

New and Continuing Audubon Initiatives for 2019/2020

The Alachua Audubon Society is embarking on several new and exciting initiatives for the 2019-2020 birding season.

AAS board members Jonathan Varol and Dr. Katie Sieving are developing a bird banding lab that will educate and train students and other participants on the scientific methods of capturing, banding, and tracking birds. The **Alachua Conservation Trust** is partnering with AAS on this new endeavor by offering a wooded area and the barn facility at their Prairie Creek Lodge property. A field trip and ribbon-cutting event will be scheduled in early 2020 at our new **Prairie Creek Bird Banding Lab**.

The City of High Springs has just completed the design of a treatment wetland facility that, like Sweetwater Wetlands Park, will remove additional nitrogen from the city's wastewater. But unlike Sweetwater's flow-through wetland, the cleansed water from the High Springs wetland will infiltrate into the ground and recharge the Floridan Aquifer and help restore nearby springs. High Springs had not originally planned to open the wetland facility to the public, but AAS met with city officials and offered to fund the public use facilities if the city would allow public visitation. The City enthusiastically agreed. AAS received funds from Subaru of Gainesville as a 2018/2019 recipient of their Share-the-Love Program and is using those funds for the public use facilities at the **High Springs Treatment Wetlands**. Look for this new wetland facility to open in early 2020.

Are you one of the many birders who has searched for wintering sparrows at the **Newnans Lake Forest West Tract**? The current "old field" habitat has been attractive to sparrows and other grassland species such as Northern Bobwhite and Southeastern American Kestrel during its current early successional stage, but if the site is allowed to mature into a shrubby and then forested community, the attraction to grassland species will be lost. Consequently, AAS is working with the Florida Division of Forestry to develop and implement a **Sparrow Restoration project** that will maintain a portion of this site as "old field" habitat. AAS will be funding a large portion of the sparrow restoration activities.

Dr. Mark Hostetler gave a presentation to AAS board members on the **Acopian Window Treatments** which are vertical parachute cords that are installed on windows at a specified width to significantly reduce the number of bird window strikes. AAS board member Eric Amundson has constructed and installed his adapted version of the Acopian Window Treatments at his house and has noticed a reduction in bird strikes. AAS is looking for 1-2 buildings that have a high incidence of bird strikes so we can purchase and install Acopian Window Treatments.

AAS is partnering with **Kanapaha Botanical Gardens** to create a bird checklist brochure for visitors to the gardens. We will also provide brochures on "Plants for Birds" and "An Invitation to a Healthy Yard" as a way of encouraging more bird-friendly yards.

Alachua Audubon Society's new **High School Scholarship program, College Internship program, and College Scholarship program** were all unveiled in 2018/2019. These programs were a huge success and will continue to be funded in 2019/2020 and subsequent years. The board of the AAS voted to name the high school scholarship program the **John Hintermister Memorial High School Scholarship program** in memory of John Hintermister, who was a charter member and long-time volunteer of AAS and a huge supporter of high school programs.

AAS will lead **over 100 birding field trips** during the 2019/2020 season. These field trips include the strategically scheduled weekend field trips (with some new sites planned), **Wednesday Walks at Sweetwater** (8:30 am September – May), **Sunday Birds and Brew** (1st Sunday afternoon of each month), **Family Birding at La Chua Trail** (9:00 am, first Saturday of each month, October – May), **Bob Carroll's Third Thursday** birding trips, and **Zen Birding** at Possum Creek Park (4th Sunday of each month, Sept. – Apr. at 9:00 am). In addition, Charlene Leonard and Cindy Boyd will continue to lead the popular **Santa Fe College Community Education Birding Class** during the fall and spring semesters.

The Alachua Audubon Society is an all-volunteer organization. You do not need to be a member to participate in any of our activities, but your membership enables us to offer more to the community and makes us stronger in our efforts to promote conservation initiatives in Alachua County. If you are not a member, please consider joining the Alachua Audubon Society.

Debbie Segal