research Assistance Needed

Conservian, a nonprofit conservation organization, is beginning a new shorebird and habitat conservation program in the Bahamas. Come join us for the adventure of a lifetime! We need you to help protect beach-nesting birds, nests, and nestlings. Conservian is seeking a weekly crew of 6 to 8 enthusiastic individuals for our Bahamas shorebird habitat conservation project in May 2016 aboard the 75-foot schooner "Dream Catcher". Cost for the week is \$1,150, which includes your bunk, onboard meals, water, and ground transportation associated with the project. Each week crews will fly to the Bahamas to designated airports for shuttle transport to the schooner. A valid passport is required. Airfare and insurance are not included.

Conservian and partners will begin the first program in the Bahamas to implement on-the-ground protective and restorative measures to limit human-caused disturbance and control invasive Australian pine at key Piping Plover, shorebird, and seabird sites. Crews will also participate in collecting new data on shorebirds and seabirds of the Bahamas. Selected Island sites include Globally- and locally-designated Important Bird Areas and National Parks of the Bahamas.

Choose one of the following weeks:

Week 1: Grand Bahama Island: May 2-9 (Freeport GBI Int. Airport)

Week 2: Great Abaco: May 9-16 (Freeport/Marsh Harbour Airport)

Week 3: Great Abaco: May 16-23 (Marsh Harbour Airport)

Week 4: Berry Islands & Joulter's Cays: May 23-30 (Marsh Harbour/San Andros Airport)

For more information or if you would like to join the pirate crew for a week, please contact Margo Zdravkovic at [MargoGZ1@aol.com](mailto:MargoGZ1@aol.com)

## Keeping Your Yard Bird Friendly

As spring fast approaches many of us plan to enhance our gardens, add to our landscaping, and beautify our yards. We want to encourage all of you who haven't included wildlife in your landscaping plan to start this spring! Here are a few things to keep in mind as you prepare to get your hands dirty.

**Planting native plants** offers so many benefits. It provides natural cover, nesting areas, and food for birds and wildlife. It decreases pesticide, herbicide, and water use which makes maintaining your bird-friendly yard easier. Remember to plant your yard in levels—open areas with ground cover, then low bushes, then short trees like native dogwood, and then larger trees. A greater variety of plants promotes a greater diversity of wildlife. The Native Plant Sale, held twice a year at Morningside Nature Center, is a great place to get ideas and plants for your spring and fall projects. The Florida Museum of Natural History also sells native plants, especially those plant types that attract butterflies.

**Be aware of bird activity** while trimming, pruning and mowing those overgrown areas since nest building may already be underway. Rabbits could be nesting on the ground and birds at different levels in the overgrown foliage. Always check before you cut!

**Check your nest boxes** and remove the old spiderwebs and debris. Some of our cavity nesters include the woodpeckers, Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Bluebird, Tufted Titmouse, Purple Martin, Carolina Chickadee, Southeastern American Kestrel, and Eastern Screech-Owl.

**Keep your chimneys open** and clean for returning Chimney Swifts. Swifts return from Chile in March to scout out the site of last year's nest. If that is not available they will look nearby. Since dead hollow trees are rare these days, chimneys have become the substitute. They are BIG mosquito eaters and do no harm to your chimney.

Thank you for caring about the wildlife that depend on neighborhood yards like yours and including them in your landscape.

Florida Wildlife Care has more information about wildlife including what to do with injured or orphaned wildlife. [www.floridawildlifecare.org](http://www.floridawildlifecare.org)

By Leslie Straub  
Florida Wildlife Care

## Rainbow River Wood Duck Project

The male Wood Duck is considered one of the most colorful ducks and one that produces “wows” from many visitors to the Rainbow River. Wood Ducks are cavity nesters and look for spaces in dead trees. They are one of the few duck species equipped with strong claws that can grip bark and perch on branches. Wood Ducks pair up in January and look for appropriate nest sites.

The Rainbow River provides ideal nesting habitat for Wood Ducks with open water and natural vegetation along the edges of the river. The marsh and emergent vegetation allows them to forage and hide from predators. Wood Ducks eat seeds, fruits, insects, and other arthropods. When aquatic foods are unavailable they may take to dry land to eat acorns and nuts from forests and grain from fields. Plant materials make up 80% of their food source. They often have up to 10 chicks that leave the nest box on a single day. While growing, the ducklings stay very close to the female for protection.

In 1994 Rainbow River Conservation (RRC) first installed 35 Wood Duck boxes along the river. The number of nest boxes on the river has now grown to 50. Each fall RRC members clean out the old bedding material in the nest boxes and replace it with new cedar wood chips. Repairs are also made where required. This requires navigating a pontoon boat along 4 miles of the 5.3 mile river and standing on a step ladder on the front of the boat to access the pole-mounted boxes. The project has been led by Jerry Rogers for many years, and he brings spare lids, hinges, new boxes, cedar wood chips, and tools to service the boxes as they are cleaned and prepared for the next breeding season. Dr. Ellen K. Rudolf recently accompanied the box maintenance crew and photographed their efforts to make these boxes suitable for the next breeding season. Her photo essay on the effort is quite interesting and can be viewed at [http://www.drellenrudolph.com/wood\\_ducks.html](http://www.drellenrudolph.com/wood_ducks.html)

Each year the success of each box is recorded, and the overall success rate has grown from 17% in the first year to 94-98% in recent years. Since each nest produces up to 10 young ducklings, 50 nests have the potential for 500 young a year. It is likely that over 5,000 young wood ducks have come from this Wood Duck project over its life span. RRC will continue to maintain these boxes and monitor the productivity of this program.

By Paul Marrafinno and  
The Rainbow River Conservation Team



Photographs from the Rainbow River of a male Wood Duck on a nest box and a large family of Wood Ducks that likely hatched from the nest boxes. Photos taken by Dr. Ellen Rudolf.



## Around the County (Continued from Page 2)

Sweetwater Wetlands Park continued to delight visitors. The numbers of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and Limpkins were astounding (over 400 of the former, and perhaps 60 of the latter), and two locally-rare birds became regular features: Gray-headed Swamphen and the white-morph Great Blue Heron. The now-famous wintering Vaux's Swifts were noted foraging intermittently there, and a rare but fleeting drake Cinnamon Teal, first discovered along La Chua trail January 24th, was seen again on the 30th at Sweetwater.

Our first returning Purple Martin was spotted January 24, and by early February many of our resident breeding birds were in full song. By the time this issue of *The Crane* reaches your mailbox or inbox the woods will be full of the cheery song of my favorite harbinger of spring: Northern Parula. A new season will be upon us!

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through February 12, 2016

Alachua Audubon Society  
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*The Crane*  
Mar-Apr 2015

**Breeding Bird Atlas Help Needed for  
Columbia, Baker, and Hamilton Counties**

This is the final year of the Breeding Bird Atlas survey and we could still use some volunteers. If you want to help survey birds during this upcoming breeding season, please contact Dotty Robbins at 386-454-8087.

**Receive The Crane Electronically**

To start receiving The Crane electronically, simply send an email to [AASthecrane@att.net](mailto:AASthecrane@att.net) Please include your name and address.

## Join Audubon!

To join Audubon on 3 levels (National, Florida, and Alachua), fill in application and mail to:

Paul Moler 7818 Highway 346 Archer, Florida 32618

Make check payable to National Audubon Society

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Questions? Contact Paul 352-495-9419 or  
[paulmoler@bellsouth.net](mailto:paulmoler@bellsouth.net)