



# The Crane

*Alachua Audubon Society*

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## WINTER FIELD TRIPS

### **Trip Cancelled! - Please Note!**

**Sunday, February 5, 7:00 AM**  
**Emeralda Marsh Wildlife Drive**

**Sunday, February 12, 8:00 AM**  
**Gum Root Park**

Gum Root Park is one of our best-kept local secrets. Field trip leader Rex Rowan has made this park a more regular stop lately and last year found Henslow's Sparrows in one of its fields. But before you get to the fields, you'll have an opportunity to explore the margins of a diverse hardwood swamp for flocks of wintering songbirds. Meet Rex at Powers Park on Hawthorne Road/SR 20. Trip difficulty: 2.

**Sunday, February 26, 8:00 AM**  
**Palm Point/Lakeshore Drive**

Meet trip leader Bob Carroll at Powers Park on Hawthorne Rd/SR 20 and caravan to Palm Point from there. Search the open waters of Newnan's

Lake for uncommon winter residents such as Common Loon or Horned Grebe while you find wintering warblers in the swamp canopy and wrens and a few sparrows along the water's edge.

Trip difficulty: 1

**Saturday, March 4 – SPECIAL EVENT**  
**Backwaters of Cedar Key with**  
**Captain Doug Maple**

**Limited to 6 participants** - Please call WBU [352-381-1997] to make a reservation. Captain Doug Maple of Cedar Key has developed a shorebird intensive boat tour of some of Cedar Key's remote coastal marsh. The trip is timed to coincide with tide levels that cause birds to concentrate in large numbers in certain predictable areas. Expect to see large numbers of shorebirds like Dunlin and Short-billed Dowitcher as well as American Avocet, Red Knot, Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Curlew, and Whimbrel. Cost is \$25/person. Second trip on Sunday if needed.

(Continued on page 6)

**Trip Difficulty 1)** =Most of trip is within easy access to the vehicle and/or walking on level terrain one mile or less. **2)** =Trip may involve walking on uneven terrain over one to two (1-2) miles. **3)** =Trip may involve elevation change, uneven terrain, and or distances greater than 2 miles.



### Alachua Audubon Society Website

**[www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/aud)**

Add it to your favorites and visit us for all the latest updates and/or changes for field trips and programs, as well as information on good birding spots in the area.

# *Around The County...* *By Bubba Scales*

On November 10, Chris Burney and Justyn Stahl kicked off a Hague Dairy sparrowfest when they found a flock of sparrows including three **Lincoln's** and a **Henslow's**. On the next day, Mike Manetz and Rex Rowan found one **LeConte's** in the same field and a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** near the office. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, Chris, Justyn, and I got to the field well before sunrise, worked the fields thoroughly, and were rewarded with two **LeConte's**, three **Henslow's**, six or more **Grasshoppers**, and one **Lincoln's Sparrow** among the multitudes of **Savannah** and **Swamp** and a few each **Song** and **White-crowned Sparrows**.

Meanwhile, Tim Spahr, a frequent visiting birder from Massachusetts, had found a county late-record **Cape May Warbler** at Palm Point and a county late-record **Yellow-breasted Chat** at the UF natural area on November 11. Tim's late chat was bested on December 18 when Adam Kent observed two individuals near Persimmon Point during the Christmas Bird Count. While Ingrid Scales and I were observing a **Black-throated Green Warbler** on private property along the north prairie

rim on December 9, John Hintermister was near the Sweetwater overlook on a different part of the prairie rim observing a flock of about nine **Vaux's Swifts**. In the weeks following John's initial observation, as many as 20 **Vaux's** were observed as late as January 5.

On November 19, Linda Hensley reminded us to be on the lookout for wintering ducks when she found a **Red-breasted Merganser**, four **Bufflehead**, one **Common Goldeneye**, and three **Ruddy Ducks** at Post Office Pond. Ron Robinson found a **Canvasback** at Chapman's Pond on December 11 and Pat Burns was one of several people to observe a **Snow Goose** around the county when she found one at the Dollar General pond on December 7.

Steve Daniels observed two **Red-breasted Nuthatches** along a tributary of Hogtown Creek

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*The 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.*

## Community Calendar

**Feb. 17-19:** Rally for the River; see article in the Crane

**Feb. 24-26:** Paynes Prairie P.S.P. Knap-In Festival; [www.prairiefriends.org](http://www.prairiefriends.org)

**Mar. 18:** Brasington's Boat Demo Day; all boats available to try out; call 372-0521 or visit [www.brasingtons.com](http://www.brasingtons.com) for more information

**Mar. 24-26:** 2nd Annual Audubon Academy; Eckert College  
[www.audubonofflorida.org](http://www.audubonofflorida.org)

**Mar. 25-26:** 16th Annual Kanapaha Spring Garden Festival;  
[www.kanapaha.org](http://www.kanapaha.org)

### Chapter Board Meetings



Alachua Audubon Society Board of Directors meets at 6:30 PM on the second Wednesday of each month. All members are welcome to attend. Meetings this year will be held at the clubhouse for Mill Pond, 401 NW 48th Boulevard, across from Gainesville Health & Fitness Center on Newberry Road.



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near NW 12<sup>th</sup> Road on January 12. The birds have not been observed again so don't pass off any canopy flocks as warblers, kinglets, and gnatcatchers without a second look. Thanks to all who submitted reports through January 15.

*The Crane* is published six times during the year. 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 or changes of address should be mailed to Paul Moler, Membership Chairman: see back page for address. Submissions to *The Crane* are welcomed. Please limit each article to no more than two pages per issue. *The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.



# Rally for the Rivers

February 17-19, 2006

Event Features Field Trips, Art Show, Music Festival, and  
Smart Growth Workshop

Join us for the second Rally for the Rivers, a three-day event to promote restoration of the Ocklawaha and St. Johns Rivers; increase environmental awareness; teach the principals of smart growth and empower activists.

Come interact with candidates running in the 2006 election and demonstrate the economic value of nature-based tourism in a festive and fun atmosphere.

Sponsored by the Putnam County Environmental Council, most events are free and all are open to the public. Scheduled events include:

**SMART GROWTH WORKSHOP:** Friday, February 17, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm. A free, all-day growth management workshop at the Riverfront Inn in Palatka. Space is limited; pre-registration is required. Call Margy Bielling at 352-685-2434 for more information.

**RIVERFEST:** Saturday, February 18, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm. Join other restoration and conservation advocates at Palatka's Riverfront Park on the St. Johns River for an arts and crafts show with live music, food, storytelling, conservation seminars, St. Johns River cruises, information tables, and a very special raffle. This will be your chance to speak one-on-one with candidates who are running in 2006 for state and federal offices. Contact Karen Ahlers at [pcecriver-rally@hotmail.com](mailto:pcecriver-rally@hotmail.com) or 352-546-3560.

**FIELD TRIPS:** Saturday and Sunday mornings, February 18-19: Over 50 field trips, mostly free and led by experts will be offered for adventurers of all types. Contact David Zeigler at [davidpzeigler@aol.com](mailto:davidpzeigler@aol.com) or 352-546-4715.

**OCKLAWAHA RIVER WRAP PARTY:** Sunday afternoon, February 19, 1:00 pm. Join event organizers, volunteers, and fellow Rally participants for a relaxing afternoon on the banks of the Ocklawaha on the southwest side of Rodman Dam for boat rides, music, food, and campfire fun.

Bring something to contribute to the soup pot or a dish for the table and your own drinks, a blanket or chair for comfort, binoculars, cameras, musical instruments....whatever it takes to help you wrap up the weekend and wind down.

Last year, the Rally brought 1,500 people from 34 Florida counties, seven states, and six countries. With the help of Audubon and other conservation organizations, PCEC successfully demonstrated that nature-based tourism does pay. PCEC calculated that the two-day event had an overall economic impact of up to \$288,000.

The Florida Wildlife Federation recognized the importance of the 2005 Rally by awarding PCEC Conservation Organization of the Year.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Riverfront Inn in Palatka. Call 386-328-3481 to make your reservations at the event rate of \$60-\$75, good through February 2, 2006. Be sure to mention the Rally to ensure the conference rate.

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Go to the Florida Defenders of the Environment website at [www.fladefenders.org/riverally.html](http://www.fladefenders.org/riverally.html) for more information, including lists of camping and dorm-style accommodations, area restaurants, and field trips. Participants are encouraged to sign up for field trips soon. The most popular trips tend to fill up fast. Hope to see you there!

# **Rally for the Rivers Smart Growth Workshop**

## **Attend a free workshop on growth, February 17, 2006 in Palatka**

Many of our most pressing environmental challenges are due in large part to the way we have built our neighborhoods, communities, and cities -- dispersed, inaccessible, and automobile-oriented; in a word, sprawling.

This and other related issues will be discussed in depth at an all-day workshop on growth management. Speakers include: Dom Nozzi, senior planner for the City of Gainesville. Dom will present on transportation issues and their relationship to the environment.

Harley Means, Florida Geological Survey Geologist. Harley will guide discussion on water quality and supply related to growth. For example, as we grow, we replace our natural landscape with streets, parking lots, rooftops, and other impervious surfaces.

Prior to development, the stormwater runoff was filtered and captured by natural landscapes. After development, it is trapped above impervious surfaces where it accumulates and runs off into streams, lakes, and estuaries, picking up pollutants along the way.

- Lesley Blackner is an environmental attorney and one of the principles in Florida Hometown Democracy, the constitutional amendment drive to amend the Florida Constitution to allow voters to vote on proposed comprehensive plan amendments.
- She will speak on charter governments and legal tools citizens can use to hold elected officials accountable. Public involvement and vigilance are critical components to keeping the light at the end of the tunnel burning.
- Jono Miller, Co-director Environmental Studies Program, New College, will conduct a discussion on conservation land initiatives, political action committees, and grassroots organizing.
- In the past few years, voters have overwhelmingly approved ballot measures to fund conservation land buying initiatives. Protection of open space provides fiscal benefits, including increasing local property value (and property tax bases), additional tourism dollars, and decreased local tax increases (by reducing the cost of new infrastructure).
- Protecting open space also ensures that prime farm and ranch lands are available, prevents flood damage, and provides a less expensive and natural supply for clean drinking water.
- Joyce Tarnow, Co-Founder of Floridians for Sustainable Growth. With Florida's population increasing by 1,000 every day, no river or wilderness habitat is safe. It is time to pull in the welcome mat and install some serious discouragements to this avalanche of population growth?
- There will also be a forum exploring the economics of nature-based tourism. As Florida's population increases and southern and coastal counties become more and more crowded, opportunities for folks to experience the peace and serenity of natural areas also increases.
- Nature-based tourism is a natural fit for economic development in rural Florida counties.
- PCEC and the Smart Growth Coalition of North Central Florida, co-sponsors of the workshop, encourage you to take advantage of this free opportunity. Space is limited and pre-registration is required. Please call Margy Bielling at 352-685-2434 for more information and to reserve your seat. Additional information is also available at [www.fladefenders.org/riverrally.html](http://www.fladefenders.org/riverrally.html).



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**Sunday, March 12, 8:00 AM**

**San Felasco Hammock Progress Park**

Meet trip leader Mike Meisenburg at the tag agency on NW 34<sup>th</sup> Street just south of US-441 (across from the old ABC Liquors). Don't forget the **\$2.00/vehicle access fee**. The grassy fields of the Progress Park entrance of San Felasco Hammock can host diverse flocks of sparrows including Grasshopper, Vesper's, Song, White-throated, Swamp, and Savannah. You'll also search the forested areas for wintering woodland species and early migrants. Trip difficulty: 2

**Saturday, March 18, 8:00 AM –**

**SPECIAL EVENT**

**La Chua Trail by canoe with Lars Andersen**

**Limited to 20 participants** - Please call WBU [352-381-1997] to make a reservation. Reclaim La Chua trail the only way you can – by boat! At all water levels and even in its absence, Paynes Prairie is Mecca for wildlife. There's a healthy alligator population and birding is always good, with more ducks than you're likely to see elsewhere in the county, a full roster of common wading birds, wintering songbirds, Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers, and other raptors. The Prairie's reputation for sur-

(Continued on page 7)

**►Next Crane  
Deadline...  
Mar. 19, 2006**

***Alachua Audubon Society  
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Alachua Audubon Society, as part of its education mission, will be mentoring scouts in obtaining merit badges pertaining to nature and conservation. The Boy Scouts of America has multiple troops in the greater Gainesville area, with hundreds of young members. Merit badge counselors are qualified volunteers in their field who act as mentors to interested scouts seeking to fulfill merit badge requirements. The AAS will assist the BSA by providing a list of members who will act as counselors and by presenting a short course (or series of short courses) aimed at helping scouts complete the merit badge requirements.



Merit badges to be potentially covered include: Bird Study, Forestry, Fish and Wildlife Management, Insect Study, Mammal Study, Nature, and Reptile and Amphibian Study. If you are interested in participating as a merit badge counselor and would like more information, please contact Emily Schwartz (hssess@aol.com; 372-0754) or Bruce Christensen (christensenb@mail.vetmed.ufl.edu; 392-4700 x4062). You may access the requirements for each merit badge by going to [www.meritbadge.com/mb/](http://www.meritbadge.com/mb/). This will be a great way to teach and recruit active, concerned Audubon members of tomorrow.

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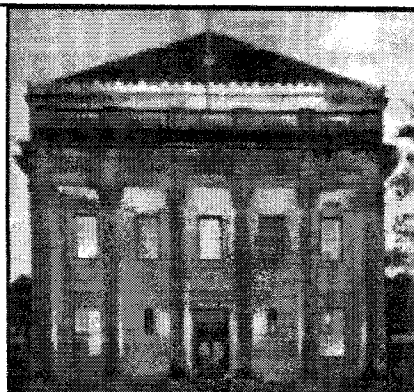
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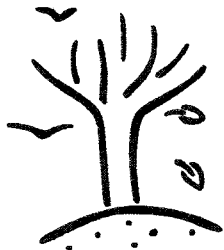


# Unusual Mortality of Red Bay (*Persea borbonia* (L.) Spreng.)

Albert E. Mayfield III,  
mayfiea@doacs.state.fl.us, Forest Entomologist,  
Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer  
Services, Division of Forestry

## INTRODUCTION:

In 2003, an unusually high incidence of red bay (*Persea borbonia* (L.) Spreng.) mortality was reported on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Since then, a similar phenomenon has been observed in coastal counties of Georgia and South Carolina, and most recently (spring 2005) on the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve in northern Duval County, Florida. Dying trees are characterized by wilted foliage, attacks by ambrosia beetles, and discolored sapwood from which an unidentified *Ophiostoma* sp. is routinely isolated (Fraedrich 2005). A new exotic ambrosia beetle, *Xyleborus glabratus* Eichhoff, is associated with the mortality in South Carolina and Georgia and may be detected in Florida eventually (Thomas 2005). Other species of native and previously-



established exotic ambrosia beetles are also associated with the dying trees. The reasons behind the geographic location of this phenomenon, the possible predisposing

factors, the means of transmission of the fungus, and the exact roles of certain ambrosia beetle species in the mortality scenario are currently not known.



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prise won't be a disappointment if a recently reported Golden Eagle sticks around. Canoes provided. Trip cost is \$35. Some profits go to AAS and Friends of Paynes Prairie.

## Saturday, April 1, 7:00 AM Ocala National Forest

Meet trip leader Bob Simons in the parking lot of the University of Florida Bookstore II (SW 34<sup>th</sup> St. and SW 20<sup>th</sup> Ave) for this locally legendary field trip to the Ocala National Forest. Bob presents the natural features of the forest from a broad ecological perspective. Expect to learn as much about plants and mammals as you do about birds. Avian highlights in the Ocala National Forest include Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Bachman's Sparrow, and the Florida Scrub-Jay. Pack water, a snack, and dress for exposure. Trip difficulty: 3



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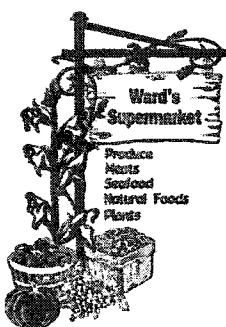
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## Ecology of Birds and Snakes on Gulf Coast Islands

Historically, Gulf Coast islands have provided important nesting refugia for thousands of wading birds, including pelicans, cormorants, ibis, herons and egrets. Cottonmouth snakes (*Agkistrodon piscivorus conanti*) inhabit these same islands where they are entirely terrestrial and scavenge on dead or rotting fish that are dropped or regurgitated by nesting birds. Unlike many other island systems in which birds and snakes associate, cottonmouths are not direct predators on the birds but depend on them for input of fish. Comparative studies of several islands within Florida's Cedar Keys suggest the relationship between nesting birds and snakes is one of mutualism. The birds provide carrion as a food subsidy for the snakes, while the snakes, in turn, appear to deter the establishment of predators on avian nests. Thus, on islands having large bird rookeries and numerous cottonmouths, there are no raccoons, no arboreal snakes, and introduced rats are less abundant than in areas without snakes.



**Dr. Harvey B. Lillywhite** earned his PhD at UCLA, held a postdoctoral fellowship at UC Berkeley, and is currently a Professor in the Department of Zoology at the University of Florida. He is also Director of the Seahorse Key Marine Laboratory, a small field station on one of the larger islands in the Cedar Keys. Dr. Lillywhite's research interests focus generally on the physiological and behavioral ecology of amphibians and reptiles, with emphasis on understanding adaptation of structure and function in integrative contexts relating to ecology, behavior and evolution. He is especially interested in the function of integument and cardiovascular systems, and he and his students have recently begun multiple projects on the ecology of mutualism between nesting sea bird colonies and island populations of cottonmouth snakes. Dr. Lillywhite has published over 200 research articles, abstracts and book chapters on a broad range of subjects. He has traveled extensively and conducted field research mostly in Australia, India, Fiji, the Philippines, Thailand, and other parts of Asia. He held a Fulbright fellowship for studies of tree frogs in India and has been a visiting lecturer and scientist at Australia, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and the NASA-Ames Research Laboratory in California. He presently serves on Editorial Boards for five international journals or book series, the Advisory Board of the Florida Institute of Oceanography, and is a member of the Executive Committee for the World Congress of Herpetology.



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## European Birding: The Thing I Like about Tits

By Bruce Christensen

Some of us (and we know who you are) emerged from the womb not crying, but imitating screech owls. The rest of us are converts. I'm a fairly recent convert. A dozen or so years ago, in my pre-birding life, I lived in Hungary. I can't remember specifically any of the birds except Rock Pigeons, White Storks, Ring-necked Pheasants, and some type of crow. I have never been back until a couple months ago, when I went over to lecture to students at the International Veterinary College in Budapest and the Royal Veterinary College in London.

I had a half-day lay-over in London during which I walked around Windsor in the Queen's gardens and along the Thames. The river was teeming with Mallards, Canada Geese, Black-headed Gulls, and Mute Swans, all begging for handouts from passers-by. I was instructed that the swans belonged, by royal decree, to the Queen and molesting or killing them was a royal offense. Though sorely tempted, I managed to refrain from swan-molestation. I noticed some different ducks holding back in the river that resembled something like a scaup or Ring-necked duck, but with a cow-lick. I was with my friend, Tai, who had her bird book (she was delighted to find out I was a "twitcher," as they call birders) and I identified my first lifer of the trip: Tufted Duck. Walking in the park, I heard a familiar voice in the trees off the path. I asked Tai what kind of chickadees they had and she laughed at me. Apparently there are no

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chickadees in Europe. And I guess it is a funny-sounding name. Chickadee. She told me they were tits. And then it was me who got to laugh. Of course, it makes sense, sort of. We've got titmice that are, along with chickadees and tits, in the Paridae family. In any case, I didn't actually get to see any tits at that time because they were off the path amongst the Queen's deer and there were "warders" driving around with bobby sticks in case any poachers (who would have guns, I'm guessing) tried to take any of the Queen's deer. Anyway, they wanted us to stay on the path.

Tai loaned me her twitching book and I was off to Hungary. My first stop was a city called Szombathely where I had some old friends to visit. The first snow-fall of the year awaited me and I was thrilled. Everyone kept apologizing to me, knowing I came from Florida, but I was so happy. I'm of Viking stock, and I miss the cold. We stopped in a city park where a large pond was partially covered in ice. In the open water areas, Eurasian Coots along with many ducks swam around, including more Mallards, Common Goldeneye, and a pair of Pochards. Then it was back to Budapest where I was to lecture.

In a weird way, I was a little eager to see House Sparrows in their native habitat (why does it feel so awkward to put it like that?). I read in the field guide that House Sparrows were assumed to be the most common bird in England (don't know about the rest of Europe) because they are so easy to see, but that, in fact, they were a distant third. The second most common was the Chaffinch, and the first most common was the Wren (which they just call "the Wren" since it's the only wren species they

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have; it is, in fact, the *Winter Wren*). I was a little surprised to read that since I've chased around Winter Wrens with some vigor in Florida for the last two years without seeing one yet. This knowledge about relative commonalities made me very careful about identifying House Sparrows, since they have a passing similarity to Chaffinches (to a colorblind eye, such as mine). In truth, they're quite different, but I still laughed at myself when I caught myself intently studying House Sparrows, just to be sure. The House Sparrow wasn't the only American pest I got to see in its "native habitat;" European Starlings were there, too. But even in Europe, in their native land, both the sparrow and starling were essentially parking lot birds. Before leaving Budapest, I was able to put two names to the birds I had just written off as "crow sp." 12 years ago: the Rook and the Carrion Crow.

Back to London, I gave my lecture the evening I arrived and then hopped a train out of London to Marlow, where Tai and her family live. In the morning, Tai asked if I was keen to go into London and see Big Ben and the Buckingham Palace, etc. I looked out her window into her little English garden with all her bird-feeders and into the large patches of forest behind the garden. "Actually, I'd rather do some twitching and maybe see some new birds." This made her happy because she didn't have to bundle up her two small children (the "squabs," as she calls them) on a drizzly, gray, wintry day. The only thing that sounded really tempting was seeing the Ravens at the Tower of London. They are hand-fed by their own, private "Raven Master" who also clips their wings to keep them from flying away, since it is believed that if the

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Ravens leave, the tower will fall and the monarchy with it. And then what would that mean to the Commonwealth?? So, even though I unashamedly count the Whooping Cranes at Joe Overstreet on my state list, and would sure as heck count a California Condor at the Grand Canyon on my life list, even a villain such as I can't justify counting hand-fed birds with clipped wings (not when they can be seen elsewhere, anyway). Still, they'd be fun to see. More fun than an old clock. But we didn't go. I'd have to save that for the next trip.

Instead, we took a walk in the rainy woods. Once the rain cleared up, and the squabs and the dog had gone home with Tai, leaving me alone, the birds began to make their introductions. In the course of a few hours, I made the acquaintance of many new birds. This is where I discovered one of the things I really like about tits: just like their counterparts in the States, they are often the easiest members of a feeding flock to find. Finding the tits, I was often treated to other birds, such as the Goldcrest and Tree-creeper. My first view of the Goldcrest was just a glimpse of its belly above me in the trees among the tits. Its minute size is what caused me to guess it was a Goldcrest (the guide says it's the smallest bird in Europe). My second view was a full frontal (of the Goldcrest, not the tits) and was confirmatory. When looking straight at you, the guide describes it as "cute," and indeed it is with its peppercorn eyes and thin mustache stripe that makes it look like it is pouting. The tits themselves were fun to watch and pretty little birds. All in all, I saw 4 tits in Europe, and the first tits were Great Tits (don't take that out of context), then Blue Tit, Coal Tit,

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and Long-tailed Tit. Other birds of my woodland walk included the Common Kestrel, Bullfinches, Redwing, and *the* Wren. Back at Tai's place, feeder-watching, we saw (European) Robins (Britain's national bird), Greenfinches, (Common) Blackbirds, (Common) Magpie, and the enormous Wood Pigeons. Circling frequently overhead we could see the Red Kites, reintroduced from populations in Spain after eradication in England years ago.

Leaving the next day for the airport, as we drove out of Tai's driveway, a falcon flew in front of the car and landed on the chimney of a neighboring cottage. Tai stopped abruptly and I jumped out with my binos. Peregrine Falcon. Good bye and good bye. What a trip! Flying back across the pond, I reflected on Thomas Hardy's poem *The Bullfinches*, and was glad I'd finally gotten around to taking this long-overdue journey:

Brother Bulleys, let us sing  
From the dawn till evening!—  
For we know not that we go not  
When to-day's pale pinions fold  
Where they be that sang of old.

With a one day stop-over in New York City to see friends, I brought along with me their first real snow storm of the year. I got up early and walked into Central park to bird around there. What a thrill to be in Central Park with everything covered in a blanket of white! I miss that. I saw many of the usual northern winter suspects: Blue Jays, White-throated Sparrows, Red-bellied and Downy woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Canada Geese, Mallards, Buffleheads, Dark-eyed Juncos, and then I saw the White-breasted Nuthatch and I knew it was time to quit.

We've all had the experience, as "twitchers," of going to a new place and feeling the thrill of seeing multiple new birds, many of them common to the area. It's something that, as a birder, makes every visit to a new place bring an added excitement that non-birders miss. I remember, still, the thrill of my first cardinal when I visited Indiana at the age of 25.

Having lived always in the West and Northwest, I'd never had the pleasure. I've spoken with Brits who have expressed the same excitement at seeing the redbird over here, that same bird that makes us bite our tongues to keep from saying, "Oh, it's just another..." My brief, winter business trip to Budapest and London gave me a list of 30 species, and all but 9 were life birds. I did not uncover any birds that would have turned any local twitcher's head (except for perhaps the Red Kite, which is locally common, kind of like seeing a Crested Caracara at Joe Overstreet). It was the equivalent of one of them coming here and submitting a list of titmice, chickadees, cardinals, Sandhill Cranes, Chipping Sparrows, Black Vultures, Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-rumped warblers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. But those are all great birds. And I'm eager for my return trip next year (they invited me back!) because there are still a lot of locally common birds I missed this time around. I've still got to look for the Song Thrush, Green Woodpecker, Great-spotted Woodpecker, and, oh, the Ravens at the King's tower.

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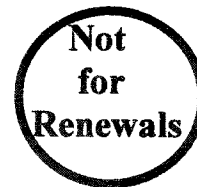
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