



The Crane

Volume 54 Number 1 September—October 2012

September and October Field Trips

Included in this Crane Newsletter is the Yearbook—a listing of all the planned Alachua Audubon field trips for the 2012/2013 season. The Yearbook is also available to download on the Alachua Audubon Website.

Saturday, September 8, 8:00 a.m.

San Felasco Hammock – Millhopper Road

Meet trip leader Steve Hofstetter at San Felasco's Millhopper Road parking lot (\$4.00 per vehicle parking fee). Sandhills, forested streams, & meandering slopes set the stage for the diversity of birds we hope to find. Difficulty: 2

Sunday, September 9, TBA

Cedar Key by boat with Capt. Doug Maple

(Sign up required) A boat tour of Cedar Key's remote coastal marsh with Captain Doug Maple. Emphasis will be on shorebirds, gulls, terns, and other coastal species—seen at fairly close range. Cost is reduced to \$25 per person for the boat ride. Call Wild Birds Unlimited (352-381-1997) to reserve a spot on the boat. Difficulty: 1

Saturday, September 15, All Day

North American Migration Count

Each fall near the peak of migration birders all across the continent spend a day in the field to take a snapshot of the fall migration. If you can identify most migrants and you'd like to help with the Alachua County count, please contact Mike Manetz at mmanetz@yahoo.com or 377-1683. Difficulty: 3

Saturday, September 22, 6:30 a.m.

Road to Nowhere and Hagen's Cove

Meet trip leader, John Hintermister, at the Tag Agency and carpool to the Big Bend Wildlife Management Area for a full day of birding. The first destination will be the Road to Nowhere—a 12-mile road that traverses salt marsh, coastal hammocks, pine, and oak stands. A large diversity of birds can often be seen along this remote road. The next stop will be Hagen's Cove where shorebirds, wading birds (including Reddish Egrets), and migrant landbirds can all be observed. Bring water, bug repellent, and lunch. Diff. 2

Sunday, September 23, 8:00 a.m.

Loblolly Woods Nature Park

Meet Caleb Gordon in the Loblolly parking lot (NW 34th Street opposite NW 5th Ave) for a ramble through the beautiful deciduous bottomlands where Possum Creek flows into Hogtown Creek. Diff. 1

Saturday, September 29, 8:00 a.m.

O'Leno State Park

Admission \$5.00 per vehicle. We'll carpool from the Winn-Dixie parking lot north of the traffic light on US-441 in High Springs. Phil Laipis will lead us through this beautiful park on the Santa Fe River in search of warblers, tanagers, and other fall migrants. Difficulty: 2

Sunday, September 30, 8 a.m.

Bar Hammock—CLEP

Meet at the Micanopy Chevron on US-441, just before the flashing yellow light. The *(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 \$8 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
Nov-Dec Crane:
Oct. 15th**



I'm always astonished at how early the fall migration begins. Even before the end of June, our June Challengers had recorded the return of both Louisiana Waterthrush and Black-and-white Warblers. There were several more reports of Black-and-whites through early July, and by the 20th we had our first

Yellow Warblers, seen by Helen Warren and Debra Segal at Paynes Prairie. John Hintermister found our first Prairie Warbler of fall along Lakeshore Drive on the 23rd, and on the 28th Felicia Lee spotted our first Redstart at San Felasco Hammock. On August 3 along Lakeshore Drive I picked up a Northern Waterthrush, and the following day at San Felasco, a Worm-eating Warbler. On the 7th, again at San Felasco, I added Ovenbird and a couple of Kentucky Warblers to our collective list. At the time of this writing, in the heart of the dog days, nine fall migrant warbler species had already been tallied.

By contrast, shorebirding in late July and early August was underwhelming, especially after the nearly unbelievable migration last spring, when low water levels attracted thousands of migrant shorebirds to Newnans Lake. The effect of tropical storm Debby along with more regular summer rainfall patterns raised Newnans Lake back to "normal" levels. The result was that shorebirds occurred in much smaller numbers and variety, and in more scattered and ephemeral locations. On July 26th Adam Zions alerted us to a small group of shorebirds at the far west end of Chapman's Pond, which included four Least Sandpipers, Spotted, Solitary, and possibly Pectoral Sandpipers. After heavy rains on August 3, John Hintermister went cruising for shorebirds along flooded farm fields at the north end of the county and was rewarded with Pectoral and Solitary Sandpipers along SR 121. On the 5th, Barbara Shea, Elizabeth Martin, and Felicia Lee found a Spotted Sandpiper at La Chua trail. Other spots where you could likely find shorebirds over the coming weeks include Dollar General pond in Alachua, the Hague Dairy, Post Office pond on SW 34th Street, and Home Depot pond.

The Fall North American Migration Count will take place September 15th. If you have participated in the past, please mark it on your calendar. We are always looking for new participants as well, so if you are at least above beginning birder level and are interested, please contact me at mmanetz@yahoo.com

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through August 7, 2012.

Summer Youth Camp at Hog Island, Maine

This summer, I was honored to be the recipient of a youth scholarship from the Alachua Audubon Society to attend Coastal Main Bird Studies for Teens at the Hog Island Audubon Camp. Hog Island is a nature study camp that was originally started in 1936, and was the first Audubon educational camp. The facility is located on Hog Island, just off the coast of Bremen, Maine, and is only accessible by boat.

On our first full day of camp we were given the choice of waking up early for the early-morning bird walk at 5:45 or sleeping until breakfast at 7:00. All of the teens chose to attend the bird walk, where we saw flocks of Red Crossbills and Purple Finches, as well as Black Guillemots and Common Eiders in the ocean. After the bird walk, we had breakfast and took a “shakedown cruise” on the Snowgoose III around Hog Island and surrounding islands, where we saw Surf Scoters, Common Loons, and lots of Black Guillemots. After the cruise, all the teens attended an afternoon lecture “Introduction to Ornithology” by Dr. Sara Morris. After the lecture, we went on a hike around the island where we saw Black-throated Green, Yellow rumped, and Northern Parula Warblers, as well as a few Hermit Thrushes.

On Tuesday, our group went across to the mainland. Our first stop was McGurdy Pond Road, a gravel road winding through deciduous woods good for warblers. Here we saw Canada, Black and White, and Northern Waterthrush Warblers, as well as Brown Creepers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. Next, we moved on to the Damariscotta River Association headquarters, a preserve consisting of extensive meadows and a series of marshy ponds, as well as a few strands of trees and low shrubs. In the meadows there were Bobolinks and Song Sparrows, and in the ponds we found American Black Ducks, Pied-billed Grebes, and a Belted Kingfisher. We also saw Yellow Warblers and a Baltimore Oriole in the forest, and a Broad-winged Hawk soaring high in the sky. The next stop on our mainland

day trip was Feylors Corner Road, a place good for woodland warblers. Here we saw Nashville, American Redstart, Black and White, Black-throated Green and Parula Warblers. Our last stop before we went back to the island was the Clary Hill blueberry barrens, rocky hilltops used for growing blueberries that are good for sparrows and Upland Sandpipers. We didn’t see any sandpipers, but we got good looks at Vesper and Savannah Sparrows. When we got back to the island, we had an awesome dinner and then listened to Tom Johnson’s program on seabirds of the Atlantic.

The next day, we were scheduled to go to East Egg Rock, a restored seabird nesting colony and the southernmost Atlantic Puffin colony in the U.S. However, the seas were a little rough, making landing on the island very difficult. So instead, we went to Harbor Island, a small private island-turned nature sanctuary. We hiked around the rocky shore and saw a flock of crossbills, and four or five Black Scoters very far offshore, plus the usual eiders and guillemots closer in by the rocky cliffs. Also, we saw Redstarts, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, and Common Yellowthroat Warblers inland where the trees are thick, and an Alder Flycatcher hunting for insects in a strand of dead trees. That evening, Dr. Don Kroodsma gave an excellent lecture on bird vocalizations.

On Thursday, our group got up at 5:45 for a walk in the woods to band birds. Our mist-nets caught a Black-throated Green and a Yellow-rumped Warbler. After our banding trip, we had breakfast at seven, and went back to our cabin to pack our backpacks for the highlight of the Hog Island camp, our trip to East Egg Rock. We left Hog Island aboard the Snowgoose III and rode 45 minutes to the rock. On the way, we saw loons and eiders, and as we got closer to the island puffins started to appear in little groups of four or five. Once on the island, we hiked on a beaten down trail up to a cabin, being careful to not step on tern nests that were in the middle of the trail. At the cabin, we were given a “tour” of the island’s facilities which included the main cabin, an outhouse, and the intern’s tents. Under the tents, Leach’s Storm-Petrels nested in burrows made from wood. The interns took us around (*continued on page 11*)



WILL YOU BE BUYING A CHRISTMAS TREE OR WREATH THIS YEAR?

THEN PLEASE CONSIDER BUYING ONE FROM
ALACHUA AUDUBON SOCIETY

AAS is selling Christmas trees and wreaths this year as a 2012 fundraiser and we need support from the citizens of Alachua County!

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- Organically grown (no fertilizers, no pesticides)
- Fresher than most other trees (trees will be cut just before we pick them up)
- Competitively-priced (and probably cheaper than most other trees)
- You will support a local non-profit environmental organization

Drawbacks:

- Trees must be ordered and paid for ahead of time (by November 9th)
- Buying your tree sight-unseen
- Large size trees (>6'-7') are available in limited quantities – order early!

Tree and wreath pickup will be on December 2nd (time and location will be announced)

To order, please send an e-mail to alachuaaudubons@gmail.com with your choice and telephone number. If you don't have e-mail, please call Anne at 352-378-0505.

	4'-5'	5'-6'	6'-7'	7'-8'	8'-9'	9'-10'	18" wreath	\$35
							24" wreath	\$40
Fraser Fir	\$52	\$58	\$68	\$75	\$95	N/A		
Concolor Fir	N/A	\$58	\$66	\$75	\$88	\$116		
Balsam Fir	\$52	\$58	\$68	\$75	\$95	N/A		

To view the trees and the farm, go to www.swva.net/tbd

AAS CHRISTMAS TREE Fundraiser 2012

AAS is planning our Seventh Annual Christmas Tree and Wreath sale and we wish to thank all who have supported this important fund raiser in years past. With the money raised we have started birding programs for kids, purchased binoculars and birding books, and supported local conservation efforts.

This year we will need your orders and payment by **November 9th**. Contact Alachua Audubon at AlachuaAudubonS@gmail.com. More information is on page 4. The trees are comparably priced with other locally-available trees. However, our trees are fresher because they will be harvested just before our delivery date. Although the trees must be paid for in advance and are bought sight unseen, our customers' satisfaction has brought customers back year after year. The number of Christmas trees 7 ft and taller is limited this year so if you want a larger tree, place your order early. Please consider buying a Christmas tree and/or wreath from AAS. And please tell your friends and family members! Thank you!!!!

Could You Be A Sponsor?

The new school year is starting and teachers are again looking for sponsors to support the **Audubon Adventures** program. This kit of material engages children in lessons about nature and the environment. To learn more about Audubon Adventures go to www.audubon.org/educate/aa/.

Sponsorship of an elementary school classroom costs \$46. Are you able to help? Please call Emily Schwartz at 372-0754 or email to emilysgfl@gmail.com to sponsor a classroom.

Sept. 7th—Our Water, Our Future; 7 p.m. A multimedia program with award winning springs photographer, John Moran; springs expert, Robert Knight; and a host of community leaders who will share their vision for a water ethic. Please share this message far and wide! Alfonso Levy Performing Arts Center at the FL Gateway College in Lake City. For more information, contact Jacqui Sulek at 386-497-4187 or www.fourriversaudubon.org

Community Calendar

September 18th—Native Plant Society Meeting; Speaker, Pete Wallace "*Native Grasses for your Landscape*". 7 pm United Church of Gainesville, 1624 NW 5th Ave. For more information go to www.paynesprairie.fnpschapters.org

September 15th—A Florida Friendly Landscape Tour sponsored by Alachua County Master Gardeners. Wendy Wilber, Alachua Horticultural Agent, will make a short presentation at 8:30 am at the new UF Straughn Center. A tour of several local Florida Friendly Landscapes will follow the presentation. Call 352-955-2402 to RSVP for the tour.

October 3th—The Florida Museum of Natural History Annual Educator Open House 2 – 5 p.m. All PreK-12 educators are invited to learn about the educational resources and learning experiences available to teachers and students, including field trips, tours, workshops, classroom activities and free resources. To earn in-service points, register in advance at www.mylearningplan.com. For more information, contact Dianne Behringer at 352-273-2026 or dbehringer@flmnh.ufl.edu.

October 5th and 6th—Florida Native Plant Society Fall Native Plant Sale at Morningside Nature Center (3540 E. University Ave., Gainesville). Vendors selling native plants, wildflower seeds, nature books, and botanical art. Friday from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. is for members of the Florida Native Plant Society, or Friends of Nature Parks, or those who wish to join one of these groups. Saturday from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm is open to the public. More information at www.natureoperations.org

October 27th—Lubee Bat Conservancy 7th Annual Bat Festival 10 - 4. 1309 NW 192nd Ave. View giant fruit bats and learn how bats benefit ecosystems worldwide. Free activities, exhibits, and presentations. The Conservancy is not open to the general public on a regular basis so this event offers a rare opportunity to see unusual bats. Visit Alachua Audubon's booth at the Bat Festival.

Alachua County's June Challenge

Many of you participated in our best June Challenge ever. Last year's June Challenge logged 114 species—this year a whopping 140 species! For an inland county in June - that's astonishing. Many thanks to Rex Rowan who alerted us to the exciting rare sightings, who encouraged us during those hot June days, and who engaged us with his frequent and humorous email updates throughout the month! Included in this newsletter are several June Challenge articles from various participants—adults and kids alike.

Forty-five birders submitted totals this year—twice as many as last year. And youth birders comprised many of the June Challenge participants. Listed below are the birders who submitted their results followed by the number of birds they sighted in Alachua County during June: Rex Rowan 126; Adam Zions 122; Craig Parenteau 120; Bob Carroll 119; Lloyd Davis 119; Caleb Gordon 116; Judy Bryan 113; Maralee Joos 112; Howard Adams 111; Phoebe Gordon (age 11) 110; Barbara Mollison 110; Becky Enneis 109; Anne Kendall 107; John Killian 107; Barbara Shea 106; Ron Robinson 102; Phil Laipis 101; Anne Barkdoll 100; Mary Landsman 100; Katherine Edi 96; Benjamin Ewing (age 18) 95; Samuel Ewing (age 11) 95; Bob Simons 95; Linda Holt 94; Ignacio Rodriguez 94; Sidney Wade 94; Lily Gordon (age 14) 93; Dennis Miranda 90; Dean Ewing 89; Helen Warren 89; Caleb Ewing (age 16) 86; Matthew Neilson 84; Steven Goodman (age 13) 81; Ted Goodman 81; Debbie Segal 80; John Hintermister 74; Geoff Parks 74; John Martin 66; Laura Bedinger 65; Nora Parks-Church (age 8) 63; Hannah Ewing (age 9) 59; Carol Willis 56; Bill Enneis 50; Erika Simons 33; and Alex Lamoreaux 26.

Way to go, June Challenge participants!

The June Challenge and the Last Seconds of Light

Yogi Berra has been quoted as saying, "It ain't over 'til it's over." He was talking about baseball, but the same can be said about the June Challenge. Over the years, I've come to realize that the JC doesn't end until there is no light left on the night of June 30 ... and maybe even just a few minutes after that.

One year I had tried repeatedly to see the Barn Owl that reportedly was hanging out around the observation platform at Paynes Prairie just off US 441. During the month I collected many mosquito bites there, but no owl. On June 30, Rex Rowan and I lingered on the platform until there was no light left. An owl would have to land on us for us to see it. Resigned to our fate, we headed back to my van. I opened the tailgate and the inside light came on. And in that little bit of light we saw a Barn Owl flutter directly over our heads, just a few feet away. We celebrated with whoops and high fives, and we thanked heavens that we had stayed around until that last minute; the precise minute the Barn Owl chose to swoop over us.

This year my nemesis bird was the Black-crowned Night-Heron. I whiffed repeatedly trying to catch a glimpse of one. Then Rex sent out an email suggesting that one might find something interesting by the pier at Powers Park just after sunset. So on the last night of the month, that's where I was. Sunset was at 8:34. On a gorgeous evening, herons, egrets, and blackbirds swarmed by the dock, but there was no sign of anything new. At 8:50 it was almost too dark to see. At 8:53, I reached for my flashlight to light the way back to the van. As I did, I heard the distinctive "quok" of a Black-crowned Night-Heron. I spun around, searching for the bird. It called again from just above me. There it was ... literally in the last seconds of light ... the final tick of a wonderful month of birding.

Yogi was a smart guy, but I'll bet he never knew he was really talking about the June Challenge.

By Bob Carroll



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(Field Trips continued from Page 1)

majestic Barr Hammock land bridge between Ledwith and Levy Prairies was the highest priority of the Alachua County Forever program, and was acquired in 2006. Trip leader Michael Drummond of the county's Department of Environmental Protection will be our guide. Difficulty: 2

Saturday, October 6, 7:30 a.m.

San Felasco Hammock – Progress Center

Admission fee \$4.00 per vehicle. Meet trip leader Mike Meisenburg and carpool from the tag agency (NW 34th Street just south of US-441). We'll cover a variety of habitats in this walk, including marsh, field, habitat edges, deciduous forest, and Cellon Creek. This weekend and next should see the peak of fall migration. Difficulty: 2

Sunday, October 7, 6:30 a.m.

Guana-Tolomato-Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve

Peregrine Falcons migrate down the Atlantic Coast in fall, usually peaking in early October. Meet trip leader John Hintermister at Powers Park and carpool to the hawk-watching platform at the north end of the park in hopes of seeing Peregrines, then walk a woodland trail in search of fall warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, and thrushes. Bring water and bug repellent. Lunch will be at Caps on the Inland Waterway. Diff. 2

Saturday, October 13, 8:00 a.m.

Bolen Bluff Trail

Meet trip leader Rex Rowan 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: 2

Sunday, October 14, 8:00 a.m.

Powers Park and Palm Point

Migratory birding at a classic local migrant trap. The big oaks and lakeshore cypresses in the park, and hardwoods along Lakeshore Drive can be excellent places to observe migrant activity.

Meet trip leader Bob Carroll at Powers Park to check the trees along the boat channel and scan the lake from the fishing pier before proceeding to Palm Point. Difficulty: 1

Saturday, October 20, 8:00 a.m.

Bellamy Road (Sign-up required.)

There should still be plenty of fall migrants around as we walk this quiet and historic country lane. Due to the scarcity of parking, this trip is limited to ten people. Please call Wild Birds Unlimited to reserve your spot and get the meeting location(352-381-1997). Difficulty: 2

Sunday, October 21, 6:30 a.m.

Lower Suwannee River National Wildlife Refuge

Meet trip leader John Hintermister at the Target parking lot (on Archer Road) for a full day of birding at several locations within the Lower Suwannee River NWR. Likely stops will be Shired Island, Dixie Mainland, Fishbone Creek, and Salt Creek. A large diversity of shorebirds, waders, and migrant songbirds are likely to be spotted. Bring water, lunch, and bug repellent. Difficulty: 2

Sunday, October 28, 8:00 a.m.

Cone's Dike/Camps Canal

(Sign-up required.) With special limited access, enjoy a hike with Rex Rowan under the canopy along Camps Canal to the seldom-explored eastern end of Cone's Dike in Paynes Prairie. Enjoy late season neotropical migrants and early season sparrows. Call Wild Birds Unlimited (352-381-1997) to reserve a spot. Difficulty: 2

Saturday, November 3, 8:00 a.m.

Hague Dairy

Meet Mike Manetz at the Tag Agency on NW 34th Street near US-441 to caravan to one of the county's best spots for sparrows, black-birds, and raptors. Difficulty: 1

June Challenge—Early Migrants

This year I participated in the June Challenge for the first time! I especially liked the new youth category because I would have a chance to get at least 1st, 2nd, or 3rd! I had a lot of highlights but I'll only tell about one. I heard about the Louisiana Waterthrush in Dixie County seen on June 23rd, and wanted to get out and try to find a migrant! I looked around hoping some migrant would show up here at our place. One morning while out birding, I came across a feeding flock of songbirds! I was looking at a vireo and while following it, trying to figure out what it was, I saw a small bird hopping down a tree branch! It turned out to be a Black-and-white Warbler and that was the main migrant I was looking for! At the time I didn't know they had never been recorded in June. I called Benjamin, my brother, who was outside and he saw it too! More showed up other places and I'm glad I saw mine when I did because I haven't seen one since June 27th. The June Challenge was a very fun experience and I think I'll be doing it next year too!

By Samuel Ewing, Age 11



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Photo of Samuel Ewing (left), Caleb Ewing (middle), and Benjamin Ewing (right) birding at Newnan's Lake. Photo taken by Dean Ewing.

June Challenge at Gum Root Swamp

For me, a very memorable part of The June Challenge was a trip to Gum Root Swamp with my Dad and brothers. It was our first time to visit Gum Root. After a long hike through the swamp trying to find the way to the water, we met up with Craig Parenteau and Anne Barkdoll, who showed us the trail to the lake. On the way, Mr. Parenteau was able to call in a Prothonotary Warbler and an Acadian Flycatcher, both new for my Challenge list. Once we arrived at the water, the birding began to get really good. We spotted Laughing Gulls, Forster's Terns, Sandhill Cranes, Wood Storks, American Coots, and many others. There were 26 Roseate Spoonbills foraging among the aquatic vegetation. A female Ring-necked Duck and a pair of Blue-winged Teal were also highlights. So was the large flock of White Pelicans that circled over Palm Point in the distance. All in all, I recorded 38 species of birds that day, six of which were new for my June Challenge list. It was a very memorable trip!

By Benjamin Ewing, Age 18

REFLECTIONS ON THE 2012 JUNE CHALLENGE

Ah, the June Challenge of 2012. As I sit in the luxury of air-conditioning writing this, I keep wondering what I will remember fondly about this year's Challenge. Will it be the uncountable hours spent sweating in the stifling summer heat? Or the self-induced sleep deprivation from waking up at ungodly hours to attempt to catch a glimpse of a Chuck-will's Widow or a Great Horned Owl? Or pulling off countless ticks due to continually traipsing through the drought-stricken cypress stand of Gum Root Swamp to reach the northern shoreline of Newnan's Lake to take in the bounty of wading and shorebirds?

Without question I will certainly remember the birds. How could I forget the bonanza of bird activity brought on by the combination of drought conditions and two early tropical storms? American Avocet, Semipalmated and White-rumped Sandpipers, Ring-necked Ducks, Ruddy Ducks, white form Great Blue Heron, Roseate Spoonbills, American White Pelicans, Black Skimmers, Magnificent Frigatebird, and Sooty, Black, and Least Terns...something new and intriguing seemed to show up almost every day. It was the place to be. Not to be outdone, La Chua Trail provided its own diverse array of species. I won't soon forget the conspicuous male Yellow-breasted Chat along Sweetwater Dike who so generously provided exceptionally long views of his singing prowess. Or perhaps the most easily observed Yellow-billed Cuckoo I've ever come across. I'd be remiss if I failed to mention the Blue Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, Orchard Orioles, Purple Gallinule, Least Bitterns, and Mississippi Kites...at one point I thought the list might never end. Throughout the month there was a veritable smorgasboard of birds to be found all around the county.

But even more than the wealth of avian diversity on display, what I will remember most fondly and take from this experience is the camaraderie with fellow birders. Be it the early evening walk to the northern shoreline of Newnan's Lake, (where Steven Goodman made possibly the most difficult spot of the month when he spied a far-off Short-tailed Hawk in a group of vultures) and sharing a reflective crepuscular walk back through Gum Root swamp with the first fireflies of the year dancing around. Or the Audubon group Rex Rowan tirelessly led around the county the second day of the Challenge, where everyone seemed to enjoy just as many laughs and hearty

conversations as they did spotting birds. I certainly will not forget questioning my sanity as I headed to Newnan's Lake following Tropical Storm Debby, but feeling relieved when I found Caleb Gordon, Lloyd Davis, and Adam and Gina Kent already there looking for storm-swept species. Wading through knee high water due to the rapidly increased water levels brought about by the storm, we all shared an unforgettable experience of watching (in Alachua County of all places!) a Magnificent Frigatebird fly low overhead, then watching a Sooty Tern fly closer and closer before changing direction and heading out of sight.

As with most facets of life, I don't believe the June Challenge would have been as personally rewarding without the collective involvement. After all, this is likely one of the outcomes Becky Enneis had in mind when she invented the June Challenge. Having lived in Alachua County for less than a year, I have to say the birding community here has been incredibly welcoming and charitable. There is a deeply rooted sense of community and selfless generosity displayed by every Alachua Audubon member I've been fortunate enough to meet thus far. This is what I will undeniably remember about the June Challenge of 2012.

By Adam Zions

Chimney Swifts—Numbers are Growing

Keep an eye out for Chimney Swifts! Have you spotted them dropping into chimneys at dusk? Have you noticed their populations growing as their young fledge and northern birds come south? Large numbers of swifts are gathering in Florida and will congregate in local chimneys during late summer and fall evenings before they migrate south for the winter. If you know of an active chimney roost, please let Helen Warren know by sending her an email at helenkwarren@cox.net. Please put Chimney Swift in the subject line.

Summer Youth Camp at Hog Island, Maine (continued from page 3)

the island and assigned each of us a blind to observe the seabirds. On the way, a pair of Razorbills was diving for food just off the rocky shore. At the blinds, we were each given assignments, such as watching a puffin burrow for nesting activity, or watching the ocean for seabirds. Around my blind, terns were nesting and puffins and Black Guillemots flew around with fish to feed their young. An occasional Roseate Tern flew by my blind; most of those birds nest on another part of the island. A few Least Sandpipers and a Spotted Sandpiper foraged on the seaweed-covered rocks. Big flocks of puffins gathered offshore. After three hours on East Egg Rock, we boarded the boat for the trip back to Hog Island. That evening, we were treated to a lobster dinner and then went to the final lecture of the camp, a talk on migratory birds by Scott Weidensaul.

Friday morning dawned with thunderstorms to the north. After an early breakfast, everyone packed their gear for departure. As we boarded the boat for the last trip to the mainland, we were given a final send-off by some of the camp staff who had dressed up as puffins and performed a farewell song and dance. We were all tired, but the week had just flown by and everyone hated to see it come to an end. On the mainland, we said our good-byes and slowly went our separate ways (I got to spend another week birding in Maine with my parents, but that's another story).

I want to offer my sincerest thanks to the Alachua Audubon Board of Directors, and especially Helen Warren, for selecting me to receive this scholarship. The Hog Island camp was an incredible experience that I will never forget, and I can't thank the Board enough. I meet awesome people, learned a lot of interesting things, made some good friends, and saw some amazing birds in a beautiful place including a handful of life-birds!

By Steven Goodman, Age 13

Birding Class Offered

Santa Fe College's (SFC) Community Education Program in collaboration with The Alachua Audubon Society (AAS) is offering two new and exciting bird identification courses this fall. The first class will be a four week field course with visits to local birding hotspots. This class will be held from 8 to 10 am beginning Oct. 27th and ending Nov. 17th. Classes are on Saturday mornings and will be led by a local birding expert. Cost for this four day class is \$49.

A one-day bird identification class— *Birds of Cedar Key*—will be offered on December 8th from 8 am to 4 pm. This all day trip is designed to learn shorebirds, wading birds, and inland birds around the lovely community of Cedar Key. Cost for this one day class is \$35.

These classes are designed to benefit both beginning and more advanced birders. We will visit local natural areas to identify birds in their native habitat. Registration is through SFC and begins on October 10th. For more information and registration go online to SFC Community Education or call (352) 395-5193. These courses continue to receive great reviews. Register early as they fill quickly. Hope to see you in class. These courses generate revenue for Alachua Audubon Society.

Kathy Haines, Class Coordinator



Photograph of Felecia Lee and Barbara Shea during the June Challenge at Newnans Lake. Photograph taken by Lloyd Davis.

Birds and Conservation Costa Rica

This June several members of Alachua Audubon, along with members from three other Audubon chapters, journeyed to Costa Rica to enjoy great birdwatching and experience first-hand various biodiversity projects. Bird-wise we accounted for 247 species, a great number considering there were no North American migrants to count this time of the year and our itinerary was restricted to a relatively small area on the Caribbean slope.

Hummingbirds were a highlight, with 29 species recorded. Some other outstanding birds seen were Sunbittern, White-fronted Nunbird, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Bicolored Hawk, and Fasciated Tiger-Heron. Our first full day of birding was around Poas Volcano National Park where we saw many wonderful cloud forest species, including a Fiery-throated Hummingbird that allowed us to watch at arm's length as it repeatedly returned to collect nesting material. At Selva Verde we observed Caribbean lowlands birds, including several woodcreepers, antbirds, toucans, tropical wrens, and a pair of Great Tinamous displaying out in the open, seemingly oblivious to our presence.

We later attended a presentation by the Rainforest Biodiversity Group on the grassroots efforts they are making to preserve habitat, and especially the Almendro trees (*Dipteryx panamensis*) that endangered Great Green Macaws depend on for food and nesting. The following morning we experienced the joy of seeing five of these majestic birds sail across an open field and land in a magnificently blooming Almendro.

We spent a couple of days at a unique agricultural college called EARTH University. Here students from dozens of tropical countries study and develop projects in sustainable farming methods. We toured the organic gardens, dairy farm, and projects designed for sustainable urban agriculture, and talked with some of the students about their projects. Their enthusiasm for their work and missionary zeal for improving the earth and environment was infectious. One student expressed an interest in birding and

asked to accompany us on a field trip. He was so taken by the experience that one of our group members gave him as a gift her brand new copy of *Birds of Costa Rica*. The joy on his face was in itself worth the trip!

We also spent a couple of days at Rancho Naturalista, a lodge famous for its forest birding trails and gourmet meals. It lived up to expectations on both counts. Hummingbirds were a delight here. At one impressively large hedge of porterweed (*Stachytarpheta frantzii*) we found loads of small hummers, including several Black-crested Coquettes, and watched at close range as two young males engaged in elaborate aerial combat displays. Also memorable was the hummingbird pool at the base of a deep ravine, where we watched the diminutive flyers hover and dip into the water to bathe.

Another interesting conservation-related site we visited was Café Cristina, where we saw first-hand how effectively a truly organic, shade-grown coffee farm can multiply biodiversity, work in harmony with nature, and still be economically viable. An extraordinary number of birds nest on the farm, including rarities such as Buffy-crowned Wood Partridge and Scaled Antpitta, and the owners have documented a steady increase in the numbers of migrant songbirds, such as Golden-winged Warblers, that winter on the property. They are especially proud to host a healthy breeding population of otherwise declining Crowned Tree Frogs, a fact attributed directly to their practice of planting bromeliads on the branches of the trees shading their coffee.

Experiencing what "sustainability" looks like on the ground and seeing how it all relates to birds made for a much more interesting birding trip. We hope to run a similar tour next year, and an entirely new itinerary that explores the tropical dry forest in northwest Costa Rica is being planned as well. If you are interested in seeing the full itinerary of our Caribbean slope trip check: www.birdsandconservation.weebly.com

By Mike Manetz

Due to the critical nature of our water resources, Alachua Audubon will begin featuring regular articles in the Crane Newsletter.

North Florida's Water Woes and Water Warriors

With over 20 inches of rain in north Florida this past June, it is hard to recall that it only rained 32 inches in 2011. A rainy season hides many ills. The grass turns green, swamps fill with water, and rivers begin flowing again. But is the recent drought really forgotten?

During 2011 and the first half of 2012, low rainfall resulted in low recharge to the Floridan Aquifer and exposed a troubling reality. Little to no groundwater was entering the springs, rivers, and lakes where there had always been water before. Water levels and flows were the lowest ever measured in recorded history. The Santa Fe River stopped flowing above the US 27 bridge. Poe Springs flow hit rock bottom. The Suwannee River dried to a three-foot wide trickle near White Springs. Silver Springs, the giant of Florida's crystal jewels, recorded a daily flow that was less than one third of its recorded average, a new historic low. And wells dried up throughout north Florida or were contaminated by salt water intrusion.

The historic low water levels and associated environmental degradation has rallied hundreds of Floridians to become Water Warriors and to speak up for more protection of our water resources. About 1,700 Water Warriors converged at Silver Springs on June 23rd to hear from Bob Graham, former Florida Governor and U.S. Senator; Charles Lee, senior policy advisor for Audubon Florida; Manly Fuller, President of the Florida Wildlife Federation; and other dignitaries speak about how Florida's water managers have authorized catastrophic over-pumping of the Floridan Aquifer. On average, about 2,600 million gallons of water are pumped daily in north and central Florida.

Every gallon of groundwater used is one less gallon of spring and river flow. Because hundreds of springs provide the baseflow of our

rivers, when springs cease flowing so do our spring-fed rivers. While there was clearly enough water to feed these springs during previous droughts, there isn't anymore. We are using too much groundwater. A resource that once seemed inexhaustible is now inadequate to meet our appetite for cheap water. Intensive agriculture, landscape irrigation, household use, power plants, paper mills, etc. are consuming the groundwater that used to sustain our aquifer, springs, and rivers. Our inability to conserve water results in less water for the environment and the water-dependent wildlife—a fact that still eludes millions of Floridians.

But a growing number of Water Warriors are finding ways to make a difference. For example, a new advocacy group—the Silver Springs Alliance in Ocala - has rallied to improve Silver Spring's troubled future, demanding reduced nitrate contamination and increased flows. Silver Springs is currently faced with a devastating new cattle operation—Adena Springs Farm—that will pump up to 13 million gallons a day from the aquifer and dispose of the waste from 15,000 cows.

Four Rivers Audubon, led by Jacqui Sulek, together with the Florida Springs Institute are finalizing a restoration plan for Ichetucknee Springs and River, which is also threatened by too much nitrate and not enough groundwater. Jacqui and Valerie Thomas are also conducting a SPRINGWATCH citizen science effort in the Ichetucknee River.

A similar SPRINGWATCH has been formed for Silver Springs by the Silver River Museum and International Baccalaureate students from Vanguard High School in Ocala. Other Water Warrior groups are actively trying to protect other water bodies such as the Suwannee River, Santa Fe River, and Rainbow Springs. You too can become a Water Warrior and make a difference for our regions' future water supply. For more information on how you can help protect our water resources, please contact the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute at www.floridaspringsinstitute.org.

By Bob Knight.

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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

Questions? Contact Paul 352-495-9419 or
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