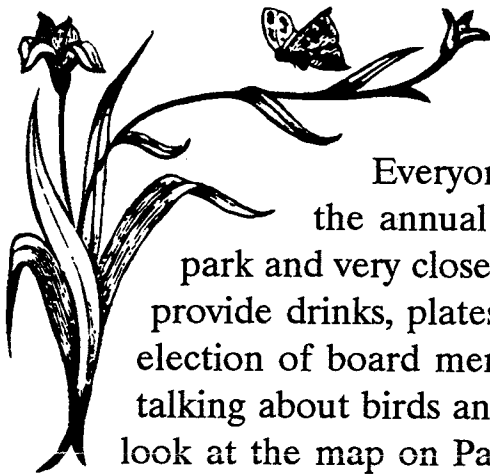


The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

Volume 41 Number 8, April 2000



Wednesday, April 26, 6:30 p.m.

Alachua Audubon Society Picnic

Everyone is welcome — members and non-members alike — to the annual meeting and picnic at Green Acre Park, a great little park and very close by. Bring a covered dish to share with others. AAS will provide drinks, plates, and eating utensils. There will be a brief meeting for election of board members and officers, but most of the time will be spent talking about birds and eating good food. To get to Green Acre Park, take a look at the map on Page 3 or follow these directions: Newberry Road to the stoplight which is across from what used to be Royal Park Mall and is now where the new multi-theatre complex is. Turn south onto SW 38th Street and go to the gate at the dead end. Parking is available along the streets, but be careful not to park in a tow-away zone. It's a short walk on a trail to the picnic tables. Your presence is VERY important at this particular AAS annual picnic meeting! Please see "Headless" on Page 3.

Lots of Field Trips This Month:

➔ **Saturday, April 8, 7:30 a.m.**

San Felasco Hammock State Preserve

Meet at the Hunters Crossing Publix (NW 43rd Street & NW 53rd Avenue) to carpool; this will keep the small San Felasco parking lot from getting too crowded and prevent everyone having to pay the \$2 parking fee. Craig Parenteau will lead this half-day walk through the fresh spring green of this deep deciduous forest. Our summer birds should be returning—Summer Tanager, Hooded Warbler, Yellow-throated and Red-eyed Vireos, Great Crested Flycatcher – and we've been known to find a migrant or two on this trip as well.

➔ **Saturday, April 15, 6:30 a.m.**

Cedar Key

NOTE CHANGE IN DESTINATION. Meet in the parking lot of the Target store, on Archer Road (SR-24) just east of I-75, to carpool. Rex Rowan will lead this traditional spring trip, which will, if we're lucky, coincide with the arrival of warblers and other migrants. Our "hoped-for" list will include Magnificent Frigatebird, Florida Scrub-Jay, Gray Kingbird, and Seaside Sparrow, and we can expect the usual shore-birds and waders.

More Field Trips on Next Page

Field Trips Continued

➔ Sunday, April 16, 6:00 a.m.

Gulf Hammock Forest

Meet in the parking lot of the Target store, on Archer Road (SR-24) just east of I-75, to carpool. Years ago this wilderness of swamp and hardwood forest fell to the saws of the timber industry, and was largely planted in pine. The owner of the land, The Timber Company, is now making efforts to cooperate with Partners in Flight, creating wildlife corridors, increasing land set aside for birds, and doing a migrant survey. Swallow-tailed Kites nest rather commonly in the area, and the nest locations are mapped; this is as close as I'll come to saying we're guaranteed to see this bird. Even more exciting, Short-tailed Hawks are resident there. This is not public land, so if you want to see these birds you'll have to join us! Rex Rowan will lead, with the guidance of forester Steve Lowrimore.

➔ Saturday, April 22, 6:00 a.m.

Wards Bank and Ft. George Island

Meet in the parking lot of The Exchange Publix at NW 13th Street and NW 39th Avenue to carpool to Jacksonville. The shorebirds should be well along towards their spring plumage, several locally-breeding species should be around – Painted Bunting, Wilson's Plover, Least Tern, Sandwich Tern, and maybe Gull-billed Tern – and the migrants, including Cape May and Blackpoll Warblers, should be passing through in healthy numbers.

➔ Saturday/Sunday, April 29-30

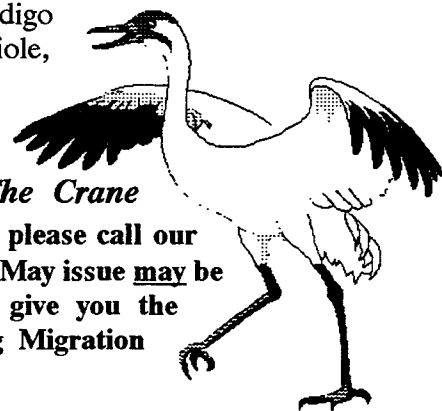
St. Marks NWR and St. George Island SP

Call trip leader Rex Rowan at (352) 371-9296 if you're interested in going, since the rendezvous point has changed. Spring migration should be very close to peaking at the end of April, and the eastern panhandle is an excellent place to see it. Birders engaging in the form of madness known as The Big Day often find 150 species or more here. We won't be quite so intense as that, but we can expect to see a good number of warblers, thrushes, tanagers, and grosbeaks as well as shorebirds and seabirds. If there is sufficient interest and time permits, there may be side trips to Wakulla Springs (bring extra money for the Jungle Cruise) and Ocklockonee River State Park.

➔ Saturday, May 6, 8:00 a.m.

Bolen Bluff Trail

Meet at the Bolen Bluff parking lot. Rex Rowan will lead this last field trip of the season. A few migrants should be lingering – Bobolinks, for instance – but this trip aims to see some of the Prairie's nesting birds, such as Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Orchard Oriole, and maybe Yellow-breasted Chat.



➔ To find out *The Crane* deadline for May, please call our SunDial number; the May issue may be delayed in order to give you the results of the Spring Migration Count.

For Year-Round

24-hour AAS Information:

Call SunDial Bird Line: 335-3500, ext. BIRD (2473) for information on field trips, programs, where to see birds, and what's happening in AAS.

Visit AAS Web Site:

<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud>

*Did you ever chance to hear the midnight flight of
birds passing through the air and darkness over-
head, in countless armies, changing their early, or
late summer habitat?*

It is something not to be forgotten.....

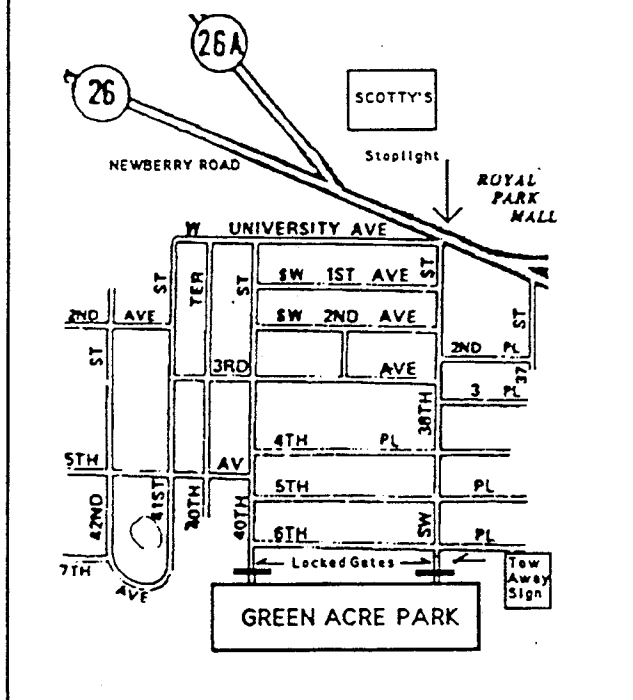
— Walt Whitman, American Poet

The Crane is published monthly throughout the year except June and July. Content of *The Crane* is the sole responsibility of the editor and fulfills stated objectives and goals of Alachua Audubon Society. Annual subscription to *The Crane* is included in AAS dues. Non-Audubon members may subscribe to *The Crane* for \$8 annually. All checks for subscriptions should be mailed to Membership Chairman; see back page for name and address. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed, can be e-mailed or on disk or hard copy. Please limit each article to no more than two pages. Mail or bring your disk or hard copy to Evelyn Perry, The Branch Office, 519 NW 60th St., Suite A, Gainesville 32607. Or fax to 331-2585. Or e-mail evperry@aol.com.

The Crane is printed on recycled paper.

PICNIC AT GREEN ACRE PARK

Wednesday, April 26, 6:30 p.m.



Nominating Slate

From Martha King, Chairman of
the AAS Nominating Committee

Officers

President - no nomination
Vice-President - Scott Flamand
Secretary - David Wahl
Treasurer - John Winn

Board Members with terms expiring 2003

Mary Clench
Craig Parenteau
Sue Hartman
Martha King

Board Members with term expiring 2002

Bob Simons

The Nominating Committee has tried for weeks to find a candidate for presidency of Alachua Audubon Society for the coming year, with 19 prospects turning down the nomination. Many of our most active members either have too much to do or are burned out after years of service.

It's time now for a volunteer to come forward from the job or for members to find a willing prospect. Please call Martha King at 372-4149 with your ideas or bring them to the annual picnic and election on April 26.



Headless

Friends, countrymen, Audubon members! Lend us your ears! We come to tell you that there is about to be a vacuum in Alachua Audubon leadership.

The three of us have been your presidents and vice presidents since 1992, and now it's time for someone else to fill those positions. And yet the nominating committee elected by you—the Alachua Audubon members at the Annual Meeting last April—is unable to find anyone willing to fill the slot of president.

This is serious. Have you ever seen a headless chicken flopping about in the dirt? Is that what we want our society to look like this coming year?

The presidency job doesn't take an inordinate amount of time nor any particular expertise. The three of us are all birders, but that has nothing to do with the job. What it takes is someone who's willing to come to ten meetings (16 if you count the program meetings) during the course of the year and see to it that the things that need to be done actually do get done. It's really not all that difficult, but the three of us are like ten-day old bread: a bit stale. We think we need to step aside. What would be best for this organization is someone with some new approaches and fresh ideas.

As things stand now, Alachua Audubon is about to turn into that headless chicken. It's too late for the nominating committee to make formal nominations—under the by-laws, those were to appear in this *Crane*, the one published just before the Annual Meeting. What can still be done is for there to be nominations from the floor at the Annual Meeting on April 26. If no one is nominated and elected, with no president, what will happen? Will there still be field trips? Programs? Birding classes? Anyone to try to keep an eye on rampant development in Alachua County?

Those are good questions. If enough things fall by the wayside, National Audubon will eventually decertify us a chapter. When that happens, probably the first thing you'll notice is that you'll no longer get *The Crane*, as we'll lose the funds—our share of your dues paid to National—which pays for *The Crane's* production.

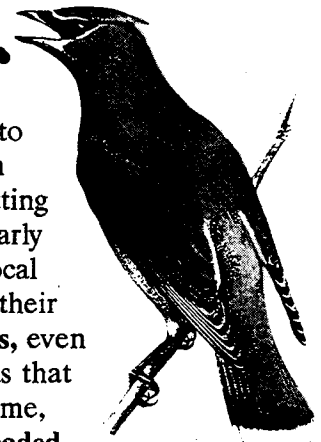
We think this is a very disturbing situation and hope you agree. We'd like to hear your ideas. Call one of us. (Our telephone numbers are elsewhere in this *Crane*.) Better yet, come to the Annual Meeting on April 26 and talk to other members about what can be done. The three of us are not going away. We'll still be here to help out and to give what advice we can, but it's time for someone to "get this country moving again."

Rex Rowan, John Winn, Tom Webber

Around the County...

by Mike Manetz

It amazes me how quickly spring unfolds in Florida. Azaleas and dogwoods begin to blossom barely beyond reach of the last freeze, almost daring the north to hurl down one more mighty cold blast. **Purple Martins** arrive in the dead of winter to begin setting up breeding territories, and **Louisiana Waterthrushes** migrate through our area so early you might wonder if you were seeing a true migrant or a bird that wintered here. Local residents, such as our **Cardinals** and **Carolina Wrens**, are building nests and raising their first broods before some of our winter visitors, like **Goldfinches** and **Cedar Waxwings**, even *think* about heading north. Perhaps it is the juxtaposition of winter and summer birds that makes birding in March a little surreal. One of the turning points of the season, for me, is the simultaneous singing of all four of our regularly occurring Vireos. The **Blue-headed Vireo**, which winters here, often sings during the weeks leading up to its departure. During that time, **Red-eyed** and **Yellow-throated Vireos** arrive from the tropics to set up breeding territories here. Add the scratchy voice of our year-round resident **White-eyed Vireo**, all on the same day, and you have something of a bird's equinox.



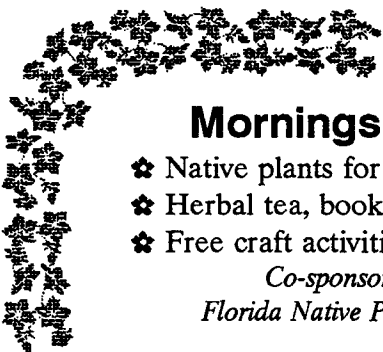
Backyard birders and vendors of bird seed were no doubt relieved at the buildup of **Goldfinches** through March. Goldfinches typically don't start massing at feeders until late winter, but this year it seemed like they were going to altogether pass on the generosity of their human admirers. Finally, by the first week of March, avid feeders were reporting hordes of them, and even I had a few appear in my yard. Likewise, **Cedar Waxwings** were present in very low density much of the winter, but suddenly were omnipresent by the middle of March. One of the best places to see them en masse is in downtown Gainesville. They often congregate there in huge numbers to feed on fruiting trees planted by City landscapers. On my way to work March 23, I observed a flock numbering close to a thousand streaming from a roost near the intersection of University and Main.

One really great winter bird during March was the **Red-breasted Nuthatch** reported by Andy Kratter on the 22nd. Given the rarity of that species in our area, this was likely the same bird Andy found in his yard last November.

Newnan's Lake continued to subside during the month, though the shorebird count fluctuated widely as the birds probably continued to pass back and forth between the lake and the prairie basin. John Hintermister found a good selection at the lakeshore on the 22nd, including several **Stilt Sandpipers** and two **Black-necked Stilts**. As my luck would have it, when I checked on the 24th, all I could come up with was a couple dozen Lesser Yellowlegs. Lloyd Davis made the trip two days later and found an abundance of **Yellowlegs**, **Dowitchers**, **Dunlin**, and **Least Sandpipers**, as well as a few **Pectoral Sandpipers**. Also notable at the lake was the increasingly regular presence of **White Pelicans**. A flock of over a hundred spent most of the winter on the prairie basin, but as the water levels there became unsuitable they chose to relocate to the somewhat deeper fishing grounds at Newnan's.

An Alachua Audubon trip to Cone's Dike on March 11 found the first **Louisiana Waterthrush** of the spring. Adam Kent and I found another the following day at San Felasco Hammock. Andy Kratter reported the first **Prairie Warbler** from his yard on the 22nd. Since then, **Northern Waterthrush**, **Hooded Warbler**, and **Ovenbird** have been tallied, as has **Swallow-tailed Kite**. By the time this issue of *The Crane* goes to print, birders will be combing Palm Point and Lake Alice for the first **Blackpoll** and **Cape May warblers**, and it won't be too early to check Bolen Bluff and the Hague Dairy for **Bobolink**. Keep an eye out for **Yellow-breasted Chat**, along the Bolen Bluff dike. They bred there a few years ago prior the the flooding of the basin and may try again now that water levels are back to "normal." Finally, don't neglect the magical shorebird spot at Newnan's. **Semipalmated Sandpipers** and **Plovers** are likely, and this could be the spring we get something really unusual, like...

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through March 30, 2000.



First *Springtime* Native Plant Sale at

Morningside Nature Center Saturday, April 8 — 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

- ✧ Native plants for sale from local growers
- ✧ Wildflower walks
- ✧ Herbal tea, books, food, bird nesting boxes
- ✧ Plant advisors
- ✧ Free craft activities for children
- ✧ Park a plant available

Co-sponsored by the Friends of Morningside and the Paynes Prairie Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, with assistance from the Gainesville Nature Operations Division.

God Bless the Gardener

I spend my spare hours
Growing crops, shrubs and flowers.
My tomatoes are unmatched for flavour.
Whilst tending the land,
With spade in my hand,
I gather the fruits of my labour.
I grow carrots and swedes,
Sow cuttings and seeds.
The scent of my roses just lingers.
With love and great care,
I tend all that is there.
Thank God for the land—
And green fingers!

*-Reprinted without permission
from an English coffee mug*



Swampland Alert

by John K. Mahon

Senate bill 1824 and House bill 1807, being considered in the State Legislature now, would steal from the people submerged lands that have been theirs ever since Florida became a state in 1845. These bills propose to turn submerged lands over to individuals and corporations for their profit. The recipients of this bonanza could exclude people from the shores of lakes and banks of rivers, and could drain wetlands in order to get at and cut down what few remaining domes of giant cypress are still standing.

When Florida entered the Union, the federal government transferred to it vast tracts of the public domain. Next in 1850 Congress passed the Swamplands Act. Florida was able to claim about 24,000,000 acres for its public domain. Under the common law, "swamp and overflow lands" are held in trust for the people by the government. They are known as sovereign lands.

The state sold off large chunks of its public lands with the understanding that submerged land remained sovereign land. The deeds did not mention these lands because of the understanding that they belonged to the people. Since 1908 the Florida Supreme Court has four times ruled that the titles stemming from the Swamplands Act did not include the submerged lands.

SB 1834 and HR 1807 are efforts to bypass the rulings of the Court and steal the public's land.

If this attempted grab annoys you, contact the primary sponsors: Senator Walter Campbell (850-487-5094) and Paula Dockery Representative from Polk County (950-488-4525). Senator George Kirkpatrick is a co-sponsor (352-377-3800).

BOOK REVIEW:

by Rex Rowan

John James Audubon: Writings and Drawings. 942 pp., 64 color plates. Library of America, 1999

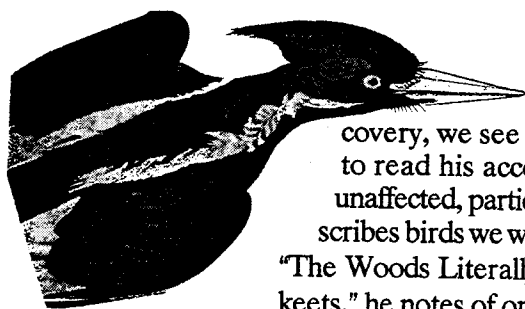
Since 1982 the Library of America has been publishing, in a handsome uniform edition, significant writings by Americans. Running the gamut from the strictly literary to military memoirs, political works, and histories, the 113 volumes so far issued also include — rather to my surprise — four volumes of natural history. Thoreau was to be expected in any collection of American books, of course, but also available are John Muir, William Bartram, and, now, Audubon.

Writings and Drawings includes the complete texts of his "Mississippi River Journal" of 1820-21 and his "Missouri River Journals" of 1843, significant excerpts from *Ornithological Biography* and "1826 Journal," a few miscellaneous writings, and a handful of letters. Taken together, they paint a vivid portrait of the man, and no less vivid a picture of the frontier in which he pursued his strange and beautiful dream.

The "Mississippi River Journal," written for his young son's future enjoyment, follows Audubon as he journeys by flatboat, keelboat, and steamboat from Cincinnati to New Orleans between October 1820 and December 1821. The frontier is not easy living. Hardships abound: "Nearly frozen, the Thermometer down at 22 — the ground very hard, and My being Without a Shirt — Made Me feel rather unpleasant" (throughout, Audubon's spelling is haphazard, his capitalization random, and his punctuation sporadic). Illness is everywhere. Squalor, if not the rule, is common. At New Madrid, Missouri, the inhabitants "are Clad in Bukskin pantaloons and a Sort of Shirt of the same, this is seldom put aside unless So ragged or so Blooded & Greased, that it will become disagreeable even to the poor Wrecks that bear it on — here family dicensions are at their Zenith, and to Kill a Neighbor is but Little More than a Kill Dear or a Raccoon." Tying up for the night opposite an island used by Indians, he and his fellow travelers "Load all our pieces." And at one bend in the river they find "2 dead Men Shot through the head Could Not burrie them their Stench was too Great."

But for Audubon the trip is worth the hazards, and





as he relates discovery after discovery, we see why. It is difficult to read his accounts and remain unaffected, particularly when he describes birds we will never see again. "The Woods Literally filled with Parakeets," he notes of one spot a few miles

below Memphis. "Saw some Ivory Billed Wood Peckers, these Birds allways go in Paires and When they Leave a Tree to fly to another they Sail and Look not unlike a Raven."

Audubon is poor, and he's left a wife and two children in Ohio. Landing in New Orleans, he drums up business to support both himself and his family — drawing lessons here, a portrait there. His struggles render him sardonic at times — "unfortunately Naturalists are obliged to eat and have some sort of Garb" — and melancholy at others — "Very Low of Spirits. Wished myself off this Miserable Stage." But he persists, makes both money and friends, and by the time his family joins him in New Orleans he has amassed an admirable portfolio of bird paintings and an impressive amount of knowledge.

The "1826 Journal" relates, in a breathless, headlong style, a visit to Great Britain to find support for his work. He is delighted with the English: "the well bred society of England is sublimity of Manners ... it is impossible to be more truly polite." One gathers the English were equally taken with him: "I was askd to Imitate the Wild Turkey call, and I did to the surprise of all the circle. hooted like a Barred Owl. and cooed like the dove ... they all appear very much surprised that I have no Wonderful Tales to relate — that for Instance I so much in the Woods have not been devoured at least 6 times by Tigers, Bears, Wolves, Foxes or — a rat."

The centerpiece of the book is the *Ornithological Biography*. From the massive original — it ran to five volumes — 45 species accounts have been excerpted, each tied to one or more of 64 color paintings. Spectacular and common birds predominate; there are no warblers and no sparrows. But the accounts are so filled with Audubon's curiosity and close observation, and so colorfully written, that they excite fresh attention to even the most abundant and frequently-encountered birds.

Of special interest are his descriptions of three extinct species, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker (which may *not* be extinct, if recent reports from Louisiana's Pearl River pan out), the Passenger Pigeon, and the Carolina Parakeet. Although we can no longer see these birds with our own eyes, we see them quite vividly with Audubon's. Circling towards a landing, a flock of Passenger Pigeons, "exhibits a beautiful appearance, as it changes its direction, now displaying a glistening sheet of azure, when the backs of the birds come

simultaneously into view, and anon, suddenly presenting a mass of rich deep purple." Writing of the depredations of the Carolina Parakeet, he describes a flock covering stacks of grain so completely, "that they present to the eye the same effect as if a brilliantly colored carpet had been thrown over them." The latter account contains the oddest bit of trivia I've seen in a long time: the Carolina Parakeet "is easily tamed by being frequently immersed in water." How did he find that out?

Lack of space precludes extended consideration of the other works, but "Missouri Journals" describes an 1843 trip upriver as far as the upper reaches of North Dakota to gather material for his lesser known collection of mammal portraits, *The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America*. Among the miscellaneous writings are a brief autobiography and two essays on his method of drawing birds. And the letters, chiefly to his collaborator the Rev. John Bachman and his long-suffering wife Lucy — who, although he addressed her as "My Dearest Friend," was a sort of ultimate golf widow — show him in all his humanity and selfishness. One letter shows him grieving for the fate of Creek warriors — "these once free owners of the Forest" — being escorted from their homes by soldiers: "Such a Picture as I hope I never will again witness in reality." In another he asks Lucy to "settle [their son John] at Louisville with whoever you think best" and join him in Europe. If she refuses, he says, "we probably never will meet again."

John James Audubon: Writings and Drawings is very easy to recommend. Few books published this year will offer so much to delight in, so much to discover. It is available at local bookstores — I know Borders had half-a-dozen copies the last time I looked — or directly from the Library of America, which is well worth investigating on its own merits. Check out the web site at www.loa.org.

Would You Like To Play A Part In Migratory Bird Conservation?

Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge needs experienced birders who would volunteer their time to help conduct the refuge's Breeding Bird Survey. Participants will venture into some of the most remote and natural locations along Florida's Nature Coast. Only an hour's drive from Gainesville, Lower Suwannee Refuge offers an expansive and diverse eco-system including bottomland hardwood forests, coastal and riverine habitats, and pine flatwoods. Participants will complete a series of point counts by identifying all the birds that are encountered at each point. A thorough knowledge of bird calls is essential, as most species will be identified by their call. Surveys will be conducted in the mornings, beginning shortly after sunrise from April 15 to June 15. For details call (352) 493-0238 from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mon.-Fri. or e-mail kendall_smith@fws.gov.

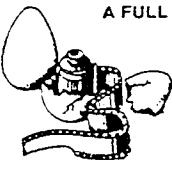
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 Vice-President.....Tom Webber 392-1721
 Secretary.....David Wahl 336-6206
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 Conservation Chair.....Michael Meisenburg

Birding Classes.....Kathy Haines 372-8942
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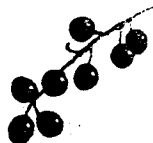
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The Crane

April 2000



Join Audubon

To join Audubon on 3 levels (National, Florida, and Alachua), fill in this application and mail to:

Paul Moler, 7818 Highway 346, Archer, Florida 32618

Check the level of membership desired and enclose your check payable to:

National Audubon Society

If you have any questions, call Paul at 495-9419.

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