

The Crane

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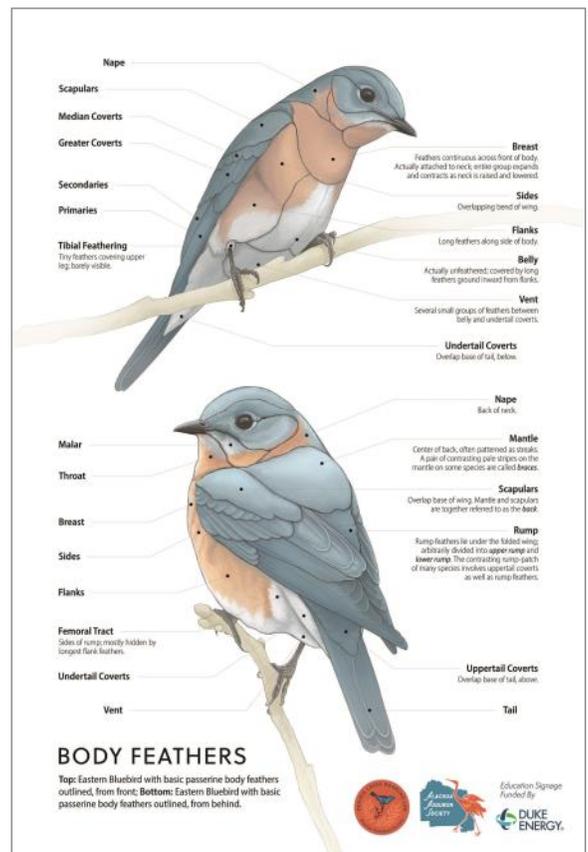
Message From The President

What a magnificent spring we are having this year. Birds galore – those returning from their wintering grounds in central and South America like Northern Parulas, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, Summer Tanagers, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, and Great-crested Flycatchers are filling our outdoors with songs and calls; vocal year-round residents are enhancing the musical variety; and those just passing through on their long journey northward are adding excitement to the avian surprises that our county has to offer. While most of the AAS field trips are still on hold, there are no shortages of nature preserves and outdoor gems in which to discover birds.

First, a heartfelt thank you to the two outgoing AAS board members, Trina Anderson and Chris Burney, who have contributed to a plethora of Alachua Audubon’s programs, projects, and internal organizational activities. During the six years that Trina served on the AAS board, she wore many hats, often simultaneously, and her dedication and contributions have enhanced the AAS organization tremendously. At the risk of inadvertently omitting some of her contributions, Trina has served as Treasurer, Website Administrator, on the Financial Investment Committee, on the High School Scholarship Committee, and as coordinator of the Wednesday bird walks at Sweetwater Wetlands Park. Likewise, in his invaluable contributions to AAS, Chris Burney served on the Field Trip Committee and utilized his superb artistic skills to design the educational signs for the Bird Banding Lab (see illustration at right and on page 17) and the new signs at Sweetwater Wetlands Park. On behalf of the other AAS board members, we extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Trina Anderson and Chris Burney for their dedication to AAS.

I would like to welcome the two newest AAS Board Members – Tina Greenberg and Jacob Ewert. Tina recently retired after a long career in accounting and she takes the reins as the new Treasurer.. Jacob is a rising UF Senior and is past-president of the UF GREBE Audubon chapter and founder of the GREBE native plant garden. He is interested in educational

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WebsiteMichael Brock 540-287-1153
AAS Websitewww.AlachuaAudubon.org
FacebookTim Hardin 352-441-6185

*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
July – August issue: June 15th

Content of *The Crane* fulfills the
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outreach and will help to coordinate AAS's student bird outings and programs. Welcome, Tina and Jacob.

Alachua Audubon's Birds and Brews field trip kicked off on April 4th and over 30 people safely met at First Magnitude Brewery for a birding stroll to nearby Depot Park. This event will continue to be held on the first Sunday of each month two hours before sunset. Check Alachua Audubon Society's website for exact starting times.

AAS hopes to resume our other bird outings – weekend field trips, Wednesday walks at Sweetwater Wetlands Park, Santa Fe College birding classes, Family Birding, and Yoga and Birds – this fall but all will largely depend on the status of the pandemic and the comfort level of field trip leaders.

The five college interns who were selected for AAS's spring internship program – Veronica Simeoni, Chloe Arbogast, Lexie Scott, Carolina Bellow, and Grayson Koch – added a tremendous amount of excitement and positive energy to the internship program. As their articles starting on [page 9](#) in this newsletter demonstrate, they acquired invaluable experience with a variety of avian-related projects including mist netting and bird banding, loon migration monitoring, and kestrel nest box monitoring.

AAS awarded \$400 scholarships to four high school graduating seniors through the John Hintermister Memorial High School Scholarship Program. The recipients were Luke Alexander, Benjamin Fick, Jett Hill, and Will Eubanks. These applicants expressed an interest in pursuing a science-based college program.

As the article and photograph on [page 14](#) shows, Audubon's Purple Martin breeding program at the Lake City Wetlands will be fluttering with over a hundred Purple Martin chicks soon. An astonishing 25 of the 32 nesting gourds are occupied by nesting martins and as of April 21st, 107 eggs and five chicks were tallied in the gourds. This successful conservation project is a partnership between Alachua Audubon Society and our neighboring Audubon chapter, Four Rivers Audubon.

AAS Board Member Jonathan Varol designed and installed a native plant garden next to the Prairie Creek Bird Banding Lab through a partnership with the Native Plant Society. This garden will enhance both the habitat and the educational opportunities for visitors and future interns at the banding lab.

We have lots to look forward to during the upcoming months – the highly anticipated June Challenge, and hopefully this fall, the resumption of AAS's numerous bird outings. 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 and educational initiatives in Alachua County. If you are not a member, please consider joining the Alachua Audubon Society.

Debbie Segal

Audubon Evening Programs

Friday, May 14, 2021, 7:00 p.m. Alaska: Birding the Last Frontier

From the lush rainforests of the Pacific Northwest to the barren Arctic tundra, Alaska boasts a large diversity of birds over its vast and varied landscape. This presentation will bring the audience on a tour throughout the state to get a closeup look at the states of the birdlife from species familiar to Coloradans, like the American Dipper, to birds seen nowhere else on the North American continent, like Spectacled Eiders and Red-legged Kittiwakes. This [Zoom](#) presentation is sure to spark the sense of awe and wonder that drew Andy up to the 49th state for summer after summer of field work.

Born and raised in central Florida, Andy Bankert has been a birder since receiving the National Geographic Field Guide for his 5th birthday, and his hobby has taken him all over the country and other parts of the world searching for birds. He has worked as a field technician for the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies all over the Great Plains region, a shorebird and seabird biologist for the US Fish and Wildlife Service across Alaska, and a seabird surveyor in Hawaii. His plan to work as a tour guide on Alaska's St. Paul Island this year got derailed, so he now spends his time photographing Alaska's birds and wildlife, harvesting fish and berries for the winter, and analyzing grassland bird data for Bird Conservancy of the Rockies based out of Colorado.

The link for the May 14 program is [here](#), or find it on the AAS website under [Programs](#).

Tuesday, June 29, 2021, 7:00 p.m. Springs and Aquifer Protection is for the Birds

Join us on [Zoom](#) to hear and see Dr. Bob Knight, Director of the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute, describe the worsening threats to Florida's artesian springs and the Floridan Aquifer that springs rely on, and how one approach to protecting the springs also enhances birdlife. Prior to founding the Florida Springs Institute, Bob was President of Wetland Solutions, an environmental engineering firm specializing in design and implementation of constructed treatment wetlands. In addition to working on more than 200 treatment wetland projects nationwide, Bob started and ended his wetlands career conceptualizing and helping to design Gainesville's Sweetwater Wetlands. This project not only cleanses nitrogen from about 2 billion gallons of the City's wastewater and stormwater that enters the aquifer each year at Alachua Sink, but it also is home to one of the most diverse and productive birding hotspots in North Florida. Bob will describe how other large utilities throughout the state's 27 million acre Springs Region can play their part in protecting the most important drinking water supply in Florida while enhancing their environmental stewardship.

The link for the June 29 program is [here](#), or find it on the AAS website under [Programs](#).

Would you like to be reminded when our programs are nearing? If so, send an email to programs@alachuaaudubon.org and you will be sent an email reminder prior to each program.

Past AAS Programs Available Online

Miss one of the AAS evening programs? Watch them online at your leisure from the [Programs](#) page of our website at www.alachuaaudubon.org/programs/

“Bird Bling: How Banding Birds Aids Conservation” presented by Adam DiNuovo

“Building Birding Skills” by Adam Kent

“A Fight Against Time” about the critically endangered Nordmann's Greenshank by Philipp Maleko

“A New Wetland in Gainesville!” presented by Gainesville Regional Utilities.

“Conservation Ecology of Short-tailed Hawks, Swallow-tailed Kites, and Snail Kites” by Gina Kent.

“The 2020 Christmas Bird Count In Alachua County, a Synopsis” by Andrew Kratter.

Why Do You Watch Birds?

There are almost as many reasons to watch birds as there are birders. Even if you can't identify them, you can watch birds simply for their wonder and beauty. A flock of hundreds of American White Pelicans swirling against the backdrop of a clear blue sky is breathtaking. Common Yellowthroats and Scarlet Tanagers are stunning even without a name. Some people find fascination in studying and understanding birds; going beyond simple identification to learn the details of plumage, migration and life history. Some birders are consumed and nurtured by the competitive urge to have the highest lists and to chase rarities, while others are satisfied with watching whatever they happen across and have no desire or need to go any further. Most people have a mix of motivations for watching birds at different times and there is no bad reason to watch birds, nor is there a right way or a wrong way to do so.

For me, birding is a great organizing principle: If you go out in pursuit of birds, you will experience life. There will always be something new and previously unseen. Looking for birds has caused me to get up for sunrises that I would have slept through and to stay out for sunsets that I would have missed. I've watched clouds play with light to create skylines with shifting palettes of colors that have no given names and that may exist for only an instant. I have seen fog create a half-seen world that faded in and out of the gray murk.

In pursuit of night birds, I have seen star-spattered skies, meteor showers and moonsets. I've watched lightning turn clouds into Chinese lanterns. I have heard deafening choruses of frogs, the moan and clatter of wind playing through the trees, the grunts of alligators and odd, mysterious and somewhat concerning splashes and crashes in the darkness. I've even heard the calls of night birds; trills, cackles, hisses and hoots.

In pursuit of birds, I've gone places that I would not otherwise have gone. I have sought out seabirds on the Pacific Ocean, where I've been dazzled by sunlight playing fractal games on the pulsating living surface of the sea and seen thirty-ton whales leap from the water. I've trudged through the North Woods in winter as silver dollar-sized snowflakes slowly filtered down. I've dodged the thorns of cholla and ocotillo in the deserts of Southern Arizona while searching for Verdin and Pyrrhuloxia. I have walked along tropical beaches in summer watching lines of Brown Pelicans skim the wavetops and stood sea watch in winter on the rocky North Atlantic coast watching for Razorbills and Harlequin Ducks. I've climbed windy mountain ridges to look for migrating hawks and waited in the stillness of wooded valleys hoping to hear the flute-like call of a Wood Thrush.

In pursuit of birds, I have been witness to the constant struggle for life, as Forster's Terns and Ospreys plunge dive for fish, as American Kestrels snatch dragonflies in mid-flight and as Bald Eagles grab coots off the surface of a winter pond. I've catalogued the birds feeding on Sweetgum seeds, Cabbage Palm berries and the fruit of Winged Sumac. I once spent a productive hour observing a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher build a nest out of lichens and spider webs and I have watched an owlet attempt its first flight.

In pursuit of birds, I have seen murmurations of Tree Swallows rising out of a cattail marsh, twisting shifting dark clouds full of life, and seen the sky whitened by masses of migrating Snow Geese. I've been on a barrier island as a fallout of Spring migrants dropped in after an overnight flight across the Gulf and I have listened to the bugling of thousands of Sandhill Cranes on a Florida prairie in mid-winter as they settled in for the night.

Along the way I have been distracted by the beauty of dragonflies, butterflies and beetles. I've watched a bobcat hunt for rails in a salt marsh and a trio of otters engaged in a game of aquatic tag. I've listened to a howling chorus of coyotes in the night and seen the sudden violent eruption of an alligator ambushing an unwary Snowy Egret.

If you pursue birds, you will necessarily expose yourself to extremes of land and weather. You will wander through forest, swamp, prairie, canyonland, mountain slope and urban fringe; you will shiver in snow, sweat in summer heat, get lost in the fog, bask in sunshine and be drenched in rain.

If you pursue birds, you will find yourself rising early and finishing late.

If you pursue birds, you will see things that you have never seen before every time you go out; unforeseen and unexpected behaviors, previously unseen species, ephemeral colors and exotic landscapes.

If you pursue birds, you may find yourself in the company of people who share your passion but may not speak your language.

If you pursue birds, you may sometimes find yourself cold, wet, hungry, tired and miserable, but at the same

time oddly satisfied.

Tomorrow, I will get up early and head out once again. I'll listen for owls before first light while I wait for the dawn chorus and morning flight. My goal will be to find birds and I'll probably be successful. It's not that hard. However, along with the birds I will find other things that I was not seeking. I don't know what they will be, only that there will always be something new

By Don Morrow.

Summary of 2021 Spring Migration of Common Loons in Alachua County, Florida.

Another season of surveying Common Loons during Spring migration in Gainesville is in the books. The 2021 season is the second year of using an expanded survey design, with citizen scientists surveying from eight stations spread across 25 km (15.5 miles), from Hague south to Micanopy. The loons, which prefer to fly over water, are travelling from their wintering grounds on the Gulf of Mexico to their summering grounds in eastern Canada. To minimize overland travel, they take off near Cedar Key, head NE to cross the Florida peninsula, and reach the Atlantic Ocean near Jacksonville. Looking at a map, you can see that a route over Alachua County is the shortest overland route from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic on the Florida peninsula. Like everywhere, loons begin their migration at dawn. Leaving near Cedar Key, they fly about 60 miles/hour which brings them over Gainesville about 45 minutes to 2 hours after sunrise, depending on how far offshore they started. Another hour of flying and they hit the Atlantic.

In 2021, we finished with a total of 2320 loons, about 6% higher than last year's record (2190), but with only about 60% of the effort as in 2021. The season started 15 March and continued until 19 April, with four days of fog or rain. The loons are quite consistent. The median date (half of total passed before, half after) was April 2nd, the same as last year and the same as all years combined. Like last year, we had some static warm weather with no fronts in late March, but this year there was less fog and a welcoming front appeared sooner.

We had several big days (>200) of loons (229 on 19 March, 200 on 2 April, 206 on 3 April, and 256 on 9 April), but none eclipsed our two highest of last year (325 on 21 March, and 299 on 1 April). We had our first ever individual count with 200 loons (Scott Robinson south of Micanopy with 200 on 19 March). Five other individual stations had over 100 loons in one day.

We are starting to piece together how the loons are using this migration corridor. They seem to be quite bunched, as some stations would report great numbers, while others would have only a few on the same day. Like in 2020, loons tended to use a more southerly crossing early in the season and switched to flying over the more northern stations later in the season. After one and a half seasons of low numbers, on 1 April I decided to stop using the northernmost station at Hague Dairy, as our efforts there were producing very few loons.

I want to thank everyone who participated. I would especially like to thank Alachua Audubon for sponsoring several interns (Grayson Koch, Carolina Bello, and Chloe Arbogast), who did great jobs. Next year I am going to change up the training so that we can better incorporate new birders. One way to do this would be to have two counters per station. This year, Peter Polshek and Laura Gaudette had outstanding success when they doubled up on counts. I am going to try this in future years.



*Common Loon on Lake Santa Fe.
Photo by Tedd Greenwald.*

Andy Kratter (kratter@flmnh.ufl.edu)
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Views from the Banding Lab

Migrants are on the move!

As the weather gets warmer and the days become longer, migratory birds start their journeys to their respective breeding grounds. In North America, bird species known as neotropical migrants make these long-distance travels twice a year.

This bird is a **Yellow-throated Vireo** (*Vireo flavifrons*), and it is one of many neotropical migrants now arriving back into its breeding range in the eastern U.S. and Canada. In the early decades of the twentieth century, this species



Indigo Bunting.

Despite these potential benefits in the species' breeding range, the destruction of tropical forests on their wintering grounds could easily and quickly offset their conservation success. Yellow-throated vireos are considered to be "forest specialists" in the Yucatan Peninsula, and are therefore highly vulnerable to tropical deforestation in this critical part of their wintering range.

When we consider the welfare of birds in the United States and Canada, we often overlook or simply forget that the majority of our beloved songbird species do have some form of migratory behavior, much of it including cross-border travel. There is a major need for better and more comprehensive international cooperation and management of avian species so as to ensure their continued monitoring and guarantee effective conservation.



Yellow-throated Vireo.

started to disappear from urban and suburban cities of the Northeast. It was speculated that the pesticide spraying carried out to combat Dutch elm disease was contributing to the disappearance of this bird throughout parts of its range. Over the last 6 decades, however, the population of this species has been increasing by 1.1% each year, and conservationists believe this is due to the maturation of woodlands throughout the yellow-throated vireo's range as well as changes in forest management practices such as the expanded use of selected cutting as opposed to clear cutting.

Continued - next page.

Mist netting and banding birds often feels like panning for gold. While every bird is precious, some of them shine like absolute gems. This male **Indigo Bunting** (*Passerina cyanea*) is a stunning example of that.

This is the first time my lab has carried out a banding season during the Spring. We had only ever banded over the Fall before, and there is a real difference between what birds look like in Spring compared with Fall.

So where might this bird be coming from and going? It's difficult to say. Their wintering range spans the majority of the West Indies (excluding the Lesser Antilles) as well as Central America and coastal northern Colombia. This bird has likely flown from somewhere in that eastern portion of the species' wintering range and has either reached its breeding grounds here in north Florida or will carry on migrating further north into the continent.

Over the last 70 years, Indigo Buntings have expanded their breeding range into peninsular Florida with the secondary growth shrubby zones surrounding the Paynes Prairie Basin being some of the most reliable places to see Indigo Buntings during the nesting season.

Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*)

We seem to be seeing blue at the Prairie Creek Banding Lab this spring. Indigo buntings, eastern bluebirds, and now this stunning male blue grosbeak have all made appearances over the last two weeks as spring migration and nesting territory establishment reach their seasonal peaks here in North Florida.

This is the first time we've banded a blue grosbeak at the lab, and we were thrilled to experience this poorly understood and lesser-studied American songbird. While the species is fairly widespread throughout its breeding range, it has a generally scarce population and virtually all aspects of its biology are poorly known.

The blue grosbeak's breeding biology is likely similar to that of its close relative, the indigo bunting. Both species' breeding ranges overlap, and it's safe to surmise that ecological competition between the species may contribute to the low population density of blue grosbeaks. In addition, limited research indicates that blue grosbeaks are heavily parasitized by both brown-headed cowbirds and bronzed cowbirds.

The male featured in these photos almost certainly spent the winter in the West Indies and migrated across the Caribbean before making landfall on the Floridian peninsula. I wish we had more insight into where this individual is heading to. It could be any number of destinations along the eastern seaboard. It could even be planning to breed right here in Alachua County. Perhaps some other fortunate bander will get the chance to see this bird and report its movements back to us.



Blue Grosbeak.



Blue Grosbeak.

Text and photos by Jonathan Varol

Latest Flock of Interns Leaves the Nest

The most recent group of Alachua Audubon interns has finished their semester of exciting work with AAS projects. They all provided a great deal of help and enthusiasm along the way. Each one is receiving an intern scholarship of \$250 in appreciation of their participation. Below are comments about their experiences.

Chloe Arbogast

When I started this internship with the Alachua Audubon Society, I was so excited to learn more about avian conservation. I saw it as an opportunity to gain field experience and learn the ins and outs of wildlife research. And on the first day at the Prairie Creek Banding Lab, I experienced all that and more. I learned how to extract a bird from a mist net and then band it. I also learned how to handle passerine birds and how I can protect them from getting injured. A highlight from the banding lab is when I extracted and banded a tiny Prairie Warbler. It was a really cold morning, so I put the Prairie Warbler in my jacket while it was in a weighing bag. When releasing the Prairie Warbler, it rested in my hand for a while, looked up at me, and then took off. That experience reinforced the fact that these are wild birds, and their well-being is the most important thing when conducting research.

Another highlight from this internship is going American Kestrel nest box monitoring. It was breathtaking seeing such elusive birds up close. I was impressed with how many kestrels were using the man-made nest boxes. There were a couple of nests with five speckled eggs. I found it a huge success for wildlife conservation and an interesting management strategy.

I also gained experience inputting data from previous field expeditions and how to set up large mist nets designed for wading birds in working for Avian Research & Conservation.

Overall, this experience has been incredible. I am inspired to use these techniques for my own research on migratory birds and disturbance ecology through a master's program. I want to thank everyone involved in this program for making this internship so memorable! I have developed an even greater appreciation for birds and their environments.

Carolina Bello

My memories of my sophomore spring semester are marked by innumerable cardinal bites, early mornings, and high stress bird extractions, all done with love in the name of Alachua Audubon Society. My semester as an AAS intern has taught me patience, teamwork, and the value of determination and perseverance through my experiences bird banding and loon monitoring. AAS has also whipped my bird identification skills into shape, turning me into a life-long birder; my ears immediately perk up at a vireo call, and my eyes scan the sky for Swallow-tailed Kites. I've loved getting to know the diversity of birds living at the heart of Alachua County at Prairie Creek Banding Lab, all the while getting my hands dirty with



Chloe holds a Prairie Warbler.



Carolina holds a Hermit Thrush.

unforgettable and invaluable hands-on opportunities. Some highlights from the banding lab include an iridescent Indigo Bunting, Black-and-white Warbler, and our infamous surprise guest: a very confused Sharp-shinned Hawk.

I loved looking out for loons while sipping on my morning cafecito at Depot Park. In addition to loons, I also spotted Loggerhead Shrikes, Anhingas and Cormorants. I never knew so many birds could thrive in urban settings, a testament to the power of nature. While looking for loons, I also had the opportunity to tell pedestrians about the birds and start some amazing conversations with people I would not have met if not for AAS. In fact, I believe that my experience with the members of AAS and Prairie Creek Banding Lab over the course of my internship has impacted me beyond birds. I loved interacting with visitors to the banding lab. My favorite group was a family who I convinced to hold a ratsnake that I had caught at the lab. My fellow interns, Veronica, Grayson, Lexie, and Chloe have become my friends, as we go birdwatching together on weekends, make memes in our group chat and go out for boba tea and Carrabba's. Jonathan, Dr. Sieving, Tim, and Felicia have used their years of experience and extensive knowledge of birds to instill a plethora of life and career skills over the course of the internship, which I will carry into my future in conservation. Thank you to AAS for an incredible semester, and I hope to stay involved in the fall!!

Alexandra (Lexie) Scott

Coming to college in a year with everything online made it hard to adjust and find people in the community, as well as difficult to find work to get involved with. Last semester, I had resigned myself to week after week of monotonous Zoom meetings and hoping that things would get better. I spent a lot of time at home and was just generally down about a bad start to college. But this semester, my internship with Alachua Audubon helped change that. Getting out to do banding work, even just once a week, made this semester exponentially better. We take their age, sex, wing chord length, weight, and put a band around one leg for identification purposes. This work has given me a focus point to come back to, a reminder of why I wanted to study wildlife ecology in the first place: the animals.

There isn't much I can compare to the wonder of seeing these birds, as many of the ones we get I had never even seen before this semester, much less held! This opportunity gave me the confidence to start birding (or more accurately, trying to. It's difficult.) Although the internship is ending soon, I know the skills and experiences I have gained with Alachua Audubon will be so useful not only in my career, but also just in enjoying life for the little things. And let me tell you, some of those birds are very little! I am so thankful for the opportunities I have had with Alachua Audubon and cannot wait to see the great work the organization continues to do.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us interns – we wouldn't have had such a great experience without you!

Veronica Simeoni

This was the second semester in a row that I was fortunate enough to be able to intern for the Alachua Audubon chapter. Last semester (Fall 2020) I was the only intern and I primarily worked at the bird banding lab. I've previously had experience working with birds of prey, so dealing with much smaller birds was an entirely new experience for me. I can truly say that working at the lab has given me experiences and knowledge that I am very thankful to have gained. I've become more appreciative of migratory and songbirds that are indigenous or pass through Florida.



This cardinal was very pretty, but don't be fooled – his bite hurts!

I also have a new interest in birding and want to learn more about identifying them via sight and sound!

As of this semester, I've been working alongside the other interns. Being able to meet the interns, volunteers, and board members is also another aspect of this internship position that I am incredibly thankful for. I've never had a position where I'm surrounded by so many like-minded individuals. Everyone has their own interests or branches of study, but what unites us is this fondness for not only birds, but wildlife as a whole. Overall this internship has been one of my favorite working opportunities so far, and I am so thankful for the Alachua Audubon Society for allowing me to have these experiences!

Grayson Koch

I first visited the Prairie Creek Banding Lab during fall of last year for a GREBE field trip. My interest in birds really only developed during the start of quarantine. I taught myself how to bird and decided that I wanted to work with the feathered creatures that I quickly fell in love with, so when I was offered an opportunity to get a taste of what my future career might hold, I jumped at the chance.

I was captivated by the process of mist netting and the experiences I had that day. The crew was extremely welcoming and more than willing to let us all get our hands on a bird. Being up close and personal with my first bird (a gray catbird, one of my absolute favorites) was unlike anything I had ever gone through, and I became dead set on becoming an intern with AAS.



Veronica with an Ovenbird.



Fortunately, I was accepted, and I can honestly say that working with AAS the last few months is probably the coolest thing I've ever done. I was so unsure of what I wanted to do for so long, but I felt right at home being out in the field. Everything I've done, whether it's the lab, loon watch with Andy Kratter, or monitoring kestrel nest boxes with Bob Simons has not only been a wonderful time but has also felt like I'm gaining relevant skills that I'll use for my whole career. Learning how to extract birds from mist nets was well worth all the cardinal bites and stressful mornings when the weather is below 40 degrees and not a second can be wasted to ensure the birds keep their energy. It's hard to say who my favorite capture was, but the blue-gray gnatcatcher, the indigo bunting, and the lovely pair of eastern bluebirds are all in fierce contention for the crown.

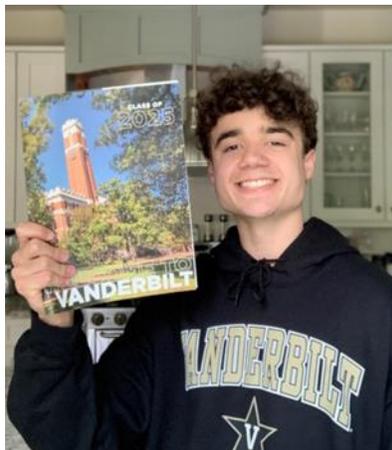
Lastly, I'm so grateful for all the wonderful people I've met through this internship. From the interns and the rest of the banding crew to the AAS board, everyone has been a pleasure to work with, and I know I'll remain active in the community long after the internship ends. Thank you to everyone that made this possible, and I hope the next group of interns has as great of a time as I have.

AAS High School Scholarship Winners: 2020-2021

The Alachua Audubon Society is pleased to award the 2020-2021 John Hintermister High School Scholarship to the following applicants. AAS wishes these students the best of luck with their future endeavors. We hope that our small contribution will encourage their commitment to the conservation of nature. Guidelines for the 2021-2022 AAS High School Scholarship will be published at the beginning of the next school year in *The Crane* newsletter and on the AlachuaAudubon.org web site.

AAS would like to thank Trina Anderson, Anne Casella, Charlene Pringle and Pratibha Singh for administering the scholarship program and reviewing the applications.

Benjamin Daniel Fick is a dual enrolled student at Santa Fe College. Birds have fascinated Ben since he was a kid and he says, “it wasn’t until summer 2017 that I really began to take on birding. One of the more interesting things I did recently was help conduct surveys of Red-cockaded Woodpecker groups at the Osceola National Forest last fall.” Aside from more birding after high school, Ben plans to go into nursing at Santa Fe College. His spark? “While I was already enjoying birds on some level as a kid, my interest really sparked while photographing a Little Blue Heron in my neighborhood retention pond.” Ben says, “I’m originally from California so I’m lucky enough to be able to go back and see some really cool birds out there while visiting family.”



Jhett Hill attended Buchholz High School. He says, “Sustainability, biodiversity, and renewable energy interest me. I’ve investigated/researched golf course sustainability as well as experienced all kinds of Floridian nature.” Jhett plans on attending Vanderbilt University in the fall to study environmental sociology, and then plans to pursue environmental law. Jhett loves playing and watching sports and his cat, Storm.

Will Eubanks is a student in the PK Yonge Developmental Research School and Santa Fe College dual enrollment program. Will lives on his family's large cattle farm in Micanopy that has been in the family since 1849. “I’m the 8th generation to live on our farm”, Will says. “When I was little, I climbed trees, caught tadpoles, counted stars, and watched birds. At 7 years old, I joined the Alachua County 4-H Forestry team. This provided a strong knowledge of natural sciences. I loved learning how the ecosystems were all interconnected and different from each other. After



many years on the Forestry team, we won the state competition in 2018 and then placed third nationally”.

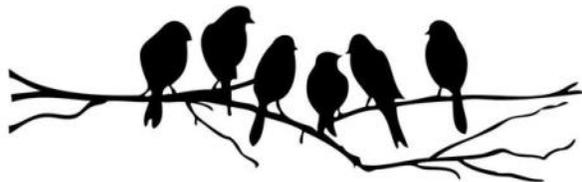
Will’s current favorite nature interest is fishing, especially fishing in the morning. “I paddle my boat out into the middle of the lake. Fog rises around me. Birds begin to wake up. Eagles come to fish first and then wading birds like storks, anhingas, spoonbills, and egrets. Ducks are quacking and whistling all around me. My attention snaps back to fishing as soon as I feel a hit on my lure. Most of the time it's mudfish, but I go for black crappie. No matter if I catch any fish, I enjoy my time out on the water.” After high school Will plans on attending Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Georgia and will major in Natural Resources Conservation in the wildlife track with a minor in Education. Will’s goal is to work in environmental education, specifically in a summer camp setting. He wants to be a camp naturalist or camp director.

Luke Alexander is a student at Buchholz High School. Luke is an athlete and an avid hiker and runner.” I have developed an interest in the upkeep of trails at local, state, and national parks.” As a boy scout, he has had the opportunity to help remove invasive plant species, pick up trash, and control overgrowth. “It is very rewarding to help maintain these trails so others can enjoy them as much as I do.” After high school he plans on attending the University of Florida and becoming a Physician’s Assistant. Luke says, “This profession stands out to me because I want to place a focus on helping people. While in college, I hope to become involved in student organizations that focus on volunteering in the community in areas of the conservation/environment, homelessness, and medical missions.”

Kids and Birds at Sweetwater Wetlands Park

Anika Anderson and Jacob Ewert took members of the North Central Florida chapter of Jack and Jill to Sweetwater Wetlands Park. There they learned about bird habitats, how to identify birds, where to look for birds, and some Paynes Prairie history. Jacob says, “We all had such a great time and they are interested in doing something again in the fall.” Debbie Segal, AAS president, says, “This is everything we’re striving for!”

(Photos by Jacob Ewert)



Purple Martin Update

Alachua Audubon Society and Four Rivers Audubon (FRA) have contributed to the nesting success of Purple Martins at the Lake City Treatment Wetlands by installing three multi-gourd systems during the last four years. And each year, the breeding population of martins increases at this site. On April 21st, Tedd Greenwald, Mary Ellen Flowers, and Jacqui Sulek monitored the 32 gourds and discovered 107 eggs and five recently hatched chicks. Twenty-five of the 32 gourds contained eggs or chicks.

According to the American Bird Conservancy, breeding Purple Martins throughout the eastern United States rely on the good graces of people to install and maintain hollow gourds and apartment-style boxes for their nesting success. However, conservationists worry that fewer people are taking steps to assist these aerial insectivores, and consequently their population continues to decline. Three important steps that help the nesting success of Purple Martins, North America's largest martin species, are to provide nest cavities, exclude introduced House Sparrows and European Starlings from the nest cavities, and protect vital wetlands and open grassy areas from pesticides. AAS and FRA are pleased to contribute to the nesting success of these special birds.

By Debbie Segal



Purple Martin pair.
Photo by Tedd Greenwald.

Book Review – Vesper Flights by Helen Macdonald

Perhaps you have read *H is for Hawk* by Helen Macdonald, the story of the care and training of a Northern Goshawk for falconry which won the Samuel Johnson Prize for Nonfiction. Now comes a second book, *Vesper Flights*. Called “a literary cabinet of curiosities about the wonders and oddities of the natural world,” the book invites you to see the world through Macdonald’s eyes. She experiences being atop the Empire State Building with Andrew Farnsworth from Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (of the team that created Birdcast) observing bird migration on the Atlantic Flyway. They are also seeing the migration of huge pounds of biomass in the form of insect migration at the same time. She views the famous peregrines who nest on power station chimney towers on the east coast of Ireland.

Macdonald climbs to the Altiplano in Chile, sees new birds in Australia and muses on deer, ants and hares locally. She goes mushroom picking. The essay, *Vesper Flights*, is about swifts. She calls them “the closest things to aliens on Earth” as they mate, and even sleep, on the wing and soar as high as 8,000 feet. All events and experiences are thoughtfully described with insight and sensitivity. Surely any nature explorer will enjoy this book!

By Emily Schartz

Book Review – The Art of Birds: Grace and Motion in the Wild by Jim Miller

Jim Miller is a nature photographer who has spent a lot of time in many locations known to avid birders in north central Florida such as St Mark’s National Wildlife Refuge, Fort DeSoto County Park, Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park, St. Augustine Alligator Farm, and Venice Rookery. His photography of birds has been exhibited in galleries around Florida.

Each photograph is accompanied by a quote from well-known authors and observers such as Audubon, Chapman, and Bartram.

Just published by University Press of Florida, this 8 x 10 coffee table book could make a pleasing gift to a friend who enjoys nature photography. Hardcover \$39.95. Visit [UPF \(upress.ufl.edu\)](http://UPF.upress.ufl.edu) for more information.

Emily Schwartz

Prairie

everything
shines

the water
the grasses

sun and wind
and alligators

on the move
in the sink

moorhens
chuckle

and bleat
as the wings

of the boat-
tailed grackle

whoosh
and the purple

and royal blue
and green passes

through
this beautiful

high system
each creature

here pursues
another and

the beating
flailing thing

fight's down
the gullet

to become
the shine on

another's wing
I wish

for equanimity
in the face

of this I want
to slide into

this great
grim maw

with the grace
of the gator

as he eases
himself onto

the bank
in the sun

and creaks
and smiles

just like
someone

settling into
a leather sofa

By Sidney
Wade

North American Bird Banding Program

Earlier this year, I noticed a banded Wood Stork when birding at La Chua Trail. I recorded the band number and submitted it to the USGS [North American Bird Banding Program](#). Two days later, I received a message informing me that the bird was banded in 2014, presumably while in the nest as the data said it was too young to fly when banded at the Savannah River Ecology Lab in Aiken, SC. I also received a certificate of appreciation. Hopefully, others will relocate birds that have been banded at the Prairie Creek Preserve Banding Lab and report those observations to the same database.

According to their website, the Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL) is an integrated scientific program established in 1920 supporting the collection, archiving, management and dissemination of information from banded and marked birds in North America. The Bird Banding Program manages more than 77 million archived banding records. This information is used to monitor the status and trends of resident and migratory bird populations. Because birds are good indicators of the health of the environment, the status and trends of bird populations are critical for identifying and understanding many ecological issues and for developing effective science, management and conservation practices. Last year the program celebrated 100 years of service to avian conservation.



Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: banded with federal leg band. (Ikumi Kayama, MA, Studio Kayama, LLC)

By Debbie Segal

Birth of The Crane

Forty-five years ago (May 1976), the Alachua Audubon newsletter was officially christened *The Crane*. It had been published since 1973 but without an official name. In that issue, John Hintermister was planning the Summer Bird Count; Bob Simons was leading a canoe trip to Bird Island in Orange Lake; a bike, hike and camping trip was planned for Blue Springs. John Hintermister was taking over as president from Helen Hood who, according to John, was “the main force in convincing the state to buy San Felasco Hammock.” There was an article about the single most immediate threat to Bald Eagles: gunfire, with three shootings reported in Alachua County alone that year. Jesse Connor was the editor and created the newsletter using a typewriter. To see the birding report for that month from John Hintermister and more, check out the issue on the AAS website [here](#).

By Karen Brown

The Case for Indoor Cats

The Wildlife Center of Virginia has produced a very informative video called **The Case for Indoor Cats**. The video explains how wildlife patient data from the Center was entered into a Center for Disease Control epidemiological database. The results of the data evaluation showed that 15% of ALL wildlife patients of the Center were victims of confirmed or suspected attacks by domestic cats, with the survival rate being very, very low.

A study by the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Smithsonian Institution revealed that there are approximately 164 million outdoor cats in the U.S. with around half being feral and half being pets.

In a retrospective study covering 2000-2010, 21 thousand wildlife patients of the Center were a result of cat attacks. These attacks were found to be the 2nd leading cause of injury to mammals, and the 4th leading cause of injury to birds. Of all mammals, the death rate from cat attacks was 70%; for birds, the death rate was 81%, and *this was at a state-of-the-art wildlife medical center*. A National Geographic/University of Georgia “Kitty Cam”

study used digital cameras on pet cats to document their behavior. They found that 77% of pet cat victims were eaten on the spot or left where killed, leading owners to believe that their pet does not kill while outdoors. The Center receives daily admissions of wildlife injured by cats. Staff members report witnessing immense suffering on a daily basis.

The Wildlife Center of Virginia was formed in 1982 to provide quality health care, often on an emergency basis, to native wildlife. Since 1982, they have treated more than 85,000 wild animals, representing more than 200 species of native birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians; shared the lessons learned from these cases with some 1.5 million schoolchildren and adults across Virginia.; trained a corps of wildlife medicine practitioners, including veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and volunteer wildlife rehabilitators.

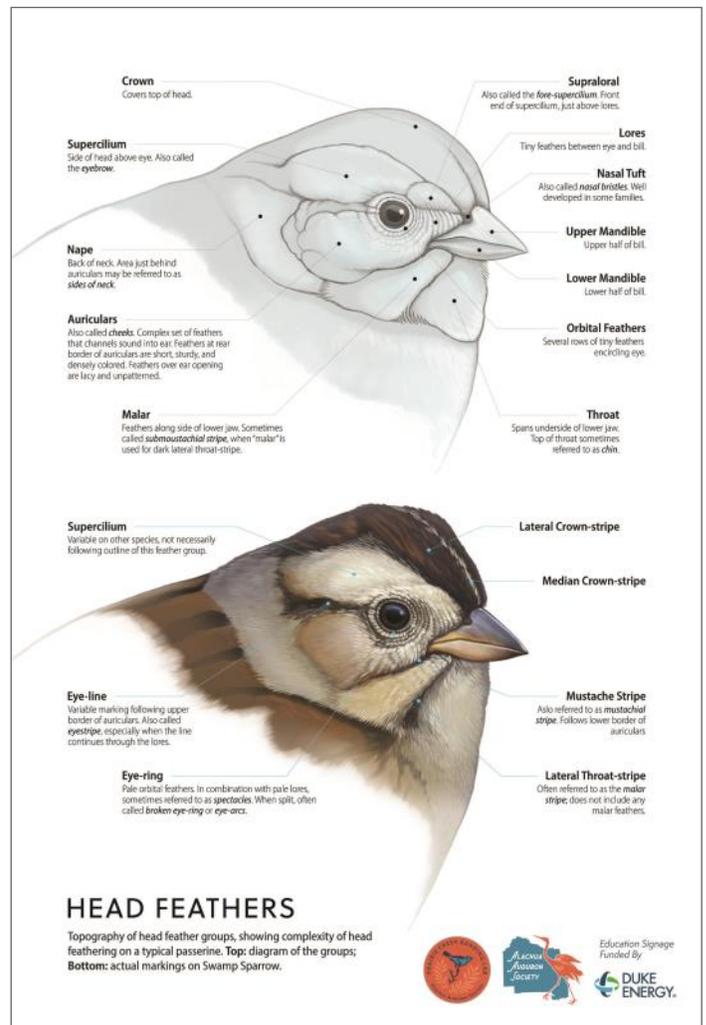
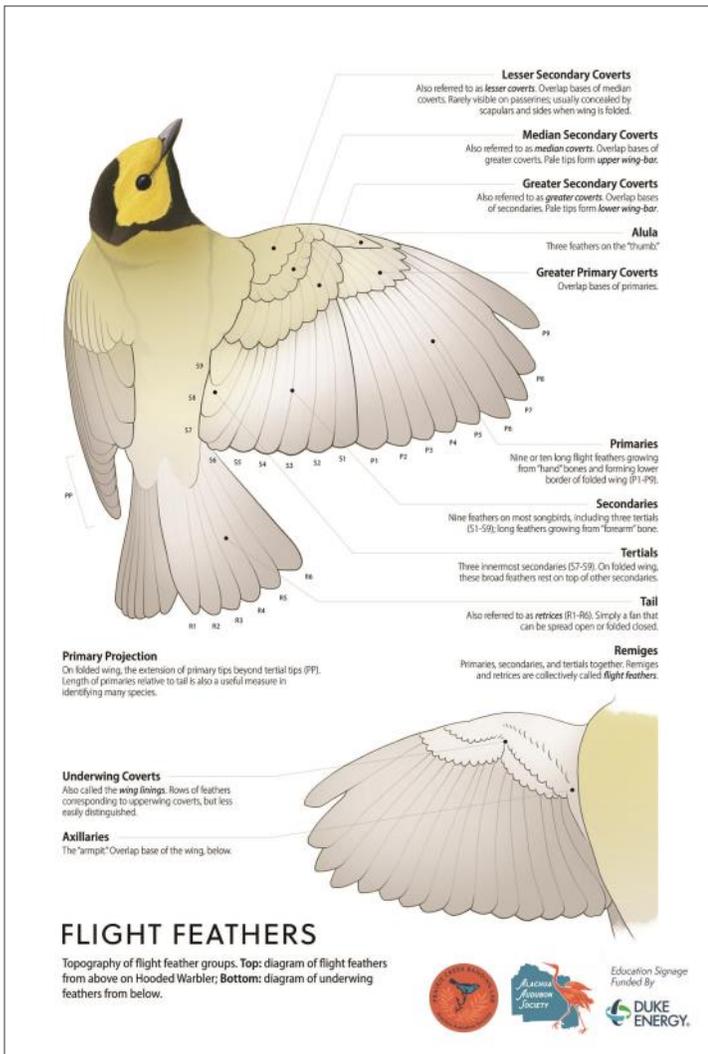
In 2007, the Wildlife Center received the National Conservation Achievement Award from the National Wildlife Federation as the Conservation Organization of the Year. They are guided by a Scientific Advisory Committee, consisting of researchers, veterinarians, and other wildlife and health-care professionals; to promote sound, ethical, scientific inquiry that will further conservation, veterinary medicine, rehabilitation, and education. Visit their website at WildlifeCenter.org.

Please view this very informative 26-minute video [here](#) and share it with cat owners who continue to let their pets roam outdoors. There are numerous reasons outlined for why it is far safer and healthier for the cats to be kept indoors as well.

Thanks to Anne Wiley for bringing this video to our attention.

By Karen Brown





Prairie Creek Banding Lab Artwork

Mr. Chris Burney, an accomplished artist as well as an expert birder, created the three posters featured here and on page 1 for the Prairie Creek Banding Lab. The posters will be displayed at the lab to assist banders with distinguishing the age, sex, species and more when identifying and banding captured birds. The posters will also serve as educational tools for visitors to the lab. The stunning artwork will enhance the lab's appearance and effectiveness as it continues to grow into a professional endeavor.

Alachua Audubon Collaborates

Two of Alachua Audubon's recent projects - the Prairie Creek Bird Banding Lab and eBird training on conservation easement properties are highlighted in this [3-minute video](#), **Bridging the Gap Between People and Birds**. In addition, an article is [here](#) on the eBird training component: The [Cornell Lab's Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative](#) helps to maximize the mutual benefits that birds and land trusts can provide to each other through conservation collaboratives. AAS worked with Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy and the Alachua Conservation Trust on these initiatives. Learn more by viewing the video and/or reading the brief article.

Alachua Audubon Society
P. O. Box 140464
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AlachuaAudubon.org

The Crane
May – June 2021

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To join National Audubon, please go to AlachuaAudubon.org/Membership where you will be directed to their membership page.

Alachua Audubon is a 501(c)3 organization.

Audubon Membership Explained

To join Audubon at the local level, please visit the AAS website where you may use PayPal to pay by credit card. You may also complete the membership form to the left, or print a form at AlachuaAudubon.org/Membership. Choose the membership level that is appropriate for you. Mail the completed form with your check, payable to **Alachua Audubon Society**, to the address provided.

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Please send any questions to
AlachuaAudubonMembership@gmail.com