



The Crane

Volume 63 Number 5 May–June 2022

FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, May 7, 2022 8:00 a.m.

Bell Ridge Longleaf Wildlife and Environmental Area (WEA)

Bell Ridge is a 720-acre property with a 3.1-mile trail winding through what has been described as “one of the highest quality longleaf pine sandhill forest tracts in Florida.” Join trip leaders Mary Ellen Flowers and Tedd Greenwald at 1008 Four Mile Road (SE 65 Ave) in Trenton (off CR 232 between US 41 (from Newberry) and SR 47 (from Trenton). We’ll be looking for both resident and summer breeders such as Summer Tanagers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Bachman’s Sparrows, American Kestrels, and other longleaf-savannah denizens. Hairy Woodpeckers have been reported here. Difficulty: 2.

Sunday, May 15, 2022 8:00 a.m.

San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park, 441 Trailhead (Progress Park)

Meet trip leader Tim Hardin who expects us to see some summer residents, lingering or late migrants, and possibly some shorebirds in the flooded areas. According to the park website, this 7,360-acre park has one of the few remaining mature forests in Florida and is one of the finest examples of the climax mesic hammock. It is believed that there was a late 17th century mission called San Francisco de Potano, named for the American Indian culture living in the area when the Spanish arrived. Artifacts found here indicate human habitation since at

least 8,000 BCE. I wonder what birds they saw. The park has a \$4 per vehicle entrance fee (or annual state park pass). Trailhead is located at 13201 Progress Park Blvd, off 441, south of the city of Alachua. Difficulty 3.

Saturday, May 21, 2022 8:00 a.m.

Longleaf Flatwoods Reserve (CLEP*)

Meet trip leader Steve Hofstetter at the Longleaf Flatwoods Preserve on CR-325. The 2,742-acre preserve has wide unpaved trails that go through sandhill and mesic flatwoods, skirting cypress swamps. Alachua County Forever provided funding for its purchase and it is jointly owned/managed by Alachua County and the St Johns River Water Management District. The positive influence of prescribed burns here helps main-

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

Trips noted as CLEP highlight lands that protect plant and animal life and focus on their history and uniqueness.

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
July – August issue: June 15th

Content of *The Crane* fulfills the stated objectives and goals of the Alachua Audubon Society. Annual subscription to *The Crane* is included in National Audubon and/or Alachua Audubon membership. Please see the back page for more information. Additional advertisers are welcome. Please contact the editor for more information at karenpbrown1953@gmail.com

tain habitat for multiple species of interest including the Bachman's Sparrow and Northern Bobwhite. We'll hope to see Bachman's Sparrows (and hear them singing), Brown-headed Nuthatch, Red-headed Woodpecker, and others, but we'll be looking at everything – trees, wildflowers, insects, reptiles, whatever we find – an opportunity to expand our perspective to the diversity of life around us. Head east on Hawthorne Rd. to CR325, right on CR325 for 2.3 miles. Difficulty: 3.

Wednesday, June 1, 2022 6:00 a.m.

June Challenge Kick-off

Meet Rex Rowan in the parking corral of Longleaf Flatwoods Reserve (on CR-325, 2.3 miles south of SR-20 (Hawthorne Rd)) to kick off our annual summer birding contest. We'll try to find Chuck-will's-widow, Common Nighthawk, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and Bachman's Sparrow at Longleaf (your chances for Chuck-will's-widow are better if you get there at 5:45). Next we'll go to Windsor to scope Newnans Lake for Bald Eagles and Laughing Gulls. If time allows, we'll also visit Powers Park and/or Palm Point for additional views of Newnans Lake and possibly some late migrants. Our last stop will be Sweet-water Wetlands Park (\$5 per vehicle entry fee, payable on smartphone app) to search for Limpkin, King Rail, Least Bittern, Gray-headed Swamphen, and Purple Gallinule. We'll be done by lunchtime with 40-50 species on our June Challenge lists. Difficulty: 3.

Barbara Muschlitz – 1927-2022

If you've been a Gainesville birder for fewer than fifteen years, you probably passed over Barbara Muschlitz's recent obituary without a second thought. But for the rest of us it marked the end of an era. In Alachua County's long birding history, Barbara was probably second in importance only to John Hintermister.

After joining Alachua Audubon in the 1970s she rapidly developed into a leader in the local birding community. In 1979 she took over Jack Connor's "Birdwatching" column in *The Crane*, which she continued writing until 1994, passing along notable sightings and otherwise keeping us up to date on the local birding news. In 1982 she and Craig Parenteau commenced a 21-year-stint as co-compilers of the Gainesville Christmas Bird Count. In 1986 she took over from John Hintermister as the Alachua County coordinator of the Breeding Bird Atlas. And in 1992 she signed on as the regional organizer for the North American Migration Count, a task that she gladly surrendered to me two years later. And throughout this long stretch of time she submitted seasonal records of significant local sightings to the national and state birding journals, *North American Birds* and *Florida Field Naturalist*.

Skeptical and not especially warm, Barbara could be an intimidating presence to ambitious young birders trying to report rarities. But when you managed to impress her, you really felt that you'd made it. She withdrew from the birding scene in the early 2000s to care for her ailing husband at home, and sadly most of us never saw her again. R.I.P.

By Rex Rowan

Our National Pastime: The June Challenge!

The World Series. The Super Bowl. The NBA Finals. All very nice in their way, of course, but is there anything on the American sporting scene to compare with The June Challenge? Any contest in which the competition is so keen, the conditions so exacting, the excitement so palpable, the trophy so honking huge? I think not.

And yet is there any other contest that so happily welcomes the novice? Only two things are needed to take part in The June Challenge: a pair of binoculars and an enthusiasm for birds. Well okay, three: a tolerance for high summer temperatures is actually pretty useful. But that's it. You're in. Let's go!

So, what is The June Challenge? It's a fun and friendly competition to find out who can see the largest number of bird species in Alachua County during the month of June – with an emphasis on the *fun and friendly* part. As with all competitions, there are rules: (1) Only birds seen in Alachua County during June may be counted. (2) Heard birds do not count; you've got to SEE those Chuck-will's-widows and Eastern Screech-Owls. So don't trust eBird with your June Challenge list, since it lists heard birds the same as seen ones. (3) You are free to put Muscovy Ducks and retention-pond Mallards on your list, but no other domestic birds. The Whooping Crane at Cones Dike and the Gray-headed Swamphen at Sweetwater Wetlands Park are both countable. (4) Email your list to me by midnight on Thursday, June 30th. We'll have a party shortly afterward to hand out prizes and have a good time.

That's simple, isn't it? Now here are a few tips to increase your chances of success: Do as much birding as possible during the first few days of the month. You're more likely to see lingering spring migrants that way. Purple Martins, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, and Orchard Orioles may complete their nesting and leave before the month's end, so get them early too. But don't neglect the last few days of the month either, because they've produced early fall-migrant Louisiana Waterthrushes, Black-and-white Warblers, and Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs.

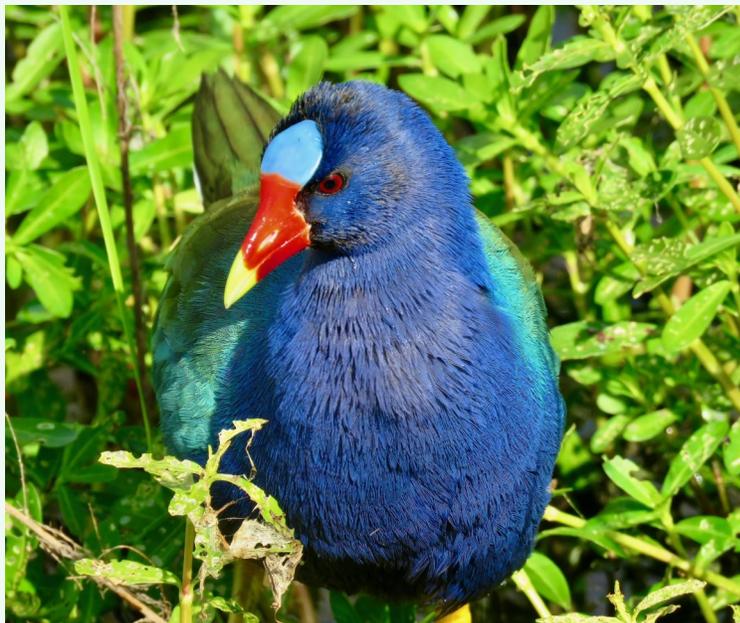
Make several visits to Newnans Lake and other large bodies of water to scan for gulls, terns, and pelicans, which may come and go on a daily basis. Go to Longleaf Flatwoods Reserve for Bachman's Sparrow; San Felasco Hammock for Hooded Warbler; and Sweetwater Wetlands Park for Least Bittern, Limpkin, Purple Gallinule, and Gray-headed Swamphen. There are over 100 species possible here in June (the record is 129). The first and last few hours of daylight are best. Birds tend to sing early in the morning.

As usual I'll be leading kickoff field trips to get this, the 19th annual June Challenge, underway. On Wednesday, June 1st, we'll meet at 6:00 a.m. – earlier if you can stand it – in the parking corral at Longleaf Flatwoods Reserve on County Road 325, 2.3 miles south of Hawthorne Road. For you working stiffs, we'll repeat it Saturday the 4th. On each day we'll visit two or three other sites after Longleaf, and head home around lunchtime with 50-60 species. There will be field trips to other locations – including Watermelon Pond to see the county's only known Burrowing Owls – on subsequent Saturdays. Sounds like fun, right?

I'll be sending out email bulletins during the month to keep everyone up to date on what's being seen and where. If you'd like to be on the mailing list, contact me at rexrowan@gmail.com. Emails will commence in late May, continue through June, and end in early July.

Good luck to all of you who decide to join us! Let me know when you see an unexpected bird so I can pass the word. Don't keep it a secret – it's a friendly competition, after all, based on our shared enthusiasm for birding rather than a desire to come in first (although there *is* that honking huge trophy). Good luck!

By Rex Rowan



Purple Gallinule. Photo by Lloyd Davis.

Audubon Evening Programs

Panhandle Birding by Robert Gundy

Date and time to be announced in May

Robert Gundy will profile eastern Florida Panhandle birding hotspots. Robert, who prefers to be called simply Gundy, has lived for many years in the Tallahassee area and birded extensively. He has many recommended birding hot spots for you to explore and we are guessing that you are not aware of many of these great locations. In 2020, Robert and his girlfriend Natasza Fontaine worked together to break the Florida Big Year record that had been set at 387 species just the year before. Birding as a team, Natasza ended the year with 386 species and Gundy with 388.

Robert is currently traveling for a year and will be in Columbia during the month of May. Since internet connections in South America can be sketchy, the date and time of this program will depend upon when Robert is able to secure a good connection. **We will be posting the date and time as soon as we know it and we urge you to watch for this announcement on our Facebook page and website (alachuaudubon.org).** If you would like to be on the “programs” email list (we only send you program announcements), please send an email to programs@alachuaudubon.org to be added to the list.

Invaders, Vagrants, & Rarities, Wednesday, June 1, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom

This program will be presented by Alex Lamoreaux, a senior leader and North American birding specialist for Wildside Nature Tours. Alex guides birding tours across the US and beyond. He has worked on avian research projects from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to southern Belize. Bird migration, particularly shorebird and raptor migration, is his strongest interest. You might recognize Alex's name from when he has visited or lived for short periods of time in the Gainesville area, but he currently resides in Plymouth, Massachusetts and bird-guiding takes him all over the world. His presentation will delve into the mechanisms that influence how birds end up where they shouldn't be by drawing on rare bird sightings from Florida and beyond.

Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87594693064?pwd=bWlYYTR6NHBVSnJMSSE54WEVrUzdaQT09>

or find it on the AAS website under Events and Activities ->[Programs](#)

Would you like to be reminded when our programs are nearing? If so, send an email to programs@alachuaudubon.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.alachuaudubon.org/programs/



WILDLIFE ALERT

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 message to Tip@MyFWC.com. Learn more at MyFWC/contact/wildlife-alert.

Weekday Bird Rambles Offered

A lachua Audubon has restarted our weekday birding trips after several people requested easier, more leisurely outings than our more energetic weekend fare. We have had 3 outings so far with about a dozen attendees at each. We typically walk one mile or less and stay on even terrain. If you would like to be added to the email contact list for these weekday “bird rambles,” please send an email to



Bird ramblers on a recent outing to Palm Point Park on Newnan's Lake.

AlachuaAudubonMembership@gmail.com. Membership is not required to participate (but individual membership costs just \$15 and strengthens our voice in conservation efforts).

By Karen Brown

Burning for the Birds

In response to a Florida Highway Patrol warning of smoke hazard in the area around Oleno State Park, a clearly angry and frustrated citizen wrote to us. She questioned the reasoning behind prescribed burning during nesting season. Bob Simons, chair of our Conservation Committee and a retired forester, provided the following response.

The timing of prescribed burns should be determined by a combination of factors that include public safety, the best time to burn for maintaining the habitat, and weather conditions that include smoke management issues, soil moisture, and fuel moisture. In general, the best time to burn the fire adapted habitats of longleaf pine sandhill and longleaf pine flatwoods (such as occur at O'Leno State Park) is in the spring and early summer, which is precisely when birds are nesting. Ironically, without being able to burn at this time of year, the habitat for the birds and all other wildlife adapted to these habitats would be lost. In other words, not burning at this time of year is far worse for the birds than burning.

Prohibiting burning in March, April, May, and June would be especially harmful for the very birds whose nests would most likely be burned: Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Meadowlarks, and Bachman's Sparrows. Indeed, it would be a sure-fire way to exterminate these birds from these habitats. These fires are also beneficial for the many other birds that use these habitats, including Wild Turkeys, Eastern Towhees, Northern Cardinals, Northern Mockingbirds, and more.

These habitats have been shaped for thousands of years by fires in this "lightning season" time of year. The plants, insects, birds, and other species that make these habitats home are adapted to and dependent upon this fire seasonality.

By Bob Simons

Notes from the AAS Interns

Before this internship, I wouldn't call myself an avid birder. I recognized the birds that frequented my backyard feeder and the many cardinals on UF campus. However, as a wildlife ecology and conservation major, my interest in birds has grown and I wanted to learn more.

The highlight of this internship, for me, was my growth from my first to last days at the banding lab. On my first day, I was able to release a Common Yellowthroat. It's difficult to describe the excitement and fear that rushed through my body while holding a bird for the first time. As the semester went on, I grew more comfortable handling birds, extracting them from the net, and banding them. Many groups, such as the Gainesville High School Birding Club and UF GREBE, visited the banding lab and I was able to teach students about what we do at the lab and how to handle a bird. I was able to witness them release birds for the first time, with the same thrill and excitement I had on the first day.

As Katie had described the internship – “see one, do one, teach one.” I appreciated this method because I learned quickly and efficiently. This internship has given me an invaluable experience where I have learned many skills that I will use in the future. I can say confidently that I would like to work in conservation in the future, hopefully with birds.

I would like to give a special thanks to Jonathan, Katie, and other members of the banding lab that took the time to teach us these skills for the past 12 weeks. I am also very grateful for the Alachua Audubon Society providing this internship and look forward to continuing into the Fall semester.

By Holly Schmidt



Holly Schmidt with a Palm Warbler.



Amanda Bishop with a Parula Warbler.

I've always had an interest in birds and knew I wanted to work in the field in the future, so when my friend who had completed this internship told me about it, I knew it would give me experience that would help me get to where I want to go after college. This internship has given me many valuable and practical skills, including mist netting, how to handle and band birds, and identification skills. I also enjoyed being able to see firsthand birds that I recognized from my classes. When I first started working with the banding lab, I was nervous to extract birds from the nets, but with Jonathan Varol and Katie Sieving's help, I learned quickly how to properly and confidently handle birds. My confidence and efficiency with handling and banding birds has grown so much throughout this internship.

One of my favorite memories is from my first day as an intern. It was extremely cold and rainy that day, but I was very excited to be there and just see birds up close. With Jonathan's help, I was able to release my first bird. I was able to release a red-bellied woodpecker, which was the first one the lab got since it opened. It was such a memorable experience

to be able to release this as my first bird knowing that it was the first one that we'd gotten. I want to especially thank Jonathan, Katie, and Felicia for being so helpful throughout this semester. Each of you set great examples for us and I have a lot of respect for you and what you do to help Alachua Audubon. I also want to thank Alachua Audubon for providing me with this valuable opportunity that let me grow in so many ways.

By Amanda Bishop

This internship has been a wonderful experience. I have always had an interest in birds and have had some experience working with birds of prey in rehab, but I had never thought I would get to work so personally with songbirds. I first heard about this internship on a trip to the banding lab with GREBE, where I fell in love with the mist netting process. I asked about the internship and applied straight away. I was so excited when I heard that I was accepted as an intern!

I have loved gaining valuable skills like bird extraction and banding, and the hands-on approach to learning has helped me practice and hone these skills. I have also enjoyed teaching others how to extract, band, and release birds. Most memorable was the graduate student workshop where several grad students came to the banding lab for several weeks. As interns, we were responsible for teaching them how to do everything we did, from opening the nets, to banding the birds. I had a lot of fun teaching everyone and seeing them enjoy it as much as I did.

We have gotten many interesting birds this spring, from a Prothonotary warbler, to a Summer tanager, and I have enjoyed them all. I would like to thank Jonathan, Katie, and the Board, as well as everyone else who helped at the banding lab, for giving me such an inspiring experience and teaching me valuable technical skills. I can't wait to come back to help out in the fall!



Charisse Sproha with a Summer Tanager.

By Charisse Sproha

Nicole Wulff is a homeschool teacher in Gainesville who is active on the Alachua County Birding Facebook group. Noting her enthusiasm, I asked if she would be interested in my leading a bird walk for her and the students. After discussing the idea with the other families in the community, she agreed and I led two walks for over 20 parents and children. Homeschooling takes a great deal of work and these field trips and guest speakers can be very rewarding for them. I find that kids have boundless energy and are a delight to teach on a field trip. And I love when parents are just as interested and ask questions of their own as well!

By Jacob Ewert



Martins Galore at Lake City Wetlands

Hoping that Purple Martins would nest at the Lake City Treatment Wetlands, Alachua Audubon and Four Rivers Audubon teamed up in 2018 and purchased and installed an eight-gourd nesting system. The Purple Martins promptly arrived, moved in, and raised young in all eight gourds.

Our two Audubon chapters expanded the housing complex by installing a larger, 12-gourd system in 2019 and another one in 2021.

The Purple Martin Conservation Association recommends lowering the gourds during the nesting season to monitor the status of the nests and to detect any problems that might arise. On April 29th, members from both Audubon chapters –

Mary Ellen Flowers, Tedd Greenwald, Jacqui Sulek, Winnie Lante, Bob Knight, and Debbie Segal – monitored the 32 nesting gourds. Thirty-one gourds contained eggs and/or recent hatchlings, with a total of 114 eggs and 25 young. How exciting to know that even with an expected level of predation and mortality, this colony of stunning, vivacious, and aerobic swallows will likely fledge over 100 Purple Martins from this Audubon-generated bird conservation project.



By Debbie Segal

Photos by Tedd Greenwald



Kestrel Nest Box Program

For the past 30 years, Alachua Audubon has been building, installing, and maintaining nest boxes to support South-eastern American Kestrels which require cavities for nesting. This year has been a good one, with increased nesting both at and around Ichetucknee Springs State Park (five nesting pairs) and on the county owned property at Watermelon Pond (seven nesting pairs). There are other active nests in boxes scattered around the western half of Alachua County. Here are some photos of our spring season in the field.

By Bob Simons



A female kestrel patiently waiting for us to finish working on a box.



Miguel Romero Olvera, our number one student assistant, working on a nest box.



A male kestrel incubating eggs in a nest box.



Baby kestrels in a nest box.

Nest box interior photos are taken with our telescoping pole and camera which causes minimal disturbance to the birds.



Common Loon Census 2022

The 2022 season for censusing Common Loons is in the books. We count these loons in Gainesville as they migrate from their wintering grounds on the Gulf of Mexico and hop over the Florida Peninsula to the Atlantic Ocean. For the third year, we employed a citizen science approach to provide expanded coverage over time and space, to give a better idea of the breadth and scope of this migration over the 15 March to 15 April count period. This year we decreased the number of stations to seven (from eight) because the northernmost station seemed to be outside the flyway. At those seven stations over 25 days (subtracting six days lost to fog or rain), we covered 92 of the 175 stations (53%). This was almost identical to 2021 (54%), but far less than in 2020 (81%). We had 24 different observers in all.

Despite these differences in effort, the overall number of loons counted in 2022 (2185) was very similar to 2020 (2154) and 2021 (2322). Only six percent separates these three years. I think the low numbers per effort the first year resulted from lack of experience, as many observers were first-time loon watchers. As our collective experience increased, the number of loons per station increased. The median date of passage – the date that splits the migration into 50% before and 50% after – was 29 March, three days earlier than the median dates in 2020 and 2021 (both 1 April).

As is usual, most loons were concentrated into a few big days. On 8 April, we destroyed the single day record for Common Loons in Alachua County, counting 692 loons, 31% of the entire season's total. Almost half of these (320) were seen at the station at the north end of Gainesville Regional Airport by Gina Kent, but all other stations counting that day had more than 100 loons. The big day followed seven sluggish days of migration, with a cold front passing the day before. The previous record was set earlier this spring, with 344 on 21 March 2022. These two big days accounted for nearly half (47%) of all loons surveyed this year.

I want to thank all the observers who participated in this year's count: Scott Robinson, Jacob Ewert, Gina Kent, Rex Rowan, Maggie Paxson, Caroline Poli, Barbara Shea, Laura Gaudette, Sydney Wade, Jose Miguel Ponciano, Andres Leon, Adam Kent, Adam Zions, Debbie Segal, Tom Hall, Mary Ellen Flowers, Tedd Greenwald, Woody Hartman, Frank Goodwin, Bryan Pfeiffer, Peter Polshek, Justin Bright, Mia Gonzales.

By Andy Kratter



The poster for 'Nature Day In May!' is set against a yellow background with various nature-themed illustrations including musical notes, a guitar, a bee, a turtle, a snake, a tree, and a paint palette. The text is arranged in a central column with sidebars for activities. At the top, it lists the organizing groups: Friends of Little Orange Creek, Alachua Conservation Trust, and The City of Hawthorne. The event is on Saturday, May 7th, 2022, from 11 AM to 4 PM at Little Orange Creek Nature Park, and is free. Musical performances are listed as The Front Porch Backsteppers & Clay Dixon & the Piccadillies. Other activities include Local Food Vendors, Native Plant Sales, Children's Activities, Guided Hikes, Cilantro Taco Food Truck, Bartram Impersonator, Live Wildlife Demonstrations, and Arts & Crafts. Contact information for the Alachua Conservation Trust is provided at the bottom left.

Friends of Little Orange Creek, Alachua Conservation Trust,
and The City of Hawthorne Present:

Nature Day In May!

Saturday, May 7th, 2022
11 AM - 4 PM
Little Orange Creek Nature Park
Free Event

Musical Performances by:
The Front Porch Backsteppers & Clay Dixon & the Piccadillies!

Come Out And Enjoy!

Local Food Vendors | Cilantro Taco Food Truck
Native Plant Sales | Bartram Impersonator
Children's Activities | Live Wildlife Demonstrations
Guided Hikes | Arts & Crafts

Contact us:
7204 SE, Co Rd 234, Gainesville, FL 32641
(352) 373-1078
Info@alachuaconservationtrust.org

Please join Alachua Audubon in celebrating *Nature Day in May* at Little Orange Creek Nature Park. Visit our display for information about our many activities, conservation, birding, and fun activities for the kids, including the popular bird pong!

We hope to see you there!

EagleWatch

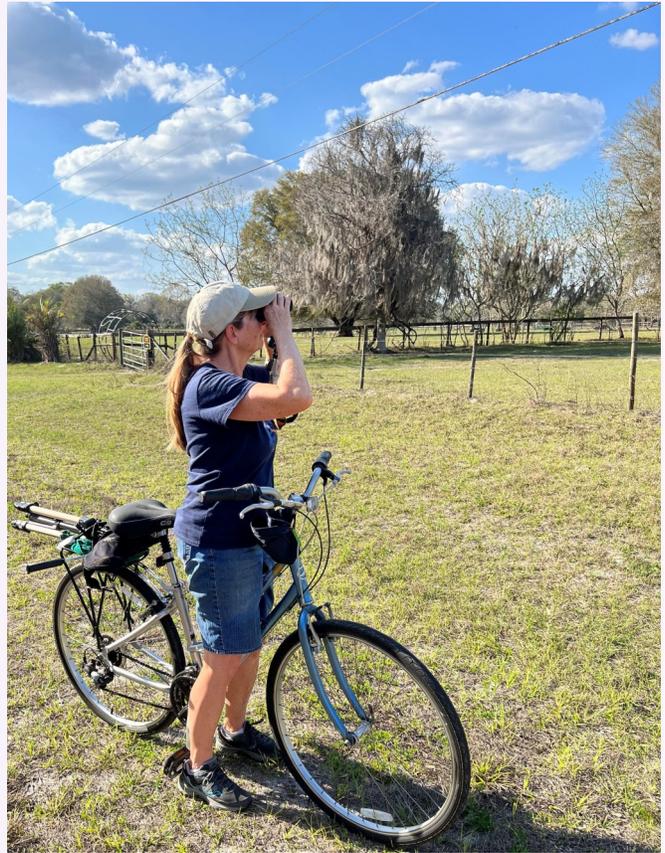
Bald Eagle nest AL032 sits near the crown of a mature long-leaf pine in a pasture where I rode my horse and bird-watched years ago. With a gentle nudge and a loaned spotting scope from Alachua Audubon's president, Debbie Segal, I became the official steward of AL032 after joining EagleWatch earlier this year. This bald eagle nest near Kanapaha Prairie in southwest Alachua County is now part of Audubon Florida's EagleWatch program, one of over 800 nests monitored by volunteers throughout the state. Florida has approximately 1500 nesting pairs of bald eagles, according to FWC, so a significant proportion of our eagle nests are in the EagleWatch program. About 10% of identified nests are in Alachua County – we are very fortunate to still have the habitat to support so many of these birds.

Nest AL032 is on private property in a gated community, and non-resident access is by bicycle only. After outfitting my bike with a rack to accommodate the spotting scope, I started making the ride to watch the bald eagle family in February. EagleWatch recommends biweekly visits, but welcomes more frequent observations. The nestling was newly hatched when monitoring started, and successfully fledged at about 11 weeks. It can still be seen in the vicinity of the nest, and may remain with the parents for another month or two.

EagleWatch's on-line training is very thorough, covering biology, history, and regulatory issues. Safety for both the birds and observers is emphasized, along with etiquette and public relations. Extensive technical resources are available to help monitors evaluate nest success, record relevant behaviors, and cooperate with property owners. Shawnlei Breeding, EagleWatch director, also has badges, business cards and car magnets available for nest watchers to educate curious on-lookers about the program.

Bald eagle nesting season in Florida starts in early fall, and extends into May, so regular visits to AL032 will begin in October. I'm fortunate to have a pleasant bicycle ride to get to this nest; some observers trek for miles on foot, or travel by airboat, kayak or ATV to reach nest sites in remote locations. EagleWatch volunteers provide information that helps wildlife managers, land owners and governmental agencies monitor our bald eagle population, and provide a first line of defense against threats to the safety and well-being of critical nesting sites.

You can learn more about the objectives of Florida's Eaglewatch program, and volunteer opportunities available for the next nesting season at [Be an EagleWatcher | Audubon Center for Birds of Prey](#). As outlined by Alachua Audubon's recent speaker, Jack Davis, author of *The Bald Eagle: The Improbable Journey of America's Bird*, bald eagles need our help now more than ever.



By Lee Bloomcamp

Jacob Ewert—An Outstanding Board Member

Jacob Ewert has been an exceptional board member of AAS. However, he graduated this semester with his B.S. in Plant Science and will be moving on to pursue his new job as an Environmental Education Fellow at the [Clifton Institute](#) in Warrenton, VA. He will assist in leading trips for local groups, coordinating with teachers, designing lesson plans/curriculum, and in running camps and community programs.

The AAS board of directors is sorry to see him go but happy to see him move on to new adventures. Jacob is very outgoing, friendly, and engaging and has boundless energy. He has done so much during his relatively brief stint on the board. Here are just a few of the many things he has accomplished, almost all as a result of his own initiative.

Jacob served two terms as President of the Gators Ready for Exceptional Birding Experiences (GREBE) and helped build the Audubon campus chapter into a dynamic and active group. He planned, coordinated and built the [UF GREBE Garden for Birds](#) with native plants and has maintained an active and educational Facebook page about the garden. His many events there included a planting day with over 15 UF students from a range of majors, plus a propagation workshop for them afterwards; annual Earth Day events that included tabling by many other organizations that he coordinated with; planting days and weeding days that reached out to a variety of students for volunteer assistance, thereby introducing them to both native plants and birds.

Jacob has also been very active in educational programs for children, participating in numerous Alachua County Library District events such as the online Nature Tales programs; planning and leading schoolkids as part of the FLEDJE program ([see page 13](#)), multiple field trips with home-schooled students ([see page 7](#)); and guiding

elementary and middle school teachers around Sweetwater Wetlands Park as part of the Flying WILD Curriculum Professional Development. (Flying WILD is a part of FWC's Project WILD environmental education training program that provides tools and resources to integrate wildlife topics into teachers' curriculum.)

Jacob participated in Audubon Florida's Conservation Leadership Initiative, an experiential learning program providing opportunities for undergraduate college students to immerse themselves in Audubon, strengthen leadership skills, and gain an understanding of career options in the conservation field. He committed to mentoring several students for one year and has taken them on field trips and introduced them to a variety of learning opportunities such as meeting with conservation professionals. One of the mentees, Kayla Ehrlich, is now filling his spot on the AAS board of directors and has already committed to several specific tasks to assist AAS.

With all that he has done for AAS, Jacob is always thanking us for giving him opportunities and support. I believe he has created, and will continue to create, his own opportunities and we are very grateful to him for everything he has done for us.



By Karen Brown

Birding & Building Relationships with Kids

Audubon Florida and the National Audubon Society have rolled out a new Equity and Diversity training program called FLEDJE (Future Leaders for Equity, Diversity and Justice in the Environment). As part of this program, AAS board member Felicia Lee and I worked with previous board member and Rawlings Elementary School Fine Arts Coordinator, Sharon Kuchinski, to organize a field trip for her 4th and 5th grade students to Sweetwater Wetlands Park. During the two weeks leading up to the trip, we visited Rawlings each Monday to teach students about bird identification and behaviors. By building a relationship with these kids, we built trust with them just as they built trust with us. Buses for the field trip were subsidized by the Alachua Audubon Society as there is a widespread scarcity of funding for field trips at Rawlings and other East Gainesville schools. On the day of the field trip, the students saw Felicia and me waiting at the Sweetwater Wetlands Park pavilion and they were overjoyed to see us again. In addition to our Monday visits, we joined the Rawlings Birding Club for their weekly morning walk one Friday. We spent time observing the many birds – Eastern Bluebirds, Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Gallinules, and more – that spend their days on the school campus. Our visit to Sweetwater was our fourth meeting with them, and we plan to make this an ongoing partnership. I'm glad Alachua Audubon was able to kickstart this program which will hopefully lead to more students in Alachua County enjoying this valuable experience.

By Jacob Ewert



Did You Know?

Caterpillars dominate nestling diets in 16 out of 20 bird families. Carolina chickadees rear their young almost exclusively on caterpillars. To rear one clutch of nestlings until they fledge, chickadees must catch from 6-9 *thousand* caterpillars! They need landscapes with plants that support insects.

Please plant native plants!

2021 / 2022 Winter Hummingbird Banding Summary

Our Hummingbird Research banding team has completed our twenty-fourth winter hummingbird banding season in the Southeast. The number of birds banded this winter dropped from 278 last winter to 110 this winter, and the number of species dropped from seven to five. We banded 51 Rufous, 48 Ruby-throated, 8 Black-chinned, 2 Buff-bellied, and 1 Allen's.

Seventeen of our previously banded hummingbirds of four species returned to or near the original banding location. Seven Ruby-throated returned including three back for the second winter, two back for the third winter, one back for the fourth winter, and one back for the fifth winter. Six Rufous returned including five back for the second winter, and one back for the fifth winter. Three Black-chinned returned for the second winter, and one Buff-bellied returned for the second winter. We expected a significant increase in returns this winter because of the large number of Rufous banded last winter, but that did not happen.

Five of our banded hummingbirds were encountered at locations other than where they were banded:

September 11, 2021, Fred Bassett recaptured a male Rufous in Callaway, FL at the home of Mary Mask. Fred had banded that bird January 18, 2021, at Carol Yarnell's home in Dunnellon, FL. 260 miles between encounters.

September 16, 2021, a bander in Steuben County, Indiana caught a female Rufous that Fred Bassett banded January 12, 2021, at Brenda and Charlie Roose's home in Gulf Breeze, FL. 880 miles between encounters.

October 9, 2021, a photographer in Central Garden, TX took enough pictures to read the band number of a male Rufous that Emma Rhodes banded December 5, 2020, at Jimmy Stephenson's home in Satsuma, AL. 720 miles between encounters.

January 15, 2022, Fred Bassett caught a male Ruby-throated at Chris and David Cock's home near Brooksville, FL that Fred banded five years earlier on January 17, 2017 at Roy Morris' home in Lakeland, FL. 55 miles between encounters.

January 31, 2022, Fred Bassett recaptured a female Ruby-throated at Carol Goggins' home in Enterprise, AL that he banded November 17, 2021 near Hartford, AL at Dick Mowbray's home. 20 miles between encounters.

Comparisons with the five previous winter seasons are:

2016/2017 – 100 banded with 21 returns and 3 foreign recaptures
2017/2018 – 145 banded with 20 returns and 3 foreign recaptures
2018/2019 – 151 banded with 19 returns and 3 foreign recaptures
2019/2020 – 139 banded with 14 returns and 7 foreign recaptures
2020/2021 – 281 banded with 14 returns and 5 foreign recaptures
2021/2022 – 110 banded with 17 returns and 5 foreign recaptures



Black-chinned hummer

We banded at 62 homes compared to 178 last winter and had 22 first time hosts compared to 60 last winter.

The decrease this winter tracks closely with other eastern winter hummingbird banders. Last winter's spike in Rufous hummingbirds did not carry over for a second winter. The hummingbirds were also harder to trap this winter with hosts reporting birds using feeders occasionally rather than regularly. The number of no-shows and birds that would not go in traps increased. That change is likely due to more people maintaining winter feeders and more flowers available with warmer winters.

Our twenty-four years of winter hummingbird research documents cycles and trends and works to educate people about how to attract and take care of wintering hummingbirds. The data for our research is dependent on the many hosts who allow us to include their wonderful winter visitors in our research. We thank you and look forward to seeing you and your special wintering hummingbirds again next winter.

By Fred Bassett

Fred Bassett is a certified master bird bander who has worked with birds for over twenty years. Fred has banded more than 35,000 hummingbirds in more than 1,000 locations from Miami, Florida to Haines, Alaska. During the winter he documents western hummingbirds wintering in south Alabama and Florida. Over the last fifteen winters he has captured more than 2,000 hummingbirds of ten different species in this area. Visit the website at <http://hummingbirdresearch.net>

Osprey Cam Update

The UF Osprey Cam is up and running and the osprey family is busy! Currently, we have two chicks and the parents are feeding them a daily diet of fish. Osprey activity can be seen 24/7 on the UF Dept of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation's Osprey Cam at <https://wec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/ospreycam/>. The current two chicks hatched April 5 and 6th. These chicks are quite active (especially when a fish comes in) and if all goes well, they will fledge around June 1–5th. Unfortunately, the third chick that hatched around April 11th did not survive. The nest is quite active each and every day and there is infrared lighting at night so you can watch then as well. Stay tuned for a “name the osprey family” contest. Look for an announcement on the osprey cam webpage. Donations to offset the cost of live-streaming the webcam are appreciated. Please visit the website for more information.

By Mark Hostetler



Day-old Osprey chicks being looked after by a parent.



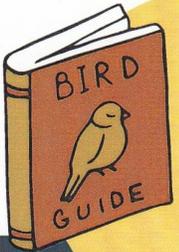
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Kids 4 Birds / Birds 4 Kids

Do you have a child, grandchild or neighbor's child who has expressed an interest in birds? This is your invitation to arrange a personal bird walk. Contact Alachua Audubon Society to set up a date and place to bird. We will provide someone to bring loaner binoculars and help that child or children identify some birds. Suitable for youth ages 5—18 as a small group or as individuals. An adult must attend with youth. Call Emily at 352-339-2201 to arrange your walk.



Would you like to partner with Alachua Audubon and support specific programs?

If so, here are some suggestions.

Donate a New or Used Pair of Binoculars to the GHS birding club and help us introduce more high school students to birding. Binoculars cost approximately \$125, however, your extra set of used binoculars will be gladly accepted. If you would like to help, please send an email to Contact@AlachuaAudubon.org.

Sponsor a College Intern – AAS provides valuable internship experiences to college students who learn and practice mist-netting, bird banding, nest box monitoring, and more. Interns receive a \$400 scholarship at the completion of their program. Consider contributing to the AAS college internship fund with any amount. Read about the positive impacts of this internship on the students on [page 6](#).

Contribute to the Bird Banding Lab – We are continually improving and expanding this facility. Any donation to this important project is greatly appreciated. *Donors will be treated to a tour of the Bird Banding Lab.*

To donate any amount, scroll down to the **Donate** button on our [Membership Page](#), choose or enter an amount, and add a note (the note option is available once you are logged in to PayPal) stating the program to which you are donating. You may also send a check and a note to AAS at the address on the last page of this newsletter. Please send an email to AlachuaAudubonTreasurer@gmail.com if you would like assistance.

Thank you for your consideration.

Fun at Festivals Again!

Alachua Audubon has been enjoying the spring season of nature festivals in and around Gainesville after a long pause for COVID. It's good to be back and interacting with the public again.

We recently participated in the 8th annual *Pints & Predators* event at First Magnitude Brewing that raised funds for area wildlife rehabilitators. This year's event featured ten animal exhibitors who brought over 55 species including birds, crocodilians, snakes, spiders, turtles, frogs, bats, and skinks.

Party for the Planet was held at the Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo and we once again enjoyed a great day, especially watching kids play bird pong!

Eric Amundsen and various helpers have been making pine cone bird feeders for each event and they are very popular with children and adults alike.

Next up is *Nature Day in May* at Little Orange Creek Nature Park ([see page 10](#)). Come on out!



*Board member Pratibha Singh has fun interacting with a possible future birder!
Photo by Rick Wolfe.*



Follow us on [Facebook!](#)



Check us out on Instagram at [@alachuaaudubon](#)

Monthly Birds and Brews

The AAS Birds and Brews event continues to be popular with both new and experienced birders. Meet the first Sunday of the month at [First Magnitude Brewery](#), 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 **May 1st** we will meet up at **5:45** for a **6:00 p.m. departure** to Depot Park. On **June 5th** we will meet at **5:45** for a **6:00 p.m. 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 brew and conversation.

All birding skill levels are welcome!

Next event: Sunday, May 1st at 5:45 p.m.





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The Crane
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The Crane is distributed via email. Your email address will not be shared with other organizations.

Alachua Audubon (AAS) is an official chapter of **National Audubon** and **Audubon Florida**. If you belong to National Audubon and live in our area, you are automatically a member of AAS.

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.

To join Audubon at the National level, go to AlachuaAudubon.org/Membership where you will be directed to the NAS membership page. Your introductory membership will be credited to our local chapter and you will become an annual member of the **National Audubon Society**, **Audubon Florida** and **Alachua Audubon**, with one-year subscriptions to *National Audubon* magazine, *Audubon Florida Naturalist* magazine, and Alachua Audubon's bi-monthly newsletter, *The Crane*.

Please send any questions to
AlachuaAudubonMembership@gmail.com