

Until further notice, in lieu of canceling field trips, masks will be required by all participants on AAS Field Trips

Sunday, August 29, 2021 08:00 am

Watermelon Pond North Trail, Goethe State Forest

For our first Field Trip of the season, we have a new angle on an old favorite. Watermelon Pond has a Trailhead off SW 282 St (CR 337) which is West of the more familiar SW 250 St); it is managed by Goethe State Forest. We have Trip Leaders, Jason and Kelly O'Connor, who are knowledgeable birders and familiar with the site. The Blue Trail is quite long but they know a shortcut.

Watermelon Pond has unique combination of habitats including longleaf sandhill, sandhill wetlands, rosemary scrub, and hardwood hammocks. It's a good spot for birds like red-headed woodpeckers, bachman's sparrows, loggerhead shrikes, eastern meadowlarks, and kestrels, as well as wading birds and migrant songbirds. In this underbirded area there is always the chance for a surprise sighting. Last year, towards the end of August, Kelly & Jason were entranced by large numbers of Black Terns feeding over the wetlands. If these birds return this August and are present on the 29th, we will be with leaders who can find them.

There could also be chance sightings of local wildlife like gopher tortoises, gopher frogs, pine snakes, fox squirrels, and more.

Meet at Watermelon Pond - North Trailhead / Goethe which has a gravel entrance, parking area and even bathrooms. Difficulty 2

September 11, 2021

Blues Creek Ravine Preserve

Meet trip leader, Tim Hardin, the energetic top Alachua County eBirder for 2020 and 2021 so far, at the Preserve Trailhead parking area on NW 71st ST (off Millhopper Road), We will bird down 69th to the Trailhead.

This 160 acre recently opened Preserve, managed by Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) is touted to have a "habitat that is an almost pristine example of a N Florida upland habitat."

September has been the month of maximum migrant diversity. We especially hope to see migrant warblers during our travel on the wooded trail.

The upaved trail is uneven in places and may have exposed roots or stumps. It could be muddy in times of frequent rain. It is less than a mile and will take us back to the dramatic steep ravine and Blues Creek.

September 19, 2021

Powers Park and Palm Point

We'll meet trip leader Barbara Shea at Powers Park to look for migrant warblers, tanagers, and thrushes in the trees along the boat channel and to scan the lake from the fishing pier. Then we'll travel to nearby Palm Point to search for more migrants in the live oaks and cypresses. Difficulty 1

September 25, 2021

Turkey Creek Preserve. Description & Directions

Officially opened in 2021 this 376 acre preserve with 5 miles of trails, gives us a chance to see many ecosystems. These include basin swamp, depression marsh, bottomland forest, hydric hammock, upland hardwood forest, black water streams and sinkholes. It serves to buffer adjacent San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park and our drinking water.

Bought in 2009 through the voter approved Wild Spaces Public Places 1/2 cent sales tax and a grant from Florida Communities Trust. It took years to clean up debris and remove exotic species of plants, replacing them with natives. The trails a bridge and large parking lot have been added and the preserve continues to be managed by Alachua County

Lots of birding possibilities. Fall migration should be ramping up and bringing us a good variety..

We will take a nice casual 2-3 mile walk guided by accomplished birders Adam and Gina Kent. Trails are well marked, mostly wide and relatively flat. Be prepared by bringing water, sunscreen, bug spray and wear comfortable shoes. Long pants recommended. Masks and hand sani also recommended.

Meet us at the Main Trailhead parking lot at 6300 NW 93rd Ave at 0800, at the latest, please.

From SR 26/Newberry Road

Take NW 43rd ST North (R from 26)

Continue through town Past Milhopper Road almost to 441

But before 441 Turn Left or West on to NW 93rd Ave

Look for the large Parking Lot at the Trialhead on Right

(It is just a little past 59th Terrace)

From 441

Take 441 North out of G'ville past Turkey Creek Forest on L

There is a light at NW 43rd St. Turn Left and

Soon find NW 93rd Ave as above

Sunday, September 26, 2021

Santa Fe River Preserve - South Trail

Meet at the parking corral on State Road 121 4.5 miles north of LaCrosse. This 910-acre property is managed by Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT). Sam Ewing started birding at a young age and has many years of experience. A prior June Challenge winner, he will lead a walk along the 1.5-mile trail through hardwood forest and bottomland surrounding Santa Fe Creek in search of migrants. Wear rubber boots or old shoes you don't mind getting wet, as the trail can be soggy in places. Difficulty: 2.

October 2.2021. Barr Hammock Woodlands Trail (CLEP): Meet trip leader Stephen Hofsetter at the trailhead on SE 175th Avenue 1.5 miles west of I-75 (go west on County Road 234 and keep right at the fork). Barr Hammock is a forested land bridge between Ledwith and Levy Prairies, an environmental jewel that provides habitat for a wide diversity of upland and wetland species. We should see some migrant birds on this walk, but we'll be looking at everything – trees, wildflowers, insects, reptiles, whatever we find. Difficulty: 3.

October 3, 2021. Bolen Bluff Trail: Meet trip leader Debbie, Segal, President of Alachua Audubon Society (AAS) at the trailhead on US-441 at the south rim of Paynes Prairie. Bolen Bluff is one of Gainesville's perennial favorite birding locations, especially during increased songbird migration in the first part of October.

We will be watching out for fall migrants like Bay-breasted, Tennessee and Magnolia Warblers. Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Wppd, Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes are all possible. Entry fee \$2 per vehicle. Difficulty: 3.

Saturday, October 9, 2021 8:00 a.m.

Newnans Lake State Forest - Pithlachocco Trail (East Trail):

Meet in the parking corral for the Pithlachocco Trails, directly across the road from the NFETC sign on State Road 26, three-quarters of a mile north of the junction with County Road 329B. Tim Hardin, will lead us along a 2.5-mile trail through a variety of habitats that include pinewoods, open oak woodlands, wetlands, and a bit of lakeshore. Plenty of migrant warblers and thrushes should be around. Flooding is a possibility this year, this trail could be muddy or wet especially nearer to Newnans Lake. Plan accordingly. Please remember to bring and wear your mask.

Difficulty 3

Sunday, October 10, 2021 08:00

Bivens Rim Forest Conservation Area

This little gem is nearby and often quite birdy. We will meet Caroline Poli at the Trailhead, to explore the trail along the northern shoreline of Biven's Arm. Caroline is one of the top eBirders for this Hotspot overall, and is #1 for bird species sightings in the month of October. You are welcome to come explore this small, easy to get to, 114 acre park with AAS and find some of the 139 birds reported here.

There is a small floodplain marsh, bottomland hardwoods and a mesic mixed hardwood forest further upland. The trail may be muddy or wet in places and does have some uneven ground. The trail can be narrow in places, don't forget to bring and wear your mask.

Weekend parking should be available in UF Department of Animal Science lot. The Trailhead main entrance is at the intersection of Shealy Drive and

Richie Rd. Difficulty 2

Sunday, October 24, 2021

San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park - Yellow Trail

Meet Sam Ewing at the Trailhead parking lot on Milhopper Road (\$4 per vehicle St Park fee) at 08:00 to go through sandy hammocks, pinelands and sandhills. We hope to see late migrating warblers such as Black-throated Blue and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks among others and possibly some arriving winter residents. The Eastern Wood-Pewee reliably nests along this trail in summer, maybe we will hear his distinct call before he leaves the area in early November. This is a long trail but with several cut offs, some rough ground and elevation change. It is mostly shady. Bring water, bug spray, sunscreen as needed.

Don't forget to wear your mask.

Saturday, November 6, 2021. 08:00 a.m.

Hague Dairy (University of Florida Dairy Unit):

Meet our intrepid trip leader, Tim Hardin, at one of the county's best spots for sparrows, blackbirds, and raptors, not to mention western strays like Yellow-headed Blackbird and Bronzed Cowbird. No sign up since Covid but park in the usual spot on the western side of the complex, labeled Classroom parking recently. We will respect and defer to the workers and cows. The required masks may be easy on this one, it does smell, well, like a dairy. Difficulty: 2.

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