



# GAZETTEER

May 2009

## Tusawilla Preserve Surpasses 500 Acres

CONSERVING NORTH FLORIDA'S WETLANDS WITH FEDERAL SUPPORT

ACT's Tusawilla Preserve, just southeast of Micanopy, has grown by another 139 acres. ACT acquired the Connell family's land on the northwest side of the Tusawilla Prairie, including the most reliably deep water in the basin. The primary funding source was the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which awards funds for the protection of migratory bird habitat.

ACT has opened the Thrasher Park portion of the preserve, which is directly across the road from Micanopy's recently dedicated Native American Heritage Park. Both of these properties were acquired with funds from Florida Communities Trust. The 518-acre Tusawilla Preserve now includes land purchased with federal, state, and private funds – without needing to tap into any local funds from *Alachua County Forever* or *Wild Spaces-Public Places*.

ACT also purchased the Tusawilla Cabin, a large cabin set on a beautiful, secluded site. It will be used for meetings and other functions with a conservation focus and has already been used for a meeting about the future of *Florida Forever* with legislative staff, a Sustainable Alachua County planning session, and a Conservation Burial, Inc. board retreat.

Tusawilla Preserve has become a favorite among birdwatchers. After a sudden spring deluge, cotton rats were driven from low-lying areas, which made a feast for raptors. More recently, water levels have dropped, and the few small pools have concentrated fish and amphibians, bringing in alligators, wading birds, and mammals. This dynamic system, with always changing conditions, makes for quite the wildlife show. The trail system provides a shady walk on the northern rim of the prairie.

ACT has begun to discuss management issues with adjacent landowners and agencies. Chief among these is protecting against wildfire while making it possible to bring prescribed fire back into this ecosystem. Wet prairies are prone to burning during hot, dry, windy conditions, and we want to avoid a catastrophic fire by planning for a fire when conditions are right and everybody is prepared. Invasive exotic plants are also a problem – and these include coral ardisia, cogon grass, air potato, and climbing fern.

To enjoy the birding and wildflowers of Tusawilla Preserve, drive to the blinking light on US 441 in Micanopy. Continue south on 441 about one mile to the intersection of SE Tusawilla Road, also known as CR 25-A and SE 165<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Turn right (west) and drive about ½ mile where you can park at Micanopy's Park. The trails of Tusawilla are on the south side of the road. Future additions to this park include a boardwalk, additional picnic facilities, and regular environmental education classes.



Great Blue Heron at Tusawilla Preserve.

Photo by Liz Binford



Alachua Conservation Trust thanks our many supporters whose generosity makes possible the protection of north Florida's special places.

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# Land Management Progress



*Burn boss Richard Hamann and Landmanager Ivor Kincaide watch over a prescribed fire at Prairie Creek Preserve. Photo by Tristan Harper*

Dramatic changes have taken place at the Prairie Creek Preserve this year, as many of our visitors have noted. On January 17th, with a lot of help from volunteers, we conducted a 45-acre prescribed burn on a portion of the preserve that borders the Gainesville-Hawthorne Trail. While the aftermath may seem startling, fire is a critical tool necessary to restore habitat that has been degraded and which might even be lost entirely without periodic burning.

ACT is especially grateful to the many volunteers who assisted with the burn and follow-up, including The Nature Conservancy Strike Team from Ordway Preserve, staff from Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, City of Gainesville Nature Operations, the Alachua County Wildfire Mitigation team, and the Division of Forestry. Extra special thanks go out to ubiquitous ACT volunteer Doug Hornbeck, whose fire truck was the backbone of our operation.

Another big change to the preserve was the thinning of 90 acres of pine plantation. This plantation is a relic of a former land use, and will be one of Alachua Conservation Trust's biggest restoration challenges in years to come. In 1995, the natural pine forest on what is now the eastern third of the preserve was logged and plowed into rows not unlike an agricultural field. About seven hundred slash pine seedlings per acre were then planted, and by 2009, fourteen years later, those pine trees were shading out the few native grasses, shrubs, and palmettos that remained. In its natural state, an acre of pine flatwoods habitat might have as few as fifty trees but a tremendous diversity of grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs. This is where the real biodiversity of a Florida pine forest is found and without a lot of sunlight, these native plants disappear. For the next year or so, this thinned acreage won't be our prettiest landscape, but we've made every effort to keep the trail shady and we appreciate your patience for the next few years



*Landmanager Ivor Kincaide dominates a brush pile. Photo by Hutch*







*Volunteers Doug Hornbeck and Damion Graves manage the controlled burn at Prairie Creek Preserve. Photo by Larry Korhnak.*

as the indigenous plants, insects, and other wildlife return for the enjoyment of hikers, cyclists, and equestrians.

Of note also are the large entry signs for Prairie Creek Preserve and Tusawilla Preserve that will be coming soon from Festival Signs, thanks to a grant from the Alachua County Tourist Development Council. We think they look great and they will make these great preserves more visible.

Without the assistance of a large cadre of volunteers, there would be virtually no land management or restoration activity to be discussed. Special thanks to a few of our star volunteers:

- Darrell Hartman for his help every week with trail maintenance, pine seedling planting, and hardwood control in our restoration areas – there’s almost no project he hasn’t assisted.
- Paul Nelson also planted many hundreds of longleaf pines for us this year as well as assisting with any project – no matter how dirty – I have asked for help with.
- Vicky Baldwin has tirelessly led the charge at the Saarinen Preserve, maintaining and creating trails, doing fencing, rebuilding our entry gate, and even organizing a bake sale to raise money for materials. She’s an expert at organizing volunteer help, so watch out if you live in Jonesville or you may find yourself mowing trails, installing fence posts, or clearing brush!
- Doug Hornbeck requires a second mention for all his efforts to help ACT. His assistance with all things mechanical or otherwise is always invaluable.

Keep an eye out for upcoming environmental education events. Classes are being planned for those who want to learn more about wetlands, plants, spiders, insects, and the many bird songs of a spring morning in Florida at our “Birding by Ear” classes in May. Come enjoy our preserves for an hour or two while learning a little about our natural environment.

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# Another Addition to Prairie Creek Preserve!

Two decades ago, there were no public lands along Prairie Creek, the connection that drains Pithlachocco (aka Newnans Lake) into Paynes Prairie's basin. Adjacent landowners occasionally blocked paddlers' access to the creek altogether.

Today, Prairie Creek flows through wildlands that are protected from SR 20 (Hawthorne Road) to CR 234 (Rochelle-Micanopy Road), a distance of 3.75 miles. The properties that make up ACT's Prairie Creek Preserve and the surrounding public lands were protected as the result of nine separate transactions over a 21-year period, protecting more than 2200 acres.

The largest remaining parcel was purchased by Alachua Conservation Trust from the Crevasse family in March. This spectacular 749-acre tract contains half the length of Prairie Creek, including its most scenic sections of mature



*Prairie Creek Ranch, purchased from the Crevasse family, is 749 acres of wild and scenic Alachua County. Acquired in March 2009, ACT is seeking funding from federal, state, and local programs – and private donors – to secure this property. Plans are still being formulated for its educational and recreational uses, which could include an environmental education center and multi-user trails. Photo by Hutch*

cypress swamp and hydric hammock, expanses of wet prairie, and surrounding uplands including flatwoods and sandhills. Blue flag irises and pickerelweed are blooming in profusion along the creek this spring, and numerous wading birds are feasting on small fish and amphibians.

ACT purchased the property with a low-interest bridge loan from courageous private lenders. We are negotiating with five different public agencies and with private foundations and non-profits to find the best combination

of funding to quickly re-pay our \$4 million debt. Funds will be sought from Florida Communities Trust, which provided most of the support for the acquisition of lands just to the north (along the Gainesville-Hawthorne Rail Trail). But receiving FCT funding requires: 1) support from the legislature to fund Florida Forever; 2) a competitive score on our grant application, which is due in mid-May; and 3) a 10% cash match, or \$400,000. All three of these are daunting challenges in this political and economic climate.



Prairie Creek was recently designated as part of an "official state paddling trail" by the Florida Office of Greenways and Trails. The Potano Paddling



Trail was named after the Native Americans who lived in the area at the time of European contact and whose ancestors were the first canoeists to enjoy the creek. John November, a UF Law Student, coordinated the application for state recognition and has led crews of Potano Paddling People on de-snagging expeditions to make the creek passable. At today's water levels, the creek can be comfortably paddled from Newnans Lake all the way to Camp's Canal, where thick vegetation makes paddling difficult. ACT is seeking mechanical means to partially clear the thick mats of floating vegetation currently blocking the canal.



*Blue Flag Iris at Crevassic Park.  
Photo by Hutch*

Robert Hutchinson, ACT's Executive Director, began playing in Prairie Creek in the mid-1960s as a teenager. In 1986, he produced a video program called *Prairie Creek: A Vital Link* to create public and political support for the early acquisitions of this little known wilderness. This 23-year-old classic, starring Court Collier, Richard Hamann, Mark Brown, David Coffey, and Jack Putz as canoeing commentators, is available on ACT's website.



Prairie Creek is protected through patience, perseverance, and partnerships – and is in the best tradition of how a local land trust can save a special local place.

## Alachua Conservation Trust Environmental Education Classes

May 16th	8:00am	<b>Birding by Ear at Tusawilla Preserve</b> taught by Ivor Kincaide
May 17th	8:00am	<b>Birding by Ear at Prairie Creek Preserve</b> taught by Ivor Kincaide
May 23rd	9:00am	<b>The Sublime to the Devilish: Trees, Shrubs, Wildflowers, Weeds &amp; Invasive Exotic Plants at Tusawilla Preserve</b> taught by Meg Niederhofer
June 6th	9:30am	<b>Bloodsuckers: Horseflies, Deerflies, Ticks &amp; Mosquitos at Prairie Creek Preserve</b>

Check [www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org](http://www.AlachuaConservationTrust.org)  
for upcoming classes!

Tusawilla Preserve classes meet at the gate to the preserve on 165th Ave, just west of 441, in Micanopy.  
Prairie Creek Preserve classes meet at Witness Tree Junction at the intersection of CR 234 and CR 2082 in Rochelle.

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# The Tenth Annual Conservation Stewards Awards

**“This saving is hard. There’s hard labor in thrift. But those who listen have been resourceful. Some savings have accumulated and we are richer for tenacious accounting of the living green.”**

*- excerpt from “The Hard Saving” by Sidney Wade*

On the beautiful and breezy evening of March 20th, Alachua Conservation Trust welcomed over 450 friends, volunteers, and supporters to our 2009 Conservation Stewards Awards Banquet at Hickory Ranch on the east rim of Paynes Prairie. Each year, this celebration just seems to get bigger and better – and this year was no exception!

Recognized as our 2009 Conservation Stewards for lifelong efforts in conservation and preservation of the natural world were Prairie photographer Dominick Martino, planner/UF educator Earl Starnes, and speleologist Al Krause. We again thank each honoree for his outstanding contributions to environmentalism in and around the community.

Kudos also go out to Gracy Castine, logistics coordinator extraordinaire, and innumerable ACT volunteer staff; Country Caterers for the delicious Bar-B-Que and eggplant parmesan; Sister Hazel’s Ken Block and Drew Copeland, the Weeds of Eden, and Cathy DeWitt for the awesome, toe-tapping musical entertainment; Andy of Royal Restrooms for the truly “royal” port-o-lets; all of the Paynes Prairie staff, Friends of Paynes Prairie, and the Prairie “cowboys” for once again providing the stunning backdrop and “Cracker” ambiance for this occasion.

To the artists, artisans, and service providers who so generously donated to the silent auction - thank you, thank you, thank you. Despite a less than stellar economy, your support this year was greater than ever, and proceeds from the auction will benefit both ACT and the Friends of Paynes Prairie.

And finally, many thanks are due to you, the patrons and supporters of Alachua Conservation Trust. This event is our one opportunity each year to honor you, the local conservation community. Without your contributions and assistance, Alachua Conservation Trust could not carry out its mission to preserve as many of Alachua County’s wild and natural places as possible. So thanks for helping to make 2008 one of the best years yet for local conservation efforts, and for making the 2009 Conservation Stewards Awards a rockin’ good time!



*Dominick Martino was honored for his work as educator and volunteer photographer at Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park. Photo by Alison Blakeslee*



*A young sungazer at the 2009 Conservation Stewards Awards at Hickory Ranch. Photo by Alison Blakeslee*



*Volunteer Jennifer Staiger perfects auction setup. Photo by Alison Blakeslee*

A special thanks to the CSA Volunteers: Susie Lyons, Laura NeSmith, Lisa Jelks, Doug Hornbeck, David O’Keefe, Jennifer Staiger, Joanna Reilly-Brown, Crystal Goodison, Krissy Stotts, Julie Padowski, Stuart Muller, John Barrow, Grace Horvath, John Horvath, Christine Housel, & Josh Coccoza



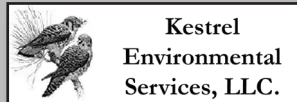
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*Thank You for making this event possible!*

# Potano Paddling Trail Opens

Have you ever wished there were a great place to canoe or kayak down a creek within ten minutes of Gainesville? If you have, then your wish has been granted. April 10th marked the opening of the state-designated Potano Paddling Trail in east Gainesville, which includes all of Newnan's Lake, with boat ramps at Owens-Illinois Park and Earl P. Powers Park, and Prairie Creek south to County Road 234. Alachua Conservation Trust will manage the trail that winds through Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park and as well as ACT's own Prairie Creek Preserve.

Florida's Office of Greenways and Trails only designates as "state trails" those lands or waterways that protect, enhance, and connect natural, recreational, cultural and historic resources, and ACT worked diligently with city, county, and state officials to ensure the official designation of the Potano Paddling Trail.

Channels on the banks of Newnan's Lake provide a scenic and shaded route where paddlers can see Great Blue Herons, Tricolored Herons, Red Shouldered



*Potano Paddling People: These roughnecks de-snagged a portion of the Potano Paddling Trail in early February (from left): Lars Andersen, Lorenzo Benini, Zack Gerhardt, Mac Stone, John November, Myles Jackson, and Robert Hutchinson.*

Hawks, Ospreys, and many other birds. In addition to these, Little Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Swallow Tailed Kites, Great Horned Owls, and Limpkin are common in the area around Prairie Creek. Alligators, deer, and wild hogs can be seen from the banks of the creek, and migratory warblers frequent the region as well. Possibly the most important thing about this paddling trail is its close proximity to the city of Gainesville. Residents now have a beautiful area to canoe and kayak within five miles of downtown.

The paddling trail's unusual name comes from the Potano tribe that lived in what are now Alachua County, northern Marion County, and western Putnam County. The Potano were a branch of the Timucua people and were semi-agricultural, planting corn, beans, squash, and other vegetables, while hunting local game like alligators and manatees.

Please visit our website for more information about the Potano Paddling Trail or if you would like to volunteer at our next snag-clearing party!

Thanks to the Potano Paddling People for helping clear snags on Prairie Creek on February 6th and April 10th: Lars Anderson, Mac Stone, Paul Nelson, Bruce Morgan, Knox Bagwell, Fran Bernardino, Nancy Lasseter, Brack Barker, Dan Rountree, David Gold, Rod Irwin, Karl Miller, Zach Gerhardt, Colin Campbell, John November, the folks at Kate's Fish Camp, and many others...

## The Potano Paddling Trail, Alachua County, Florida





# Kanapaha Prairie Conservation Easement



*Sandhill cranes at Kanapaha Prairie. Photo by Larry Korhnak.*

Kanapaha Prairie is one of the large wet prairies included in the North Florida Wetlands Conservation Project. When portions of the property were threatened, Kanapaha neighbors Lisa Gearen and Mary Rockwood Lane lead the charge to permanently protect it – raising substantial private donations and enlisting The Conservation Fund and ACT.

Matt Sexton, of The Conservation Fund (a national non-profit) crafted a strategy that included placing a conservation easement over the 685-acre property, with funding from the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Alachua Conservation Trust is the easement recipient. Lauren Day, who started the project with ACT and finished it as an employee of The Conserva-

tion Fund, wrote the federal grant proposal, negotiated the transaction through closing, and is in charge of managing the property.

Kanapaha Prairie attracts thousands of migratory birds each year, and its fluctuating water levels provide habitat to amphibians that require ephemeral water bodies. Portions of the basin are grazed, and the management plan prescribes a grazing arrangement that will work best for wildlife. Alachua County Forever has also received a conservation easement on adjacent private property, and is looking at additional lands that would protect more than 1000 acres in total.

Kanapaha Prairie is truly an inspiring success story – with private, local government, non-profit, and federal funders partnering to save this special place.



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Lu Anne Wilson  
Floyd W. Wood  
Janet Wootten

Please bring to our attention any inadvertant errors or omissions

# ACT's Friends and Family

After **President Obama** called upon the nation to increase its volunteerism, Alachua Conservation Trust embraced this directive – and the community really responded. In the first four months of 2009, volunteers and community service workers provided over 750 hours of labor – on our preserves, in our office, and at our exhibition booth. Some of the volunteers are thanked in other articles in this newsletter and others are thanked here. For anybody not specifically named, we truly appreciate your (anonymous) role in accomplishing the land conservation mission of ACT.

For the past couple of years, we have negotiated with the Crevasse family for Prairie Creek Ranch. **Carole Crevasse** and her son **Austin** made the difficult decision to sell this land, the right decision to conserve it, and the generous decision to include charitable gifts to ACT. Thank you Carole and Austin for “Crevassic Park.” And thank you to **David Menet, Jim Salter, Gwen Jones, Ellen Gershow, Harold Wise, Michael and Jason Candler**, and the other professionals who helped with this complex transaction.

Thank you to **George Edwards**, President of the Friends of Paynes Prairie, and **David Jowers**, Paynes Prairie's Park Manager, for all that they and their staffs and volunteers did to make the Conservation Stewards Awards another success.

**Donna Isaacs** is our hero, for raising funds in five figures for our Rochelle historic preservation project. Donna taught a course in South Florida, sponsored and administered by ACT, whose tuition was put directly into foundation work and structural stabilization of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Gothic revival church. Thank you to **Charles Kibbert** for making this possible, and to **Art Middleton** and his hard-working crew for the careful and cost-effective work they have provided.

Professor **Ruth Steiner** and her Urban and Regional Planning classes have generated proposals for Florida Communities Trust projects for the past four years, some of which have been awarded millions of dollars in land acquisition grant funds. This year's class did a tremendous job, working on a proposal for ACT property and other land conservation programs.

Thank you to **Matt Sexton** and The Conservation Fund for introducing ACT to the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and for his guidance throughout the process; of preserving Kanapaha Prairie, Lake Tuscawilla, and other north Florida wetlands. The NAWCA staff is also great to work with as they hold our hand through the federal acquisition process.



*Sara and K.M. Eoff donated a conservation easement on their Newnan's Lake property to ACT in April, 2009. Photo by Tristan Harper*

ACT benefits from an kitchen cabinet of professional and amateur land managers who provide advice and sweat equity on our ecological restoration projects. Many thanks to **Erick Smith, Jack Putz, Doug Hornbeck, Jim Weimer, Dylan Gavagni, Bob Simons, Parker Titus, Tom Workman, John Winn, Anne Barkdoll, Peter NeSmith, Richard Hamann, Dustin Bonds, and Don Wolfe.**

We appreciate the fine editorial help from **Kari MacLauchlin and Janet Wootten. Luc Drlicka and Logan**



## A Conservation Clinic Graduate



A benefit of being a land trust located next to the University of Florida is the Conservation Clinic at the UF Law School, led by Tom Ankersen. The latest member of the Conservation Clinic to work with ACT is Tristan Harper. He

became our in-house conservation easement expert and participated in negotiating and drafting conservation easements over Gum Slough in Sumter County, over the Gary Farm in Marion County, and over the Eoff lands in Alachua County. These three conservation easements, totaling nearly 700 acres, represent a diverse portfolio of complex projects that conserve spectacular landscapes.

Says Tristan, "My favorite part of working on conservation easements at ACT has been listening to landowners describe their property and their dreams for its preservation. I've enjoyed paddling trips on Gum Slough, treks in the Newnans Lake forest, and hearing the struggle of African-Americans to hold onto their family's lands."

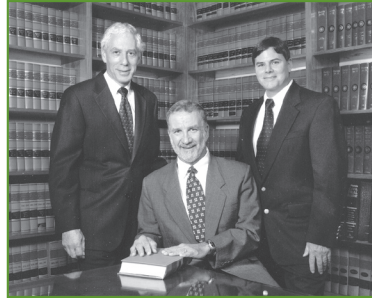
Tristan has also participated in controlled burns, election campaigns, and our fundraising events. As he leaves ACT to begin his legal career, we're hopeful Tristan's experience with ACT has prepared him for pursuing land conservation projects in Florida's panhandle.



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**Couch** at the Property Appraiser's Office are always helpful with GIS data. Thank you to **Lorin Weilacher** and **Carlos Villalobos** from Alachua County Court Services, who make sure our labor needs are covered by community service workers.

Thanks to **Phyllis Saarinen, Susie Lyons, John Anderson, Emily Saarinen, Gracy Castine**, and our Board members who have peopled ACT's booth at the Spring Garden Festival, the Downtown Art Festival, Earth Day at the Florida Museum, and the Downtown Farmer's Market.

We appreciate **Larry Korhnak** for the photography of the "**Padgett Powell Perpetual Burn**" at Prairie Creek Preserve. Our next prescribed fire will be named by **Jeanna Mastrodicasa**, which promises to be a really hot one.

And thanks to you, for whatever you do to support the cause of land conservation and historic preservation!

ACT received generous gifts in remembrance of **Jim Parrish, Courtland Collier, Mo Morris, and Flo Mickelberry** -- all people whose love for the great outdoors is still appreciated by their family and friends.

## Volunteer with ACT!

Our next volunteer days will be:

**Saturday, May 16th**

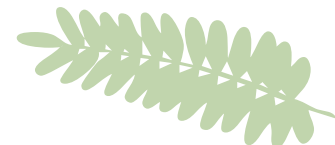
**Saturday, June 13th**

We need help planting wiregrass and longleaf pines, picking up trash, snag clearing along Prairie Creek, and building our new boardwalk. We will meet at **10am** on volunteer days at Witness Tree Junction at the intersection of CR 234 and CR 2082 in Rochelle. Please email us to RSVP:

[Info@AlachuaConservationTrust.org](mailto:Info@AlachuaConservationTrust.org)

**See you there!**

Check our website for future volunteer days.



# ALACHUA CONSERVATION TRUST: The Natural Leader

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The mission of Alachua Conservation Trust (ACT) is to protect the natural, scenic, historical, and recreational resources in and around Alachua County, Florida. ACT protects land through purchase, donation, and conservation easement.

ACT is a 501(c)3 non-profit charity created in 1988. ACT receives no government grants for general operating support, and relies on contributions from private individuals, corporations, and foundations. Donations may be tax deductible, however ACT does not provide tax advice.

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