

The Crane

Volume 61 Number 3 Jan – Feb 2020

January and February Field Trips

The Winter/Spring 2020 AAS Field Trip Schedule is now on the AAS web site at AlachuaAudubon.org.

Printed copies may be obtained at Wild Birds Unlimited and Sweetwater Wetlands Park.

Saturday/Sunday, January 4/5, 2020 John Hintermister Memorial Field Trip St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

The late John Hintermister led the St. Marks trip every January for years, so we've named the trip after him in yet another inadequate attempt to honor the memory of a man who served Alachua Audubon for nearly 60 years – literally since its inception. Meet Phil Laipis and Don Morrow (close friends of John's) at the St. Marks Visitor Center on Saturday at 8 a.m. to begin an all-day visit to one of Florida's premier winter birding spots. Expect birds in great numbers and variety. Bring a lunch and plenty of water, and make motel reservations if you're staying all weekend. Sunday's meeting time and location will be decided on Saturday. The trip is limited to 20 people; call Wild Birds Unlimited (352-381-1997) to register. Entry fee \$5 per vehicle. Difficulty: 3.

Saturday, January 11, 2020, 8:00 a.m.
AAS 60th Anniversary Celebration and Fledging of the Prairie Creek Banding Station – SPECIAL EVENT!!
Alachua Audubon will celebrate our 60th anniversary at Alachua Conservation Trust's Prairie Creek Lodge (7204 SW County Road 234). This celebratory gathering will also showcase our new Bird Banding Lab. AAS board members Katie Sieving and Jonathan Varol, together with AAS interns and other UF students, will demonstrate bird banding and avian data collection. Guided bird walks around Prairie Creek Preserve, wildlife ambassadors from Sunrise Wildlife Rehabilitation,

short presentations, games, and refreshments at the Prairie Creek Lodge. Difficulty: 1.

Sunday, January 12, 2020, 8:00 a.m.
Sante Fe Swamp Wildlife and Environmental Area
Meet trip leader Adam Zions in Melrose for our first-ever visit to this 7,370-acre conservation property, the source of the Santa Fe River. Driving directions: from Gainesville, go east on State Road 26 to the traffic light in Melrose. Turn left onto State Road 21 and pull into the empty lot just past Williamson's Food Store; we'll caravan from there. The hiking trails pass through flatwoods bordering dense swamp. We'll be looking for Brown-headed Nuthatches and other pine-loving species. Difficulty: 2.

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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 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: February 15th

Content of *The Crane* fulfills the
stated objectives and goals of the
Alachua Audubon Society. Annual
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or Alachua Audubon membership.
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**Around
The County...
By Mike Manetz**

As our summers are getting
hotter and longer, neotropical
migrants appear to be lingering
later and later in the season.
Normally Red-eyed Vireos depart
from our area by the end of Oct-
ober. This year we had eight indiv-
iduals reported in November.
Yellow-billed Cuckoos are usually
gone by mid-November but the

last two years we've had reports down to the very end of the month.
Magnolia and Black-throated Blue Warblers remained well past their
expected departure dates this year, and at least thirteen American
Redstarts were recorded between November 15th and December 15th.
A spectacularly rare and beautiful Lawrence's Warbler found by Tim
Hardin at Sweetwater Wetlands Park (SWP) October 27th was notably
late, and especially late was a Blue-winged Warbler photographed there
by Dalcio Dacol November 9th. There were two Black-throated Green
Warblers dallying into December – one at the home of Adam Zions and
the other in Steve Hofstetter's yard. We had four Nashville Warblers in
the area: one at SWP, one in the yard of Bill Pirzer, one on Ron Robin-
son's property near Alachua, and another in Lloyd Davis' yard. Lloyd's
grape-feeder attracted one of our latest-ever Wood Thrushes November
6th, plus a lingering Scarlet Tanager November 28th–December 5th,
which was easily the county late record for that species. At least eight
Summer Tanagers and one Western Tanager persisted into December.
In addition to warblers and tanagers, both species of buntings continued
to increase their presence this winter. During the first half of December,
nine Indigo and sixteen Painted
Buntings had been recorded in
the county.

There were a number of
vagrant flycatchers present in
early November. The most
exciting of these was a Brown-
crested Flycatcher identified by
Rex Rowan November 10th
during an Alachua Audubon
field trip at Cone's Dike. This
was only the third record of
that species in the county. For
the second year in a row an
Ash-throated Flycatcher was
found at San Felasco Hammock 441 entrance. This year's bird was
spotted November 11th by Jennifer Donsky. Rex Rowan picked up
another Ash-throated at La Chua trail powerline cut November 19th,
and a third was sighted at Watermelon Pond November 23rd by Jason



Brown-crested Flycatcher.
Photo by Jonathan Mays.

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2019 John Hintermister Gainesville Christmas Bird Count Summary

The 62nd running of the John Hintermister Gainesville Christmas Bird Count (CBC) took place on an exquisite Sunday, December 15th, 2019. After our record-breaking count in 2018, our expectations this year were as high as ever. We had a bunch of staked-out rarities waiting to be counted, perfect weather, and an army of well over 100 birders strewn across the landscape. Birders armed with binoculars, cameras, scopes, recording devices, checklists, and smart phones with the eBird app stalked their quarry in duck-filled flooded prairies, serene longleaf pine savannas, endless expanses of dog-fennel fields, sylvan campus nooks, lovely suburban parks, and mindless acres of retail sprawl.

The legacy of John Hintermister, who so capably took a humble and overly casual CBC and made it into a national powerhouse, is now enshrined in the name of the Count. Not only does our Count excel in overall diversity – last year’s record of 175 species was the highest among Florida’s 77 CBCs – our army of observers racks up huge individual counts of many species. In 2018, Gainesville achieved the highest individual counts in the United States for 17 species – including the highest number of Limpkins *ever* recorded on a United States CBC (544) – leading the nation among all CBCs. The day’s birding ends with a festive and well-attended compilation where we have some cold drinks, enjoy hot pizza, and methodically tally the results.

On the 15th the hard-core owlers woke up to cool and clear weather after a front passed through early Saturday. A morning mist clung to prairies and lakes at dawn, but quickly burned off and the rest of the day was stellar with a warm, cloudless afternoon and light breezes. Many of the birders started well before dawn and great effort was 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 159 regularly occurring species seen during most of the past ten years; several species are newly considered “regular” after showing up on most counts in the past 10 years. We cruised through most of these, but missed seven species (Snow Goose, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Bonaparte’s Gull, Vermilion Flycatcher, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Lincoln’s Sparrow). We had missed Bonaparte’s Gull only once in the past 25 years. But much better than what we missed were the record setting individual counts. We set all-time high counts for the Gainesville CBC for 12 species: Black-bellied Whistling Duck (an amazing 6872, previous high was 2110!), Sandhill Crane (7965), Anhinga (634), Barred Owl (67), Pileated Woodpecker (195), House Wren (325), Orange-crowned Warbler (a mind blowing 168, previous high was 105), Yellow-throated Warbler (66), American Redstart (8), Summer Tanager (5), Indigo Bunting (9), and Painted Bunting (26).

The real action begins in the second part of the compilation, when each team reads the unusual species found during the count. With 151 species under our belt, a good showing of rarities could push us towards the all-time record of 175 species, set in 2018. These species are tentatively added to our total, pending review of documentation. 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 1 Fulvous Whistling-Duck, 1 Gray-headed Swamphen, 8 Dunlin, 3 Stilt Sandpipers, 4 Least Bitterns, 4 Roseate Spoonbills, an astonishing 91 Snail Kites, only the second time this species has ever been recorded on the Gainesville CBC (an additional 13 were recorded by teams 3, 4, 6, and 7), 3 Peregrine Falcons, 1 Brown-crested Flycatcher, and 1 Wood Thrush. The total was now 161 species. Next was Team 2, which included east Gainesville south of Hawthorne Road, and uplands of the east part of Paynes Prairie. They added an Ash-throated Flycatcher; the total now reached 162 species. The 163rd species was a Winter Wren found by Team 3 (and another seen by Team 9) in the southeastern portion of the circle. A Whooping Crane seen by Team 5 and a trio of Scaly-breasted Munias seen by Team 7, were noteworthy, but likely will not be added to the species list because they are not considered established here in Alachua County. However, Team 7, between Archer and

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The **North Shore Birding Festival** takes place **January 16-20** and highlights the **Lake Apopka North Shore**, an Important Bird Area and the top Florida eBird hotspot. With 37 field trips and 3 keynote speakers, Orange Audubon Society's 4th annual festival is based out of the McDonald Canal area, 24600 CR 448A, Mount Dora, FL. Trips allow driving into parts of the North Shore typically inaccessible except on foot or bicycle. All 4 days of the festival feature a Sunrise Photography and Birding trip, co-led by a skilled nature photographer and birder. There is no overall festival registration fee, but most trips and keynote presentations charge a fee which supports Orange Audubon Society's Nature and Environmental Education Center fund. Students may register for trips at half price. For details visit orangeaudubonfl.org/festival/ and Face

book at facebook.com/northshorebirdingfestival. The website includes a [Locations and Lodging](#) page, a [Schedule](#) page, and more. For questions, email festival@OrangeAudubonFL.org or call (407) 637-2525.

About the Lake Apopka North Shore

The Lake Apopka North Shore has been designated an American Bird Conservancy Globally Important Bird Area, a National Audubon Society State Important Bird Area, an Audubon Florida Special Place, and is on the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. Lake Apopka North Shore is now the [top eBird hotspot in Florida](#). Nearly 370 species of birds have been sighted over the years.

Notes from the AAS Interns

Alachua Audubon has been thrilled with the contributions of our college interns and they seem to be equally appreciative of the experience gained from this semester long opportunity. For more information on Alachua Audubon's college intern program, contact Dr. Katie Sieving at chucao@ufl.edu.

From Cameron (Cami) Ramey

This past semester I worked primarily with [UF Professor] Dr. Katie Sieving and Jonathan Varol at the Prairie Creek Banding Station. Working at the banding station has been absolutely amazing. From day one I have been learning new and challenging things: putting up mist nets, identifying migratory birds and, the best part, bird banding! There's so much care and detail that goes into banding the birds and making sure they stay safe and healthy while we work with them. I've found that every species has a unique personality and I love "meeting" a new species, although the White-eyed Vireo is my favorite. I am incredibly privileged to be able to do this work and I have such respect for the professionals who spend their careers working with and caring for birds. Beyond the technical field skills, working at the banding station has been a fantastic challenge in problem-solving, multi-tasking, and staying cool under pressure. These skills will follow me absolutely everywhere. This semester I have also been seeking out an active Bald Eagle nest to monitor for the EagleWatch Volunteer Program. I haven't been able to find one yet but I will continue to look into the next semester and will hopefully have an eagle's nest to monitor until the end of the season!

I would highly recommend the internship program to future students. Regardless of your career path, an AAS internship will give you skills and self-confidence that you will carry with you for life!

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**PLEASE JOIN US
FOR THE
2020 ALACHUA AUDUBON
BACKYARD BIRDING TOUR**



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2020 from 9 AM – 3 PM

*Explore some of Gainesville's premier backyard birding habitat
on a self-guided tour of 6 yards!*

Learn how to attract birds to your own yard!

- ✓ See brightly colored winter visitors such as Baltimore Orioles, American Goldfinches, and many others
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- ✓ Learn how to keep squirrels and other varmints off your feeders
- ✓ Learn how to choose and present foods that attract a wide variety of birds and keep them healthy
- ✓ Find out what vegetation to plant and where to plant it in your own yard to attract more species of birds
- ✓ See how to provide water so birds can quench their thirst and bathe in safety
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Tickets are available for \$15.00 at
Wild Birds Unlimited, 4212 NW 16th Boulevard
Contact Alan Shapiro with questions at
352-317-0089 or alangrandiflora@gmail.com

Don't miss this exciting one-day event!



The John Hintermister High School Scholarship Program

To encourage youth activities consistent with the Alachua Audubon Society mission, AAS is pleased to announce the availability of scholarships (\$300) to Alachua County high school seniors who demonstrate an interest in wildlife or conservation. The expenditure of scholarship funds is not limited to academics and may be used however the student wishes. The number of awards may vary annually.

The award will be based upon the following criteria:

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

To be considered for a scholarship, an applicant must:

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

To learn more about the program and to apply online, go to www.alachuaaudubon.org/scholarship/.

The deadline to apply is March 31, 2020.
Scholarships will be awarded in April 2020.

Good luck, applicants!

Sixth Annual Pints and Predators!

Join Wild Birds Unlimited as they host the Sixth Annual **Pints and Predators** educational festival and fundraiser for local wildlife rehabilitators.

WHEN: Saturday, February 15th, 11 am - 4 pm
WHERE: First Magnitude Brewing Company
1220 SE Veitch Street, Gainesville.

This popular outdoor family event features birds of prey, creatures of the night and assorted reptiles.

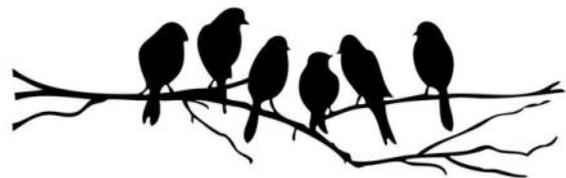


Suggested donations will be collected at the door. ALL donations benefit Sunrise Wildlife Rehabilitation, Florida Wildlife Care, Lubee Bat Conservancy, Florida Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, and Wing and a Prayer Bird Conservation.

Be sure to bring the family for this up close and personal interaction with Florida wildlife!

Weekday Birding with Bob!

Alachua Audubon offers guided mid-week bird walks led by Bob Carroll. Lunch is an option for those who would enjoy extra socializing. The next trip will be announced around the second week of January. To be added to Bob's list, please contact him at gatorbob23@yahoo.com or 352-281-3616.



College Student?

Check out the GREBES—a club focused on teaching college students about the importance and beauty of the avian world. University of Florida and Santa Fe students are eligible to join. Find them on Facebook at facebook.com/groups/ufGREBE/

Family Birding Program

The Alachua Audubon Society partners with Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park to offer family walks at La Chua Trail on the first Saturday of the month. Interested families may register under *Upcoming Events* at the Friends of Paynes Prairie website at www.prairiefriends.org. We walk at a leisurely pace for about 2 hours from 9–11 am.

A family is not required to join us – anyone is welcome! Bring a child, a grandchild, a neighbor, or just yourself. 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.

Upcoming events: January 4th and February 1st.

SPEAKER'S CORNER

AAS Programs at Millhopper Library - New Time!
Social time at 6:00 pm.; Programs start at 6:30 pm.

Urban Mockingbird Song Diversity,
Wednesday, January 15, 2020

The Northern Mockingbird is our state bird and Floridians love hearing its rich repertoire of calls and songs. University of Florida researcher Mitch Walters is studying this bird in Gainesville neighborhoods. Is there more song diversity in urban or rural Mockingbirds?

Daily Adventures of a Wildlife Rehabilitator
Tuesday, February 18, 2020

Saving Wildlife – Serving Community: Injured, orphaned, displaced wildlife are only part of our mission. Equally important are human interactions and conservation efforts. Note: This talk precedes an Alachua Audubon field trip to look for birds on the grounds of Sunrise Wildlife Rehabilitation in High Springs the following Saturday, February 22. Public welcome.

A Fight Against Time, Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Nordmann's Greenshank is one of the most endangered shorebirds on our planet. Listen to Philipp Maleko tell of his adventures in Eastern Russia working with Russian ornithologists wading through bog and forest to study this rare bird.

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 the month at the covered pavilion at Possum Creek Park, 4009 NW 53rd 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 will be on Sunday, February 23rd at 9:00 am.



Great Blue Heron—doing yoga perhaps? Photo by Trina Anderson.

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 Brewing Company**, 1220 SE Veitch St. Arrive early as parking can be scarce. There will be an Alachua Audubon table set up and loaner binoculars will be available. On **January 5th** we will meet up at **4:15** for a **4:30 pm departure** to Depot Park. On **February 2nd** we will meet at **4:45** for a **5:00 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 are welcome!
Next event: Sunday, January 5th at 4:15 pm.



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Also see Alachua County Birding and the Alachua County Rare Bird Alert on Facebook.




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Please join us as we celebrate ~

Alachua Audubon Society 60th Anniversary Celebration!



Please join us as we celebrate 60 years of community education, conservation, partnerships, and birding!

What: Anniversary Celebration and Inaugural Tours of the Newly Fledged Prairie Creek Bird Banding Lab - Guided Field Trips - Wildlife Ambassadors - Games - Prizes - Refreshments!

When: Saturday morning, January 11th, 2020 - 8 am - Noon

Where: Alachua Conservation Trust Prairie Creek Lodge, 7204 County Road 234, Gainesville, FL 32641

NEW! Prairie Creek Bird Banding Lab

**GRAND OPENING
JANUARY 11, 2020!**



Dr. Katie Sieving with Brown Thrasher.



Zachery Holmes with a Worm-eating Warbler.



Tools of the trade.

NEW! PRAIRIE CREEK BANDING STATION



The primary mission of the Prairie Creek Banding Station (PCBS) is to provide training and instruction to students and conservation professionals in the techniques of mist netting and bird banding; to advance our understanding of how birds, both resident and migratory, utilize the regional landscape; and to promote the welfare and conservation of birds and the places they depend on.



The fundamental goal of bird banding is to record the age, sex, wing length, fat deposits, and body mass of captured species as a way of monitoring, year to year, how avian populations are faring in the wild. Bird banding research has many additional uses, including:

- Avian Behavior and Migration
- Longevity and Life Cycles
- Population Monitoring
- Weight and Plumage Changes
- Habitat Use
- Disease and Environmental Toxins

Bird banding ultimately helps us understand how to conserve and manage the land in which these species live and breed.



PCBS is based in Prairie Creek Preserve, a 606-acre conservation area of flatwoods, mesic and hydric hammocks, cypress swamps, depression marshes, and blackwater streams. Prairie Creek Preserve is owned and managed by the Alachua Conservation Trust and is situated on an important migratory bird flyway in between Newnans Lake and Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park.



2019 Melrose Christmas Bird Count: Success!

On December 19, 2019, 60 participants from Santa Fe Audubon, Alachua and Duval Audubon, and other volunteers drove, boated and walked to survey all the birds that could be seen and heard for the 30th 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 that encompasses parts of Clay, Putnam, Alachua, and Bradford counties. This dedicated effort resulted in locating 126 species of birds.

This number beats the old record of 117 (set in 1990 and tied in 2013) and can be attributed to more volunteers, higher overall skill levels and more access to more area in the circle. Laura Berkelman, President of Santa Fe Audubon, commented, “We are really pleased at the permission extended to us by so many private landowners – residential, commercial and industrial. We are grateful to these generous people who welcomed volunteers onto their property to count.”

Many bird-rich natural areas occur in this circle and include Lake Santa Fe, Santa Fe Swamp, Gold Head Branch State Park, the Ordway-Swisher Preserve, plus numerous other lakes, forests, and agricultural lands.

The species with the most individuals counted were American Robins (2,431), Ring-bill Gulls (1,023) and Sandhill Cranes (1,029). Unusual for the count was an American Wigeon, a Gadwall and a Merlin.

Individual birds counted totaled 13,465 – up from last year’s 9,636, but fewer than the over 16,000 individual birds seen in 2017.

At the end of the day-long survey, participants congregated at Betty’s Pizza in Melrose to get warm, tally the results, share stories of the day’s birding highlights and, of course, to feast on the local cuisine.

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 on 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 (begun in 1990), combined with data from hundreds of other CBC surveys throughout the world, allow ornithologists to assess bird trends on a national and international scale. If you’d like to see the complete list of birds seen on the Melrose CBC, please send a request by email to lberkelman@windstream.net.

Ichetucknee/Santa Fe/O’Leno (FLIS) Christmas Bird Count

The Ichetucknee/Santa Fe/O’Leno Christmas Bird Count (FLIS CBC) held its 11th annual event on Tuesday, December 17th, 2019. This year’s 15-mile wide circle, centered near the town of Fort White, involved 40 participants traveling by car, foot, and canoe/kayak/paddleboard. Many of the participants are affiliated with the Four Rivers Audubon, Alachua Audubon, Florida Park Service, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The CBC welcomed 15 new volunteers who enjoyed their day intermingled with 25 other dedicated birders (15 of whom have participated in 8 or more years of the count!). As we birded throughout the day, we held John Hintermister close in our hearts and celebrated his memory. John was instrumental in guiding the establishment of the FLIS CBC and mentored many of us during our birding journeys.

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

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2019 John Hintermister Gainesville Christmas Bird Count Summary

(Continued from page 3)

Williston Roads, did add Canada Goose (7) and White-winged Dove (2) to bring the total to 165 species. Team 8, sandwiched between Newberry and Archer Roads, added a Vaux's Swift. In suburban northwest Gainesville, Team 9 dug up a Least Flycatcher, a Louisiana Waterthrush, and a Western Tanager for 169 species. Finally, Team 11, surrounding and including Newnan's Lake, added a staked-out Blue Grosbeak, for 170 species – just the second time the count has reached the 170-species milestone. We didn't quite match the record set in 2018 of 175 species, but it proved to be Gainesville's second-best CBC ever. John Hintermister is proud.

Despite valiant efforts by our keen observers, a few species (Egyptian Goose, Bronzed Cowbird, Bachman's Sparrow, and LeConte's Sparrow) seen during the three days prior to the count were missed on Sunday. These are not added to the total but are included in the results as "count-week birds."

Bob Carroll and Andy Kratter were 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 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 20th, 2020, 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-faced text.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck **6872**, **Fulvous Whistling-Duck 1**, **Canada Goose 7**, Muscovy Duck 244, Wood Duck 414, Gadwall 60, American Wigeon 3, Mallard 9, Mottled Duck 214, Blue-winged Teal 744, Northern Shoveler 46, Northern Pintail 28, Green-winged Teal 208, Redhead 2, Ring-necked Duck 2118, Lesser Scaup 45, Bufflehead 8, Hooded Merganser 192, Ruddy Duck 15, Northern Bobwhite 24, Wild Turkey 67, Pied-billed Grebe 133, Horned Grebe 1, Rock Pigeon 16, Eurasian Collared Dove 13, Common Ground-Dove 9, Mourning Dove 335, **White Winged Dove 2**, Whip-Poor-Will 3, **Vaux's Swift 1**, Ruby-throated Hummingbird 2, King Rail 3, Virginia Rail 2, Sora 27, Purple Gallinule 8, **Purple Swamphen 1**, Common Gallinule 1007, American Coot 4098, Limpkin 510, Sandhill Crane **7993**, **Whooping Crane 1**, Killdeer 421, **Stilt Sandpiper 3**, Dunlin 8, Least Sandpiper 34, Wilson's Snipe 231, Long-billed Dowitcher 97, American Woodcock 13, Spotted Sandpiper 1, Greater Yellowlegs 40, Lesser Yellowlegs 21, Laughing Gull 7, Ring-billed Gull 285, Herring Gull 1, Forster's Tern 6, Common Loon 1, Wood Stork 85, Double-crested Cormorant 734, Anhinga **634**, American White Pelican 15, American Bittern 7, **Least Bittern 4**, Great Blue Heron 261, Great Egret 215, Snowy Egret 123, Little Blue Heron 291, Tricolored Heron 98, Cattle Egret 126, Green Heron 38, Black-crowned Night-Heron 75, **Roseate Spoonbill 4**, White Ibis 1313, Glossy Ibis 292, Black Vulture 466, Turkey Vulture 935, Osprey 25, Bald Eagle 121, Northern Harrier 42, **Snail Kite 104**, Sharp-shinned Hawk 9, Cooper's Hawk 16, Accipiter, sp. 1, Red-shouldered Hawk 229, Red-tailed Hawk 53, Barn Owl 8, Eastern Screech-Owl 9, Great Horned Owl 45, Barred Owl **67**, Belted Kingfisher 75, Red-headed Woodpecker 22, Red-bellied Woodpecker 359, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 102, Downy Woodpecker 197, Northern Flicker 87, Pileated Woodpecker **195**, American Kestrel 41, Merlin 4, **Peregrine Falcon 3**, Eastern Phoebe 551, **Least Flycatcher 1**, **Brown Crested Flycatcher 1**, **Ash-throated Flycatcher 1**, Loggerhead Shrike 24, White-eyed Vireo 104, Blue-headed Vireo 114, Blue Jay 258, American Crow 593, Fish Crow 77, Crow, sp. 25, Tree Swallow 496, Carolina Chickadee 333, Tufted Titmouse 383, Brown-headed Nuthatch 10, House Wren **325**, **Winter Wren 2**, Sedge Wren 54, Marsh Wren 41, Carolina Wren 513, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 752, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 598, Eastern Bluebird 226, **Wood Thrush 1**, Hermit Thrush 71, American Robin 2716, Gray Catbird 143, Brown Thrasher 18, Northern Mockingbird 158, European Starling 11, Cedar Waxwing 177, **Scaly-breasted Munia 1**,

Continued on page 15

Field Trips

(Continued from Page 1)

Saturday, January 18, 2020, 8:00 a.m.

Sweetwater Wetlands Park

Meet trip leaders Adam and Gina Kent to explore this Gainesville city park created to improve water quality in Paynes Prairie and the Floridan Aquifer. SWP is now a draw to a large variety of birds with 237 species reported to eBird so far. We'll look for ducks, American Bitterns, Marsh and Sedge Wrens and other wetland birds. The park is at 325 SW Wiliston Rd. Entry fee \$5.00 per vehicle. Difficulty: 2.

Saturday, January 25, 2020, 7:00 a.m.

Dixie County Horned Larks

Meet trip leader Steven Goodman at 7 am at Hitchcock's Market (15560 NW US-441 in the town of Alachua) to caravan to the spray fields near Cross City where Steven discovered a small population of Horned Larks in 2017. Afterwards we'll continue to another Dixie County birding site (to be determined by Steven's scouting before the trip) and spend the rest of the morning there. Difficulty: 2.

Saturday, February 1, 2020, 8:00 a.m.

Ocala Groundwater Recharge Wetland Park

Meet trip leader Debbie Segal in the Target parking lot at Archer Road and I-75 to carpool to Ocala's new treatment wetland park. Construction is not yet complete, but the City of Ocala is graciously allowing Alachua Audubon to tour the new park and bird at the wetlands. There is no telling what we'll see but if there's water in the wetland cells we can expect to find ducks, waders, and perhaps even a few wintering shorebirds. Since the site is not yet open to the public, the gate will be closed after we enter. If you wish to meet us at the site, please be at 2105 NW 21st Street, Ocala, at 9 a.m. sharp. Difficulty: 2.

Saturday, February 8, 2020, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Backyard Birding Tour – SPECIAL EVENT!!

Explore premier backyard birding habitats on a self-guided tour of six yards in Gainesville. There is a \$15-per-person fee. Tickets are available at [Wild Birds Unlimited](#) (4212 NW 16th Boulevard). See [page 9](#) for details.

Saturday, February 15, 2020, 8:00 a.m.

Boulware Springs Restoration Area

Meet trip leader Andy Kratter in the Boulware Springs bike trailhead parking lot. Going south on SE 15th Street, make a right turn into the driveway immediately after you pass SE 32nd Place on your left. This 80-acre tract, formerly overgrown with brush, is being restored to longleaf pine sandhill, and in its current condition has shown itself to be particularly attractive to sparrows. They will be our primary quarry, but Red-headed Woodpecker, American Kestrel, and a variety of other winter species are possible. Difficulty: 2.

Saturday, February 22, 2020, 10:00 a.m.

Sunrise Wildlife Rehabilitation Center

Sunrise Wildlife Rehabilitation, located on 20 acres near High Springs, is dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of injured, displaced, or orphaned wildlife. They are well known for educational programs featuring their "wildlife ambassadors," including a Barred Owl, a Great Horned Owl, a few Eastern Screech-Owls, and a Virginia Opossum. Directions: Go north on US-441, and four miles north of Alachua turn left (south) onto NW 222nd Street. Continue 0.9 mile, then turn left onto NW 165th Avenue and proceed to 21374. Join trip leader Christina Opett for a tour of the flight cages and get up close to the owls and opossum. We will also walk the trails around the property in search of warblers, bluebirds, and woodpeckers. Difficulty: 1.

Saturday, March 7, 2020, 7:30 a.m.

Alligator Lake Recreation Area

We'll meet at the Tag Agency (5801 NW 34th Boulevard) and carpool to Alligator Lake in Lake City, where trip leader Jerry Krummrich will lead us along the wooded berm that surrounds this marshy 338-acre lake looking for waterfowl, wading birds, and woodland species. This site has often produced unusual birds. Difficulty: 3



Around the County

(Continued from page 2)

O'Connor. Trina Anderson found a Least Flycatcher at SWP November 28th, and another was noted along Cones Dike, which has become a near-annual location for that species.

A Bell's Vireo, only the fourth ever recorded here, was found and photographed November 26th at La Chua Trail by visiting Naples-area birder Kelly Dusham. Winter Wrens were absent from the county last year, but two were noted December 3rd along Prairie Creek. Rusty Blackbirds returned to their usual haunts at Magnolia Parke and were also seen sporadically at SWP. Among the Rustys there December 13th Jonathan Mays discovered a Bronzed Cowbird.

Several uncommon to rare species of sparrows were detected by mid-December. We had four Lincoln's Sparrows. Trina Anderson spotted our first on October 28th at SWP. Others were noted at Cone's Dike, La Chua Trail powerline cut, and at the airport. Sam Ewing picked out a Clay-colored Sparrow November 2nd at the Hague Dairy and an Alachua Audubon field trip to Kanapaha Prairie stumbled upon a very cooperative Henslow's Sparrow November 23rd. Tim Hardin did yeoman service for us in finding a LeConte's Sparrow December 3rd at SWP and a couple of Fox Sparrows December 11th on private property in Flamingo Hammock.



LeConte's Sparrow. Photo by Courtenay Harding.

Water levels on the basin continued to fall providing usable shallow habitat for dabbling ducks including good numbers of Gadwalls and Pintails, but bay ducks such as Redhead, Canvasback, and even the usually numerous Scaup were all but absent. Hopefully the Christmas Count will have uncovered a hidden patch of these birds. Rex Rowan discovered a Fulvous Whistling-Duck November 21st at SWP, and then a second December 12th. He was also the first to alert us to the re-appearance there of a Gray-headed Swamphen on October 22nd.

Lake Santa Fe has been a locus for several species which are fairly difficult to find elsewhere in the county. The likes of Red-breasted Merganser, Horned Grebe, Laughing and Herring Gulls are regular there, and rarities such as Pacific Loon and Black Scoter have been noted in previous years. This winter on November 28th Andy Kratter spotted a Lesser Black-backed Gull among the throngs of Ring-billed and other gulls. Shorebirds continued to be relatively scarce in the county, but there were two relatively rare Dunlins present, one at Butler Plaza ponds and another out on Cones Dike trail.

Please check elsewhere in this issue for the exciting summary of this year's Christmas Count, and hope to see you out there!

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through December 15th 2019.

By Mike Manetz



Suspect a crime against Florida's birds, fish, wildlife or natural resources? See an injured animal? Report incidents to FWC's [Wildlife Alert Reward Program](#) online or call 888-404-3922. From your cell phone call *FWC or #FWC, or send a text to Tip@MyFWC.com. Learn more at MyFWC/contact/wildlife-alert.

**Sweetwater Wetlands Park &
Alachua Audubon Society**
Present
**Wednesday Bird
Walks at the Wetlands**



When: Every Wednesday @ 8:30 am
from September - May
Where: Sweetwater Wetlands Park -
Entrance Pavilion
Walks are free with park admission fee (\$5/vehicle)
Bring water, binoculars, sunscreen, and walking shoes



**2019 John Hintermister Gainesville
Christmas Bird Count Summary**
(Continued from page 12)

House Sparrow 42, American Pipit 17, House Finch 109, American Goldfinch 173, Ovenbird 9, Northern Waterthrush 8, **Louisiana Waterthrush 1**, Black-and-White Warbler 131, Orange-crowned Warbler **168**, Common Yellowthroat 279, American Redstart **8**, Northern Parula 6, Palm Warbler 1217, Pine Warbler 240, Yellow-rumped Warbler 2091, Yellow-throated Warbler **66**, Prairie Warbler 8, Wilson's Warbler 1, Yellow-breasted Chat 1, Eastern Towhee 76, Field Sparrow 11, Chipping Sparrow 959, Vesper Sparrow 14, Savannah Sparrow 120, Grasshopper Sparrow 4, Henslow's Sparrow 8, Fox Sparrow 3, Song Sparrow 76, Swamp Sparrow 335, White-throated Sparrow 20, White-crowned Sparrow 12, Summer Tanager **5**, **Western Tanager 1**, Northern Cardinal 791, **Blue Grosbeak 1**, Indigo Bunting 9, Painted Bunting **26**, Red-winged Blackbird 8643, Eastern Meadowlark 144, Rusty Blackbird 24, Common Grackle 410, Boat-tailed Grackle 1467, Brown-headed Cowbird 533, Baltimore Oriole 59.

By Andy Kratter

Eye

The pair
fanned

out of the air
and landed

four feet
from our feet.

They chattered
to each other

in their woody
spoke-like

language
as we stood

still on the dike
and admired

their gray height,
their orange

eyes.

I stared

and compared
my eye

to theirs,
my tall pyre

of polite
vanities

to their bright
unhumanity,

my human
sight to their



fields of vision,
fields of stubble,

all much smaller
than they used to be,

as all can see,
since we continually

strip, shear,
fleece and skin,

leaving little
but rubble

for them
to forage in.

Then they
eased their forms

from the diminishing
frame
and slipped away.

From "Bird Book"
{poems}
By Sidney Wade

Notes from the AAS Interns

(Continued from page 4)

From Camya Robinson

As an AAS intern this past semester, I had the opportunity to work on multiple projects. I worked with Bob [Simons] and the other interns making nest boxes for kestrels and bluebirds. We would go around Gainesville, putting up new boxes and checking older boxes to make sure they were maintained. I was so proud when I put up my first kestrel nest box. I was also able to work on the Prairie Creek Banding Station with Jonathan [Varol] and Dr. Sieving. I was able to practice banding skills and how to effectively interact with the public. Catching an Eastern Towhee was definitely a memorable experience from that project. Overall, these experiences were a little challenging because I had to learn a lot quickly, but also extremely rewarding. I appreciated working on these projects because I was able to combine my passion for wildlife and educating others; I got a real sense of what these two could look like in a future career. I had a blast as an intern and am super excited to be one again next semester. To the future interns, I would say take complete advantage of this amazing opportunity because it is truly enriching – you will learn so much.

From Joelle Carbonell-Bierbaum

For the past few semesters, I have worked mainly on the kestrel box project and the bird banding station. The main parts of the kestrel box project were making the boxes and installing/checking boxes. Making the boxes was the first time I had used a hammer or a drill. I vaguely understood you should probably drill a hole before hammering a nail in, but this was only because of an episode of the Suite Life of Zack and Cody. Suffice it to say I was not an expert and although I cannot claim to be one now either, I feel much more confident with tools than at the beginning of my internship. Maybe not surprising considering I had never used a hammer, but I had never climbed a ladder before either. Still, this ended up being one of my favorite parts – going around to places throughout the county (and even outside it) to check on boxes was so fun. I loved being up high and having a more intimate peek into the life of the American kestrel. Plus, seeing eggs and babies was so exciting. Other tenants of the boxes include flying squirrels and screech owls, which we were excited to see, and wasps, which we were less than excited to see. There was one day in particular when we were so intent on getting up to check a box we resorted to throwing mud in an effort to knock the wasp nest down, even though a full half of our missiles didn't end up anywhere near the box. I am also really glad I got to learn so much from Bob [Simons] about the plants.

Banding with Dr. Sieving and Jonathan [Varol] was an amazing experience as well. I learned so much about mist netting such as proper set-up procedures and good banding practices. We also discussed why this research technique is so important. There are other ways to study birds, such as by conducting point counts, but you cannot get the same data staying hands off. For instance, giving birds a unique band allows you to identify the specific bird which leads to a wealth of information by being able to track the individual. Practically, a lot of what we learned was how to keep birds safe. For example, check nets frequently enough so birds are not sitting in a net for a long time where they can become too cold or too hot or even be attacked. I learned they are a lot sturdier than one might think, and as with most animals, being firm is the best way to reduce stress. I am really glad I was able to help for a year and a half as getting the experience really helped my confidence when handling birds. Having such knowledgeable and patient teachers certainly helped too. Also, after working on a bird project this past summer, I gained a new appreciation for this opportunity since experience like this is hard to find.

This past semester, I also started attending family birding with Emily [Schwartz]. For me, it was a great excuse to get outside as I do not do this nearly enough on my own. Beyond that, I can appreciate that other members of the community feel similarly. It is great to have a low cost, relaxed environment in which to learn

Continued on page 17

Ichetucknee/Santa Fe/O'Leno (FLIS) Christmas Bird Count

(Continued from page 11)

remaining rivers, uplands, private lands, and neighborhoods. Stories of the day's birding adventures were swapped between the teams as they compiled their data at the Count Up Supper held at Ichetucknee Springs State Park's Environmental Education Center.

The day started with comfortable temperature, low cloud cover, and high humidity. The sun never showed its presence, and later a band of rainstorms came in just as the birding day neared its end. Temperatures ranged between 60°F and 81°F with a mild to moderate (up to 16 mph) wind from the southwest to south-southwest. Both rivers were experiencing moderate river levels and normal flow.

The FLIS CBC recorded 9,414 birds comprised of 102 species, plus 1 count week species. These observations included 13 high records, four tied records, and two new species. High counts were observed for Hooded Merganser (105), Ring-necked Duck (400/tied 2018), Anhinga (18), White Ibis (186), Northern Harrier (4/tied 2018), Tree Swallow (9), White-winged Dove (27), Eastern Screech-Owl (4/tied 2009 and 2018), Orange-crowned Warbler (44), Winter Wren (2/tied 2010 and 2014), Ovenbird (7), and House Finch (19); and in the Count's uncommon species: Greater Yellowlegs (6), Snowy Egret (12), Wilson's Snipe (18), American Pipit (230), and Black-throated Green Warbler (1/tied 2013 and 2014). Two new birds to the Count were Bufflehead (1) and American Redstart (1). A few days before Count Week, a Prairie Warbler and a vagrant Lark Sparrow were observed. Of the 60 species that have been commonly recorded on the FLIS CBC, the Eastern Meadowlark has been notably absent for three straight years while the Eastern Whip-poor-will (1) and Greater Yellowlegs (6) have made their second appearance.



Greater Yellowlegs. Photo by Tedd Greenwald.

Many thanks to the Team Leaders and birders who continue to make the FLIS CBC a success! See you again on Tuesday, December 22nd, 2020!!

By Ginger Morgan, FLIS Compiler

Notes from the AAS Interns

(Continued from page 16)

about birds and simply enjoy nature. This is increasingly important as exposure to nature is the best way to encourage people to care about conservation. I became more interested in getting people I know to join us at family birding. It also transferred to reaching out to see which of my friends would be interested in learning how to compost and working out a system that made it convenient for them. I am understanding the importance of making things accessible to the public. Oftentimes, the biggest barrier is not disinterest but lack of knowledge. I believe one of my biggest takeaways from this experience was gaining more of an interest in engaging the public, as well as some techniques in how to do this effectively.

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The Crane
Jan – Feb 2020

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