

# The Crane

Volume 60 Number 3 January – February 2019

## January and February Field Trips

*The Annual Schedule of 2018/2019 Alachua Audubon Field Trips is on the AAS website under Activities where you may download and print a copy. Printed copies may also be obtained at Wild Birds Unlimited. Please check the website for last-minute changes although these are rare. All trips are open to the public and free. Come join us and bring your binoculars!*

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

**Prairie Creek Lodge:** Meet trip leader Chris Burney at Powers Park on Hawthorne Rd. to carpool to the Alachua Conservation Trust's 500-acre Prairie Creek Preserve. The Preserve encompasses a variety of uplands and lowlands, and we'll sample several of them in search of sparrows and winter feeding flocks. Wear rubber boots or old shoes you don't mind getting wet, as the trail can be soggy or even flooded. Difficulty: 2.

**Saturday, January 19, 8:00 a.m.**

**Cones Dike Trail / Camps Canal:** Meet trip leader Mike Manetz at Powers Park to carpool to the Camps Canal gate, where parking is limited. Although the gate is usually locked, Paynes Prairie has agreed to give Alachua Audubon access from Camps Canal through to Cones Dike. We'll be looking primarily for sparrows and other winter birds. Difficulty: 3.

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

**Newnans Lake State Forest - West Trail:** Meet trip leader Rex Rowan in the parking corral for the West Trail on State Road 26 one mile north of the junction with County Road 329B. The 182-acre field on this property produced 13 species of sparrows last winter, including Henslow's, Lincoln's, and Clay-colored, and we'll see how many of them we can find. Difficulty: 2.

**Saturday, February 2, 8:00 a.m.**

**Orange Lake / McIntosh Bay:** Meet trip leader Matt Bruce at Heagy Burry Park in the town of Orange Lake. From Gainesville, head south on US-441 to the Alachua/Marion county line. From the county line continue on 441 another 4.5 miles and turn left just past the Sunoco station onto NW 191st Place, which dead-ends at the park. You'll need to bring your own canoe or kayak for this trip. Depending on the weather, we'll paddle along the shores of McIntosh Bay to the point where it opens up to the main lake. Gulls, terns, ducks, American White Pelicans, and other open-water birds are possible, as well as marsh-dwelling species. Difficulty: 3.

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**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 be greater than two miles.

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*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.*

Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed. Deadline for the March-April issue: Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>

Content of *The Crane* is the sole responsibility of the editor and fulfills the stated objectives and goals of the Alachua Audubon Society. Annual subscription to *The Crane* is included in National Audubon and/or Alachua Audubon membership. Please see the back page for complete information. Additional advertisers are welcome. Please contact the editor for information at: 352-213-4257 or [karenpbrown1953@gmail.com](mailto:karenpbrown1953@gmail.com)

**Around  
The County...  
By Mike Manetz**

441 crossing Paynes Prairie when he noticed an American Oystercatcher standing on the retaining wall along the road. The bird sat long enough to allow a quick photo and then flew off. This was only the third record of that species in the county. The following day Glenn Israel discovered a Gray-headed Swamphen, only our second ever, at Sweetwater Wetlands Park (SWP). The Swamphen is an invasive species and, while interesting and fun to see, they can do severe damage to marshlands, so it was just as well the bird disappeared within a week. We had some fairly rare ducks visit the area. Rob Norton discovered a gorgeous male Eurasian Wigeon, only the third ever recorded here, on October 30<sup>th</sup> at SWP. Also at Sweetwater, Rex Rowan made the rounds November 23<sup>rd</sup> and spotted a female Surf Scoter, which was a second county record. A party of birders was enjoying a morning of gull watching on Lake Santa Fe December 8<sup>th</sup> when one of them, Alex Lamoreaux, spotted two Black Scoters, marking only the fourth time that species has been reported here.



*Female Surf Scoter at SWP, photo by Emerson Gravely.*

Swainson's Hawks are rarely seen in the county but there were two recent sightings. Rex Rowan was leading a group October 27<sup>th</sup> that found one soaring over Veteran's Park. Another was seen along Cone's Dike November 17<sup>th</sup> by Frank and Irina Goodwin. We usually have a few stray flycatchers move through our area in early winter. This year we started with a Vermilion Flycatcher reported November 11<sup>th</sup> along Sparrow Alley by Trina Anderson. Steve Hofstetter came across a Least Flycatcher while birding the Levy Lake Loop December 8<sup>th</sup>, and the same day Laura Gaudette spotted a Western Kingbird on a fence line along SR 26 in the vicinity of North Florida Evaluation and Treatment Center. Dickcissel is another western stray that shows up here most winters. Craig Faulhaber reported one November 18<sup>th</sup> at Boulware Springs. Western Tanagers have also become nearly annual. While they



*Swainson's Hawk at Cone's Dike by Frank Goodwin.*

*Continued on page 10*

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## Recognizing John Hintermister

The Alachua Audubon Society wishes to recognize the longest-standing member of Alachua County's birding community. After many decades of leading field trips for AAS, the St. Mark's field trip in early January will be John Hintermister's final Audubon-led field trip. John was a trail-blazer to birding in Alachua County and his contributions to birds, birding, science, and conservation are immense.

As a young boy, John was inspired to watch birds when two regular winter visitors would take him on birdwatching excursions. By the time John was 11, he was hooked on birds. John and his brother would pedal their bikes to Lake Alice and by noon would sometimes list 100 species. When describing this, John said, "Now I don't know if we identified them all correctly, but we would get 100 species." They may well have identified them correctly because upon seeing a bird, they would stop and read aloud the entire description from their Peterson field guide.

In January 1960, John attended the inaugural meeting of the Alachua Audubon Society. Among its charter members were Oliver Austin, Marjorie Carr, J.C. Dickinson, Jr., and 16-year old John Hintermister. Some of the first year's field trips included River Styx, Lake Alice, the pinewoods north of the airport where Red-cockaded Woodpeckers nested, Devil's Millhopper, Paynes Prairie, and San Felasco Hammock. Both Paynes Prairie and San Felasco were still in private ownership.

During the 1960s and 70s, the National Audubon Society sponsored a series of nationally-touring nature films, and these films served as AAS's program meetings. John attended many of these early Audubon programs. Roger Tory Peterson was a regular on the tour, and when he visited Gainesville every 2-3 years, the University Auditorium was booked to hold the crowds. On one of those occasions, John remembers handing his tattered and well-used field guide to Peterson to sign, and "Peterson held the tattered, well-used volume aloft and commented, "This is the way I like to see them."



The first Gainesville Christmas Bird Count (CBC) began in 1957 and, during its infancy, the CBC had few participants and they birded only from sun-up until lunchtime. There were no assigned territories, no team captains, and no organization of any sort. In 1972 at age 29, John became the official compiler of the Gainesville CBC. After reading in Peterson's Book, *Birds over America*, about the methodical way in which the Bronx CBC was conducted, John sought to emulate it for the Gainesville count. He instituted dark-to-dark counts. He cut up a topographic map of the count circle to make territories, appointed team leaders, and assigned them important birds to find in their particular tracts. John served first as compiler of the Gainesville CBC from 1972 – 1981 and then as co-compiler with Howard Adams from 2003 until 2014. During the interim 21-year period from 1981 – 2003, the co-compilers were Craig Parenteau and Barbara Muschlitz.

In the mid-70s John began teaching birding classes through Santa Fe Community College (now Santa Fe College). There is no telling how many people John inspired through these birding classes, but we know that Mike Manetz is one. Those SFC birding classes are still taught by AAS and now are led by Charlene Leonard and Cindy Boyd.

In 1985, John became the original Alachua County coordinator of Florida's Breeding Bird Atlas, and it was during this atlas survey that Hooded Warblers were discovered breeding in San Felasco Hammock. He also served as president of AAS and was a long-time board member. During his almost 6 decades of involvement with AAS, he has led countless field trips.

*Continued on page 10*

## Events and Programs

### Wednesday Morning Bird Walks at Sweetwater Wetlands Park

Meet AAS volunteers each Wednesday at 8:30 am from September through May to search for wetland birds such as Least Bitterns, Purple Gallinules, and ducks at Sweetwater Wetlands Park. The park is teeming with plants and wildlife and improves water quality while providing one of the best birding spots in Alachua County. It is located on the south side of Gainesville, 3/4 of a mile east of the intersection of SW 13th Street/US-441 and Williston Road. Look for the sign on the south side of Williston Road. We'll meet at the covered shelter by the entrance.

Guided walks are free, but park admission is \$5/car. Bring binoculars, a hat, sunscreen and water. Learn more about the park at [SweetwaterWetlands.org](http://SweetwaterWetlands.org).



### Third Thursday Bird Walks

Alachua Audubon offers bird walks on the third Thursday of most months for anyone who would like to attend. Lunch is optional for those who would enjoy some extra socializing. If you are interested in attending this trip in January and/or February, please contact Bob Carroll for details at [gatorbob23@yahoo.com](mailto:gatorbob23@yahoo.com)

### Zen Birding: A Yoga and Birding Experience

Zen Birding combines yoga and birding for a unique experience. All are welcome regardless of yoga or birding experience. We meet at 9 am on the fourth Sunday of every month at the covered pavilion at Possum Creek Park, 4009 NW 53<sup>rd</sup> Avenue in northwest Gainesville. We start with a beginning yoga workout led by a certified instructor, then enjoy a short stroll around the park to listen and watch for birds and other wildlife. The experience lasts about 90 minutes. Binoculars and yoga mats are available for loan if needed. **Previous yoga or birding experience is not required.**

Our next meeting is **Sunday, January 27th at 9 am**; please check the [AAS website](http://AAS website) for the February date.

### Family Birding Program

The AAS Education Committee continues to partner with Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park to offer family walks at La Chua Trail on the first Saturday of the month (October through April). Interested families may register at the Friends of Paynes Prairie website at [www.prairiefriends.org](http://www.prairiefriends.org) under *Upcoming Events*. We will walk at a leisurely pace for about 2 hours from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

A family is not required to join us – anyone is welcome! Bring a child, a grandchild, a neighbor, or just yourself and take a walk on the La Chua Trail. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Loaner binoculars are available during the walk, but supplies are limited.

Meet at the La Chua Trail parking lot at 4801 Camp Ranch Road, Gainesville. Walks are free, but park admission at La Chua Trail is \$4.00 per vehicle (cash only) or free with a Florida State Parks Annual Pass. Contact Emily Schwartz at 352-372-0754 if you have questions.

### Monthly Birds and Brews

The AAS Birds and Brews event continues to be a popular event for both new and experienced birders. Meet the first Sunday of the month at **First Magnitude Brewery**, 1220 SE Veitch Street. Arrive early as parking can be scarce. There will be an Alachua Audubon table set up and loaner binoculars will be available. On **January 6th** we will meet up at **4:15** for a **4:30 PM departure** to Depot Park. On **February 3rd** we will meet at **4:45** for a **5 PM departure**. It's a lovely time of day for a leisurely stroll around the ponds to look for birds. Then we'll return to First Magnitude for an optional cold brew and good conversation. *All birding skill levels welcome.*

Next event: Sunday, January 6th at 4:15 pm



## CONTINUING SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

To encourage youth activities consistent with the Alachua Audubon Society mission, we are pleased to announce the availability of \$300 in scholarship funds to an Alachua County high school student. The expenditure of the scholarship is not limited to academics and may be used in any fashion the student finds desirable. The award will be based upon the following criteria:

- Keen interest in the environment/nature/conservation
- Involvement in extracurricular nature/environmental activities
- Academic record
- Teacher/counselor recommendation

### Eligibility Requirements:

To be considered, an applicant must:

- Be a resident of Alachua County.
- Be a student at the 9th to 12th grade level.
- Be in good academic standing.

### How to Apply:

To apply for the AAS Scholarship, please complete the application form on the AAS website home page. Creating an account (optional) will allow you to save your progress and complete the form at a later time if needed. **The deadline to apply is March 15, 2019.**

Two letters of recommendation are required:

- one from a teacher or counselor who can confirm your academic record,
- the second from a teacher, club sponsor or volunteer supervisor who can provide information on your interest in the environment and involvement in extracurricular/environmental/nature activities.

Letters of recommendation should be sent as a pdf file and attached to the application or e-mailed separately to:

[scholarship@AlachuaAudubon.org](mailto:scholarship@AlachuaAudubon.org)

*Good luck, applicants!*

## SPEAKER'S CORNER

Programs are held at the Millhopper Library, 3145 NW 43rd Street, Gainesville, 6:30 social time, 7:00 program, unless otherwise noted.

**Birding Alaska**, Tuesday, January 15, 2019.

Alaska is a destination of unparalleled scenery and exciting birds and wildlife. Alachua Audubon Society speaker Anne Casella will give a presentation based on her 12-day birding trip to Nome, Denali and Seward in June 2018.

**Birdman of Archer**, Thursday, 7pm, January 17, 2019, **United Methodist Church**, 17121 SW 137th Ave, Archer. **NOTE: Special time and location.**

Thomas Gilbert Pearson (1873-1943) was one of the founders of the National Audubon Society. A resident of Archer for nine years, his interest in birds began there. Learn more about this historical figure of Archer.

**Planting for Life: How to Make your Yard your Bird Feeder**, Wednesday, January 30, 2019.

By starting with planting the wrong plants in the wrong place, Ann Wiley learned well what it takes to create a safe living space for songbirds. Learn beautiful and effective landscaping principals that contribute to the survival of our feathered friends.

**Touring Cuba**, Monday, February 4, 2019. **Tower Road Library**, 3020 SW 75th Street, Gainesville. **NOTE: Special location.**

Only in the past few years have American tourists been able to visit Cuba. Erika Simons will share pictures and her experiences from a recent trip to Cuba. Emphasis will be on the birds and other animals of this nearby island.

**What is Being Done to Preserve Endangered Species**, Wednesday, March 20, 2019. **Millhopper Library**, 3145 NW 43rd Street, Gainesville.

Aimee Pritchard will share her experiences of working in Texas to support the increased reproduction of a threatened bird.

## Field Trips

(Continued from Page 1)

**Sunday, February 17, 7:30 a.m.**

**Emeralda Marsh Conservation Area:** Meet trip leader Bubba Scales in the Publix parking lot at SW 34th St. and Williston Rd. to carpool. The 6,577-acre Emeralda Marsh in northern Lake County, at the headwaters of the Ocklawaha River, is a National Natural Landmark. It is also a prime winter birding location with extensive tracts of marsh and woodland accessible by a 3.5-mile Interpretive Drive. We should see a profusion of ducks, waders, raptors, Sandhill Cranes, Limpkins, sparrows, and warblers. Difficulty: 1.

**Sunday, March 3, 8:00 a.m.**

**Morningside Nature Center (CLEP\*):** Meet trip leader Geoff Parks in the MNC parking lot for a visit to one of Gainesville's premier nature parks featuring over six miles of trails through sandhills, flatwoods, cypress domes, and beautifully-restored native longleaf pine and wiregrass habitat. Morningside also features a working 19th-century farm, a bird blind, and a diverse array of wildlife that thrives in this unique environment. Difficulty: 2.

### \*Conservation Lands Education Program (CLEP)

Trips noted as CLEP highlight properties that protect plant and animal life, and focus on their history and uniqueness. Trips emphasize education in addition to birding.

**Saturday, March 16, 8:00 a.m.**

**Paynes Prairie Main Entrance:** Meet trip leader Felicia Lee at the parking area beside the ranger/pay station at the park entrance off US-441 just north of Micanopy. The woods should be green with new leaves, spring wildflowers should be blooming, and birds should be singing. Entry fee \$6 per vehicle. Difficulty: 2.

Alachua Audubon would like to give a huge shout-out to our many expert volunteer trip leaders. We could not offer our exceptional birding outings without their time, commitment and expertise! Thanks to all of you! ❤️

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### “Birds Are Badass”: An Evening of Live Storytelling at Cypress and Grove

Join Alachua Audubon and Guts and Glory GNV on Thursday, January 10, at 6:30 pm at Cypress and Grove Brewing, 1001 NW 4th St, Gainesville, for a memorable evening of great stories about the joys and traumas of living among our feathered neighbors. Hear some of Gainesville's best birders and storytellers share their adventures while enjoying great craft beer and the company of old and new friends. No binoculars, bug spray, or field guide needed!

Tickets must be purchased in advance at [www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3917921](http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3917921)

General Public: \$15.00 (\$16.52 w/service fee)  
Students: \$10.00 (\$11.34 w/service fee)

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## 2018 GAINESVILLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARY

The 61<sup>st</sup> running of the Gainesville Christmas Bird Count took place on a fine Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018. At the compilation dinner, Debbie Segal and Barbara Shea honored long-time compiler and Alachua Audubon stalwart John Hintermister. John took a small, loosely-run count, and turned it into one of the most organized and productive Christmas Bird Counts in the country. The 15-mile diameter count circle was broken into eleven sectors, each with a team captain to organize the troops of birders. Over the years, the number of participants has steadily increased, and we now have well over 100 birders scattered across the landscape, participating by chumming gulls from a boat on Newnans Lake, skimming across flooded prairies in airboats, tromping through prickly fields to flush up sparrows, patiently watching backyard birdfeeders, or endlessly playing screech-owl tapes to lure in wintering passerines in the woods. With increased participation, the number of species recorded has steadily increased, and now Gainesville regularly lands near the top of all counts in Florida. Not only does the count excel in overall diversity, the army of observers rack up huge individual counts of many species. In 2017, Gainesville set high counts in the U.S. for ten species, including all-time high counts of two species (Limpkin and Black-and-white Warbler). The day's birding ends with a festive compilation where we have some cold drinks, enjoy hot pizza, and methodically tally the results.

On the 16<sup>th</sup>, the hard-core owlers woke up to a rather balmy, cloudy night, with a waxing moon that set just after midnight. Some clouds hung around most of the morning, but by noon the skies had mostly cleared and temperatures rose into the 70s. Winds picked up somewhat in the afternoon, decreasing the detection and response of land birds. Many of the birders start well before dawn and great effort is expended in trying to count every bird. We arrived at the compilation around 6 PM, tired, bleary-eyed, and eager to see how we did as a group.

The compilation consists of two parts: the first section is the regularly occurring species seen during most of the past ten years, and totals 152 possible species. We sailed through these, only missing two species (Snow Goose and Wilson's Warbler). We set all-time high counts for the Gainesville CBC for 17 species: Ring-necked Duck (3,431), Bufflehead (48), Common Gallinule (1,318), Limpkin (544! smashing the all-time high count for the US of 235, set by us in 2017), Spotted Sandpiper (9), Snowy Egret (475), Green Heron (48), Red-shouldered Hawk (253), Belted Kingfisher (100), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (115), Tufted Titmouse (450), Carolina Wren (521), American Goldfinch (967), Yellow-throated Warbler (65), Yellow-breasted Chat (3), Chipping Sparrow (1,193), and Grasshopper Sparrow (20).

The real action begins in the second part of the compilation, when each team reads the unusual species found during the count. With 150 species under our belt, a good showing of rarities could push us towards the all-time record of 166 species, set in 2016. First to go was Team 1, which included the uber-bird-rich Prairie basin east of 441, including Sweetwater Wetlands Park. Stellar finds there were Indigo Bunting, 2 Clay-colored Sparrows, Purple Finch, 2 Pine Siskins (5 more seen by Team 8), 7 Purple Gallinules, 10 Least Bitterns (plus one by Team 6), Peregrine Falcon, an *Empidonax* species (analyses of the recorded call would later show it to be the expected Least Flycatcher), and an astonishing 29 Snail Kites, the first time this species has ever been recorded on the Gainesville CBC. The total was now 159 species. Next was Team 2, which included east Gainesville south of Hawthorne Road and uplands of the east part of Paynes Prairie. They added a staked-out Bachman's Sparrow, 2 Ash-throated Flycatchers, and a trio of backyard feeder visitors: Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and Red-breasted Nuthatch; the total now reached 164 species. The 165th species was a Black-throated Green Warbler found by Team 5 in the southwestern portion of the circle that includes Tuscawilla Prairie. Whooping Cranes were seen by both Teams 5 and 7, but they do not add to the species list because they are not considered established. A Tennessee Warbler in the Team 6 territory, which incorporates the part of Paynes Prairie west of US 441, tied the all-time record of 166 species. With five more teams to go, a new record looked inevitable

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## Florida Scrub-Jay Translocation in North Central Florida

Conservation “translocation” is the human-assisted movement of wild plants and animals from one location to another location. When done properly in the right context, translocation can help recolonize suitable habitat, increase population growth, or restore gene flow for imperiled species. Translocation can be especially useful with species like the Florida Scrub-Jay that have limited ability to disperse on their own. However, researchers and managers need to monitor all translocation projects so that the donor population is not unduly affected.

Two years ago, I embarked on such a translocation study with the threatened and endemic Florida Scrub-Jay at Ocala National Forest. Our team includes biologists from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the U.S. Forest Service, Florida Forestry Service, and the University of Florida. To date, we have translocated 26 Florida Scrub-Jays from Ocala National Forest – which has a stable population – to nearby public lands that have small and vulnerable populations. Most scrub-jays have quickly settled near their release sites and set up breeding territories, and successful nesting has been observed. We will continue to study the behavior and survival of translocated birds as our project continues for two more years. We also will continue to study the impact of removals on the donor sites in Ocala National Forest.

We hope to learn enough about translocation with Florida Scrub-Jays so that this technique can be used more widely and effectively as a conservation tool for the species on additional public lands. For project updates, please contact [karl.miller@myfwc.com](mailto:karl.miller@myfwc.com).



*Florida Scrub-Jay photo by  
Erika Simons*

By Karl E. Miller

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## Melrose Christmas Bird Count

On December 20th, 2018, over 25 participants from Santa Fe, Alachua and Duval Audubon and other volunteers faced rain and more rain as they went out in boats, cars, and on foot to survey all the birds that could be seen and heard for the 29<sup>th</sup> annual Melrose Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The Melrose CBC covers a 15-mile-diameter circle centered at the intersection of SR 219 and SR 100 and encompasses parts of Clay, Putnam, Alachua, and Bradford Counties. This dedicated effort resulted in locating 104 species of birds. This number is lower than last year’s record count of 113 species, but with the weather conditions flooding roads and hampering efforts to locate birds by sound and sight, organizers are pleased with the results.

Many bird-rich natural areas occur in this circle that includes Lake Santa Fe, Santa Fe Swamp, Gold Head Branch State Park, the Ordway Preserve, and numerous lakes and forests. We are grateful to generous land-owners who welcomed volunteers onto their property to count birds.

Several species had unexpected high totals: Ring-bill Gulls 3,066; Sandhill Cranes 1,357; Chipping Sparrows 631. Uncommon for the count were Bachman’s Sparrow, Western Kingbird and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

Individual birds seen this year totaled 9,636 – fewer than last year’s count of over 16,000. The 2016 count totaled 7,484 individual birds.

At the end of the day-long survey, participants congregated at Betty’s Pizza in Melrose to get dry, tally the results, share stories of the day’s birding highlights, and, of course, to feast on the local cuisine. Laura Berkelman, FLME compiler, listed the birds seen that day by eleven birding teams. The next day, results were still coming in.

*Continued on page 13*

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## Around the County

(Continued from Page 2)

are usually seen patronizing feeders, Jennifer Donsky had one October 24<sup>th</sup> along Bolen Bluff. We missed Yellow-headed Blackbird at the Hague dairy last fall, but I spotted one briefly there this year on October 27<sup>th</sup>. The same day, Jennifer Donsky sifted through a large flock of Glossy Ibis at Home Depot Pond and discovered a White-faced Ibis among them.

Purple Finches have been pretty rare over the past few decades but this was predicted to be a major invasion year for that species. Such predictions are often overblown, but this year by mid-December there were at least five reports including a total of seven birds. We also had a minor irruption of Red-breasted Nuthatches, with two, possibly three, visiting the yards of private residences in the area. Alex Lamoreaux, Chris Burney, and Jonathan Varol spotted another prized winter bird, a Dark-eyed Junco, December 5<sup>th</sup> at Prairie Creek Lodge.

Cave Swallows were virtually unheard of in the county until first recorded in 2009. While they are still rare here, they have become nearly annual. On December 11<sup>th</sup> Andy Kratter noted one foraging over the large pond in Depot Park. The Vaux's Swift roost at UF's Dauer Hall, first discovered in November 2015 by Sam and Ben Ewing, is apparently active again this year with as many as five birds regularly using the chimney.

We had several hummingbird reports into mid-winter. Unfortunately, because females in the genera *Archilochus* (mainly Ruby-throated and Black-chinned) and *Selasphorus* (mainly Rufous and Allen's) are nearly impossible to identify to species unless they are in-hand, we usually have to record them by genus only (e.g. *Selasphorus* sp.). That said, we had at least one positive Rufous in the yard of Ron Robinson and one obvious adult male Ruby-throated at the home of Bubba Scales.

The Christmas Count revealed more interesting rarities hiding in our marshes, fields and woodlands. Please see page 7 in this issue for the exciting count results!

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through December 15<sup>th</sup>.

By Mike Manetz

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### Recognizing John Hintermister

(Continued from page 3)

John once said, "There are birdwatchers and there are people who put their lives on hold in order to bird." We know which category defines John. If there is one person who has influenced the birding culture in Alachua County more than anyone else, I think we would all agree, it is John Hintermister.

Alachua Audubon is sincerely grateful to John for his dedication to all things birds, his unwavering enthusiasm as he has mentored a generation of birders, and his almost 60 years of devotion to AAS. John was recognized and presented with a lifetime membership by Debbie Segal at the CBC compilation on December 16<sup>th</sup>. He received a standing ovation.

Much of this text was extracted from Rex Rowan's *History of Birding in Alachua County* at [alachuaaudubon.org/local-birding-info/history/](http://alachuaaudubon.org/local-birding-info/history/).

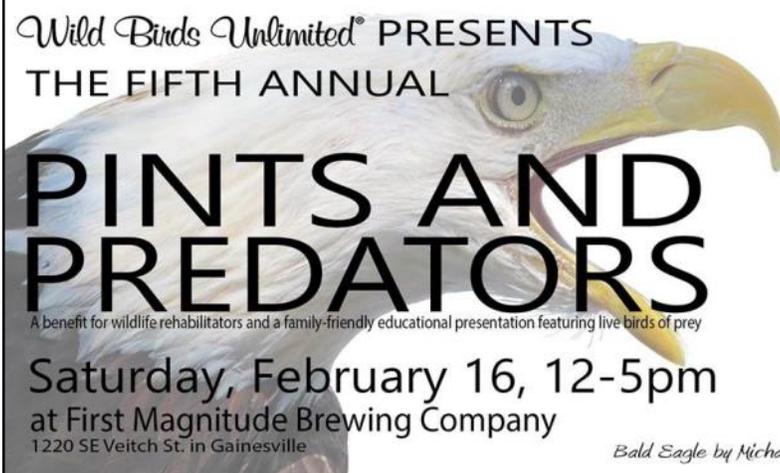
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Karen Brown

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*Bald Eagle by Michael Allard*

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## Ichetucknee/Santa Fe/O'Leno Christmas Bird Count

The Ichetucknee/Santa Fe/O'Leno Christmas Bird Count (FLIS CBC) held its 10th annual event on Tuesday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018. This year's 15-mile-wide circle, centered near the town of Fort White, involved 33 participants traveling by car, foot, and canoe/kayak/paddleboard. Many of the participants are affiliated with the Four Rivers Audubon, Alachua Audubon, Duval Audubon, Florida Park Service, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Over one third of the participants have been involved with at least 9 of the 10 FLIS CBC events (a testimony to the true dedication of this group!) and the group welcomed two new observers. As the FLIS celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, a special appreciation is extended to John Hintermister and Craig Parenteau who were instrumental in helping me establish the CBC with the National Audubon Society and for mentoring me as a Compiler to guide the 90 participants who have been involved during the CBC's first decade of birding.

The FLIS CBC covers many natural and state-managed lands including Ichetucknee Springs, O'Leno, River Rise Preserve, and Gilchrist Blue Springs State Parks; Fort White Wildlife and Environmental Area; multiple Suwannee River Water Management District properties; the lower Santa Fe River; the entire Ichetucknee River; and private lands with varying uses (commercial, residential, agricultural, and silvicultural). Three of the five teams concentrated their efforts on public lands while the other two teams focused on the remaining rivers, uplands, private lands, and neighborhoods. This year, the team's additional effort enabled observation of the 22-mile portion of the Santa Fe River within the FLIS CBC by adding a paddling route between SR 47 and the Ichetucknee River confluence. After a day of hiking, paddling, and enjoying the beautiful weather, the teams joined together at the Count-Up Supper to compile data while swapping stories of their birding adventures (some of which involved mild questioning by a County Sheriff's Deputy).

The day started with a chilly morning (compared to last year's high heat record!) with patchy fog along the Ichetucknee and Santa Fe Rivers. The sky cleared around 9:30 am, developing into 30% cover of cirrus clouds (no rain). Temperatures ranged between 38°F and 65°F with a mostly calm west-north-west wind. Both rivers were experiencing flood conditions, which slowed their normal flow and expanded their reach into the floodplains.

The FLIS CBC recorded 12,900 birds comprising 93 species, plus 2 count-week species. These observations included ten high records, six tied records, and one new species. High counts were observed for Ring-necked Duck (400), Mallard (6 /tied-2009), Hooded Merganser (50), Anhinga (12), Cattle Egret (134), Black- (4 /tied-2009), Golden-crowned Kinglet (16), Pine Warbler (268), Prairie Warbler (1 /tied-2012), Bachman's Sparrow (6), crowned Night Heron (2 /tied-2017), Northern Harrier (4),

*Continued on page 13*

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## 2018 Gainesville Christmas Bird Count Summary

(Continued from page 7)

and Team 7 gave us the record breakers. This area, including the section of the circle south of Archer Road, west of 441, and north of Paynes Prairie, added 2 White-winged Doves, and the first-ever Egyptian Goose on the Gainesville CBC. But we were not done. Team 8, sandwiched between Newberry and Archer Roads, added a Canvasback and 5 Vaux's Swifts. In suburban northwest Gainesville, Team 9 added a Summer Tanager. Finally, Team 11, surrounding and including Newnans Lake, added a Chuck-will's-widow, another new species for the count. The old record was smashed. The new record, 172 species, is going to be hard to beat. *Post-script:* A flock of shorebirds photographed on Kanapaha Prairie (Team 7) during count day showed two additional rare species – 10 Dunlin and 3 Long-billed Dowitchers, to push the total to 174 species! What a day! A Horned Lark at Sweetwater Wetlands Park on the day after the count, just the second ever found in Alachua County, doesn't add to the total, but is included in the "count week."

Bob Carroll and Andy Kratter are the co-compilers for the count. We thank Griselda Forbes for provisioning the counters at the compilation, Ashley Escalante from Life South Community Blood Center for providing facilities for our compilation, John Martin for his endlessly humorous and innovative computer work for tallying up the day's birds, Alachua Audubon for sponsoring the event, and all the great birders who participated. Mark your calendars now: next year's Gainesville Christmas Bird Count will be on Sunday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and we will see what records we can break.

**Species list.** The species setting or tying all-time counts are shown with bold-faced numbers below. The unexpected species are shown in bold-face.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck 1,340, **Egyptian Goose 1**, Muscovy Duck 228, Wood Duck 654, Gadwall 17, American Wigeon 7, Mallard 6, Mottled Duck 165, Blue-winged Teal 613, Northern Shoveler 14, Northern Pintail 24, Green-winged Teal 596, Redhead 2, Ring-necked Duck **3,431**, Lesser Scaup 16, **Canvasback 1**, Bufflehead **48**, Common Goldeneye 2, Hooded Merganser 100, Ruddy Duck 113, Northern Bobwhite 1, Wild Turkey 34, Pied-billed Grebe 128, Horned Grebe 2, Rock Pigeon 23, Eurasian Collared-Dove 2, Common Ground-Dove 3, Mourning Dove 224, **White-winged Dove 2**, Whip-poor-will 4, **Chuck-will's-widow 1**, **Vaux's Swift 5**, **Ruby-throated Hummingbird 1**, King Rail 7, Virginia Rail 6, Sora 34, Common Gallinule **1,318**, **Purple Gallinule 10**, American Coot 3,499, Limpkin **544**, **Whooping Crane 2**, Sandhill Crane 3,281, Killdeer 255, Least Sandpiper 23, Wilson's Snipe 277, American Woodcock 2, Spotted Sandpiper **9**, Greater Yellowlegs 23, Lesser Yellowlegs 4, Bonaparte's Gull 26, Laughing Gull 5, Ring-billed Gull 316, Herring Gull 2, Forster's Tern 2, Common Loon 4, Wood Stork 120, Double-crested Cormorant 857, Anhinga 592, American White Pelican 62, American Bittern 17, **Least Bittern 11**, Great Blue Heron 244, Great Egret 309, Snowy Egret **475**, Little Blue Heron 493, Tricolored Heron 129, Cattle Egret 245, Green Heron **48**, Black-crowned Night-Heron 142, White Ibis 2587, Glossy Ibis 405, Black Vulture 546, Turkey Vulture 781, Osprey 8, **Snail Kite 29**, Bald Eagle (adult) 63, Bald Eagle (immature) 30, Bald Eagle (unknown) 7, Northern Harrier 38, Sharp-shinned Hawk 8, Cooper's Hawk 17, *Accipiter*, sp. 2, Red-shouldered Hawk **253**, Red-tailed Hawk 71, Barn Owl 2, Eastern Screech-Owl 18, Great Horned Owl 31, Barred Owl 50, Belted Kingfisher **100**, Red-headed Woodpecker 24, Red-bellied Woodpecker 408, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker **115**, Downy Woodpecker 151, Northern Flicker 56, Pileated Woodpecker 130, American Kestrel 52, Merlin 4, **Peregrine Falcon 1**, Eastern Phoebe 548, Vermilion Flycatcher 1, *Empidonax* sp. **Flycatcher 1**, **Ash-throated Flycatcher 2**, Loggerhead Shrike 23, White-eyed Vireo 100, Blue-headed Vireo 128, Blue Jay 264, American Crow 630, Fish Crow 158, crow, sp. 42, Tree Swallow 1294, Carolina Chickadee 353, Tufted Titmouse **452**, **Red-breasted Nuthatch 1**, Brown-headed Nuthatch 12, House Wren 233, Sedge Wren 34, Marsh Wren 45, Carolina Wren **521**, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 723, Golden-crowned Kinglet 1, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 525, Eastern Bluebird 224, Hermit Thrush 42, American Robin 2,396,

*Continued on page 13*

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## 2018 Gainesville Christmas Bird Count Summary

(Continued from page 12)

Gray Catbird 256, Brown Thrasher 14, Northern Mockingbird 122, European Starling 30, Cedar Waxwing 285, House Sparrow 30, American Pipit 81, House Finch 40, **Purple Finch 1**, American Goldfinch **967**, **Pine Siskin 7**, Ovenbird 6, Northern Waterthrush 7, Black-and-white Warbler 121, Orange-crowned Warbler 96, **Tennessee Warbler 1**, Common Yellowthroat 259, American Redstart 3, Northern Parula 5, Palm Warbler 1,097, Pine Warbler 230, Yellow-rumped Warbler 1,810, **Black-throated Green Warbler 1**, Yellow-throated Warbler **65**, Prairie Warbler 6, Yellow-breasted Chat **3**, Eastern Towhee 66, **Bachman's Sparrow 1**, Field Sparrow 4, Chipping Sparrow **1,193**, **Clay-colored sparrow 2**, Vesper Sparrow 31, Savannah Sparrow 138, Grasshopper Sparrow **20**, Henslow's Sparrow 4, Fox Sparrow 2, Song Sparrow 64, Lincoln's Sparrow 1, Swamp Sparrow 266, White-throated Sparrow 21, White-crowned Sparrow 6, Northern Cardinal 743, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak 1**, Painted Bunting 15, **Indigo Bunting 2**, **Summer Tanager 3**, Red-winged Blackbird 7,266, Eastern Meadowlark 155, Rusty Blackbird 5, Common Grackle 677, Boat-tailed Grackle 2,177, Brown-headed Cowbird 759, Baltimore Oriole 24.

By Andy Kratter

### Melrose Christmas Bird Count

(Continued from page 9)

The Melrose CBC was begun in 1990 by Jan and Bill Bolte of Melrose; this year marked 29 years of their participation in the count.

Begun 119 years ago in New York City's Central Park, 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. Changes in the range of some bird species have implications in assessing results of climate change. National Audubon has identified 314 species of birds in the U.S. that will be affected by climate change.

Results from the Melrose CBC, combined with data from hundreds of other CBC surveys throughout the world, allow ornithologists to assess bird trends on a national and international scale. To see the complete list of birds seen on the Melrose CBC, e-mail Laura Berkelman at [lberkelman@windstream.net](mailto:lberkelman@windstream.net).

By Laura Berkelman

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### Ichetucknee/Santa Fe/O'Leno Christmas Bird Count

(Continued from page 11)

Eastern Screech-Owl (4 /tied 2009), Golden-crowned Kinglet (16), Pine Warbler (268), Prairie Warbler (1 /tied 2012), Grasshopper Sparrow (3), Brown-headed Cowbird (5,000 /previous record 56 in 2010), Baltimore Oriole (4 /tied-2009), and House Finch (5 /tied-2012). Notes were made that the Ring-necked Ducks and Brown-headed Cowbirds were most likely undercounted. Of the 60 species that have been commonly recorded on the FLIS CBC, the Eastern Meadowlark has been notably absent for two sequential years while the Eastern Whip-poor-will (1) made its first appearance. Other observed species not commonly seen within the FLIS CBC include the Snowy Egret (1), Purple Finch (count-week), and the above-mentioned Grasshopper Sparrow (3) and Prairie Warbler (1).

A most incredible "THANK YOU" to the Team Leaders and birders who have made the FLIS CBC a success over the past 10 years! See you again on Tuesday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019!

By Ginger Morgan, FLIS Compiler



*Prairie Warbler photo by  
Tedd Greenwald*

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## American Kestrel Nest Box Program 2018-2019

In 2006, Alachua Audubon launched our kestrel nest box program, resulting in about 130 boxes being put up in North Florida between 2006 and 2015. Many of the boxes have been used by kestrels or screech owls for nesting, but we have almost no data for Alachua County as we have been doing very little monitoring. (Some boxes put up in Gilchrist and Suwannee Counties have been monitored regularly by Richard Melvin. The six boxes we put up at Itchetucknee Springs State Park are monitored by the park staff, and the six boxes we put up on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) property at Watermelon Pond are monitored by FWC staff.)

This fall, it was decided to revive the program, making use of the abilities and energy of interns from the University of Florida courtesy of UF Professor Katie Sieving. We formed a committee consisting of Eric Amundson, Michel Brock, Alan Shapiro, and myself to carry out the mission. Alachua Audubon president Debra Segal applied to Florida Power and Light for a grant and received \$2,500 to buy materials for building nest boxes for kestrels and bluebirds, a set of nest gourds for purple martins, and a pole camera for monitoring kestrel nest boxes. Using materials purchased with the grant money, and with the help of three enthusiastic interns: Amanda Corrick, Adrian Dougherty, and Joelle Carbonell-Bierbaum, we have been building new kestrel boxes and bluebird boxes. We have also started doing maintenance on some of the old, installed boxes, using an extension ladder to access the boxes which are mostly 12 to 18 feet above the ground.



*Kestrel photo by Bob Simons.*

We began making trips to check on installed boxes on November 5th and have checked five areas so far. We first visited several cattle pastures in and near Evinston, FL owned by Freddy and Ashley Wood. Of the four boxes Adrian, Joelle, and I inspected, cleaned, and furnished with new nesting material, all were in fair to good condition and two have been repeatedly used by kestrels. One box that had been installed on a large loblolly pine was no longer there due to a lightning strike that killed the tree and blew up the box. The other four boxes are on cabbage palm trees. (We put up a new bluebird box in one of Ashley Wood's pastures.)

The next area, checked by Joelle and I, was between Newberry and Alachua, where we located four boxes. All were in good shape and two had been used recently by kestrels. At one box, we were closely watched by a male kestrel as Joelle worked on the box.

The third area was on Cellon Creek Boulevard and at Hague Dairy, where Adrian, Joelle, and I checked, cleaned, and put new nesting material in four boxes. The Cellon Creek box produced a family of kestrels last year and one of the Hague Dairy boxes was used by kestrels last year.

The fourth area was on the Metzger Tract at Watermelon Pond, which is owned and managed by Alachua County. On the morning of 12/12/18, Eric Amundson,



*Joelle Carbonell-Bierbaum working on a kestrel nest box.  
Photo by Bob Simons.*

*Continued on next page*

## American Kestrel Nest Box Program 2018-2019



*Amanda Corrick uses a pole camera, provided by Jennifer Walls of Goethe State Forrest, to monitor a kestrel nest box. Photo by Bob Simons.*

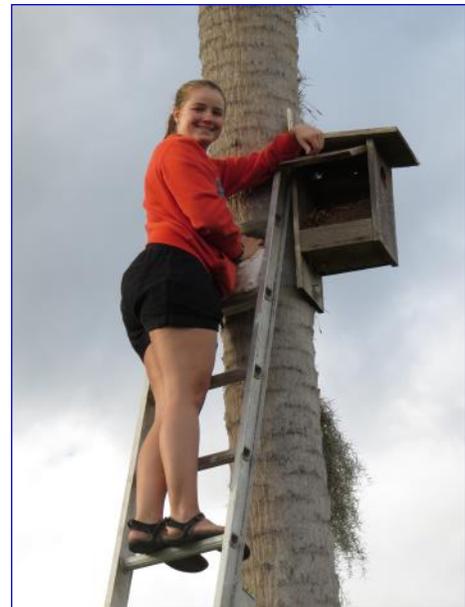
Amanda Corrick, and I, with the help of Alachua County employees Andi Christman, Emily Uhlmann, Andy Natwick, and Richard Poole, checked on six boxes. We failed to find two boxes. The boxes we checked were in fair shape, but one was on a dead tree, so we put up a new kestrel box nearby for the kestrels to use once the dead tree falls down. We also installed a new bluebird box in a good location. Two of the kestrel boxes showed signs (white-wash on the inside walls) of being used recently by kestrels, and the one on the dead tree was being guarded by a pair of kestrels.

The last area we checked is on the Florida Division of Forestry part of Watermelon Pond. Jennifer Walls came up from the Goethe State Forest office to assist Eric, Amanda, and I in this effort to check on twelve boxes that Charlie Pedersen and I put there about ten years ago.

Jennifer brought a pole camera that is similar to the one we recently purchased, allowing us to get instruction and practice with this

equipment. This was very helpful, and we got to see a flying squirrel in one box and a screech owl in another. Jennifer also had a GPS program on her cell phone which allowed us to more easily locate the boxes, all of which had been mapped with GPS coordinates in 2012 by Charlie Pedersen. We managed to find and check on eight kestrel boxes. One was on a dead tree and one, which we replaced with a new box, was falling apart, but the others were at least functional or fixable. We didn't have time to go to three of the boxes, which are in a separate area, and we could not find one of the boxes. Based on past monitoring efforts, plus our efforts on 12/12/18, at least five of the boxes we checked have been used by kestrels and one by a screech owl.

Going forward, we still have many old boxes to check, and have found some potential locations for putting up new boxes. Karl Miller has counseled us to organize our efforts into discrete units and to concentrate efforts in areas of public conservation lands such as Watermelon Pond or areas of clear kestrel use like the area around Hague Dairy. We plan to continue to make use of interns, rejuvenate old boxes, put up a few new boxes, and to do some monitoring this spring with our new pole camera as kestrels and screech owls begin their 2019 nesting season.



*Adrian Dougherty working on a kestrel nest box. Photo by Bob Simons.*

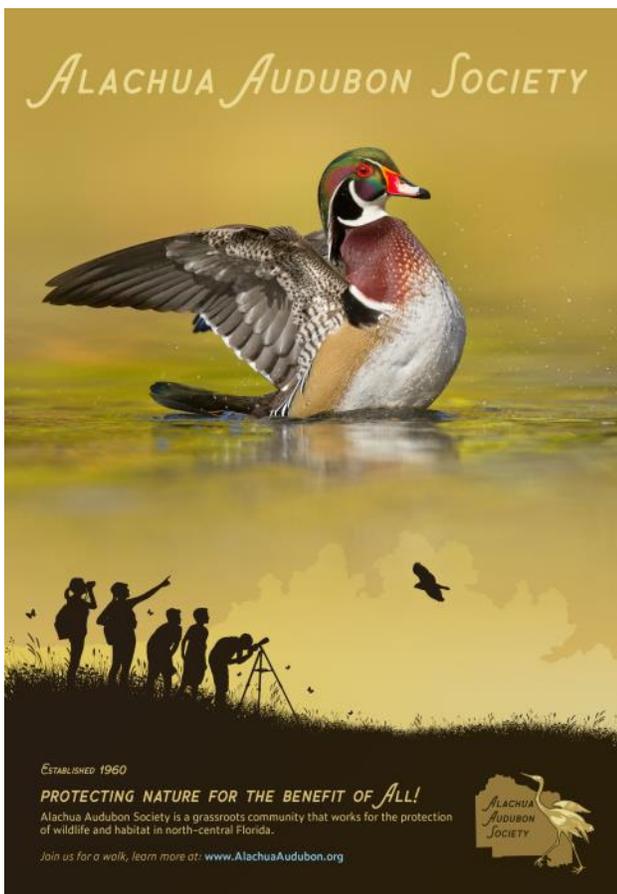
By Bob Simons



Subaru of Gainesville recently selected the Alachua Audubon Society as part of their **Share-the-Love** program. For every car sold at the Gainesville Subaru dealership between November 2018 and early January 2019, Subaru will donate \$250 to the buyer's chosen charity, with AAS being the only local charity among the group selected by Subaru.

AAS sincerely appreciates Subaru's generosity and commitment to environmental organizations. We plan to invest these funds locally for environmental education, environmental advocacy, and wildlife conservation.

AAS poster (below) on display at Subaru. Design courtesy of Chris Burney, [anntanager@gmail.com](mailto:anntanager@gmail.com)



Andy Kratter identified Cathy Bester's photos taken at Sweetwater Wetlands Park and posted on the Alachua County Birding Facebook page December 18: Immature Red-shouldered Hawk. *Accipiters*, like Cooper's, have much longer tails and shorter wings with even-colored upper sides. Note the pale crescent at the base of the primaries – a definitive Red-shouldered Hawk characteristic. [facebook.com/groups/AlachuaCountyBirding/](https://facebook.com/groups/AlachuaCountyBirding/)



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Please send any questions to [AlachuaAudubonMembership@gmail.com](mailto:AlachuaAudubonMembership@gmail.com)