



# The Crane

## *Alachua Audubon Society*

Volume 48 Number 2 October-November 2006

### October & November Field Trips

**Saturday, October 7, 8:00 AM**

#### **Split Rock Park**

Meet Mike Manetz at Kash-n-Karry on SW 34th St. to look for migrants along the Hogtown Creek Sink. Trip difficulty: 2

**Sunday, October 8, 8:00 AM**

#### **Palm Point**

Meet Bob Carroll at Powers Park. Migratory birding at a local classic migrant trap. Trip difficulty: 2

**Saturday, October 14, 8:00 AM**

#### **Bolen Bluff Trail**

Meet Steve Hofstetter and Maralee Joos at Bolen Bluff for a trip through the area's classic fall warbler hotspot. Trip difficulty: 2

**Sunday, October 15, 8:30 AM**

#### **Hart Springs**

Meet Rex Rowan at Kash-n-Karry on SW 34th St. Boardwalk birding along a Suwannee spring run at the peak of songbird migration. \$2/person entry fee. Trip difficulty: 1

**Saturday, October 21, 8:00 AM**

#### **Chastain-Seay County Park**

Meet Becky Enneis at the Tag Agency on NW 34th St. near Hwy 441 for shoulder season birding into the broad floodplain of the Santa Fe River. Trip difficulty: 2

**Sunday, October 22, 6:30 AM**

#### **Cedar Key**

Meet Rex Rowan in the Target parking lot

for a day trip for late songbird migrants, shorebirds, and seabirds at one of Florida's best birding spots. Trip difficulty: 2

**Saturday, November 4, 8:00 AM**

#### **River Rise State Park**

Meet Mike Manetz at O'Leno State Park for a hike along the deep floodplain and cypress strands of the River Rise. \$4/vehicle entry fee. Trip difficulty: 2

**Saturday, November 11, 7:00 AM**

#### **Hamilton County Mines**

NOTE: FULL DAY TRIP! No early departures! Meet an Audubon leader at the Tag Agency on NW 34th St. near Hwy 441 and caravan to White Springs. Explore a series of freshwater impoundments for ducks and their margins for sparrows. Trip difficulty: 2

**Saturday, November 18, 8:00 AM**

#### **LaChua Trail**

Meet park ranger Howard Adams at the gate to LaChua trailhead. Don't be late! The gate is shut and locked when Howard leads the group through. Look for wintering flycatchers, sparrows, raptors, and other winter prairie residents. Trip difficulty: 2

**Saturday, November 25, 8:00 AM**

#### **Hague Dairy**

Meet Mike Meisenburg at the Tag Agency on NW 34th St. near Hwy 441 and caravan to one of the county's best spots for migrant sparrows. Trip difficulty: 1

**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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***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.***

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. *The Crane* is printed on recycled paper.

**Deadline for  
Dec.-Jan. Crane:  
Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>**



With no fronts or tropical events to bring anything like a fallout, birders generally had to work pretty hard to earn their fix of warblers. Ron Robinson started us off with our first **Yellow Warbler** at Palm Point on July 18. Howard Adams and Barbara Mollison found

over a dozen yellows plus several **Prairie Warblers** on August 20. **Louisiana Waterthrushes** continued through August at San Felasco Hammock but Alice Reakes may have found the best way to see them. As she kayaked the Santa Fe River near River Rise she counted over twenty of them along the banks. I stumbled upon two **Kentucky Warblers** along the south loop at San Felasco Millhopper on August 11. *There is a wonderful new extension to the south loop at San Felasco that winds through some relatively steep terrain, beautiful woodlands, and past a large sink, nearly doubling the length of the south loop.*

While warblers tended to be scarce at Bolen Bluff, a flurry of **Cerulean Warbler** sightings there attracted a crowd of birders. I found an adult female at the far end of the loop on August 16. In days that followed, Judy Bryan and others reported up to three Ceruleans from the first section of the trail. Geoff Parks reported the first **Blue-winged Warbler** of the fall from Loblolly on August 23. Since then they were fairly regular at Newnans and Lakeshore Drive. The first **Golden-winged Warbler** was a little late this year, with the first spotted September 9 by Bob Wallace at San Felasco Hammock. Also September 9, Dave Beatty scored a 14-warbler day at Palm Point, which included the first reports of **Tennessee, Magnolia, and Black-throated Blue Warblers**, plus a bonus **Peregrine Falcon**.

Perhaps the most interesting non-warbler sighting was a state early record of **Black-billed Cuckoo** found by Robert Norton August 18 in his yard. A report at the end of July from Longleaf Flatwoods that Robert Cavalieros had seen a **Red-cockaded Woodpecker** caused quite a stir. Unfortunately, several attempts to re-locate the bird were unsuccessful. This would be the first Alachua County Red-cockaded since 1997. Pat Burns found a **Hairy Woodpecker** on August 20 at O'Leno State Park. It was the first such sighting in the county in over two years. Andy Kratter picked out five Bank Swallows in a large flock of Barns flying over his yard on August 23. Rex Rowan had the only report of **Black Terns** this fall, four birds

*continued on page 3*

August 16 at Newnans Lake. While walking along Hogtown Creek flood plain north of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue on July 16, Michael Meisenburg flushed an **American Woodcock**. The status and distribution of American Woodcock in our county is something of a mystery. While they are regular winter visitors, their breeding status remains unclear. So, a sighting during breeding season like Michael's is all the more intriguing. We had an early record for **Rufous Hummingbird**, with one appearing August 20 in Ruth Palenik's yard. The first real influx of **Veeries** didn't occur until about September 8. **Scarlet Tanager** was right on time, however, with Bob Carroll and Becky Enneis spotting one September 9 at San Felasco Hammock.

With a drought punctuating August, normally our biggest month for fall shorebird migration, we had high hopes for places like the Hague Dairy lagoon. **Spotted, Solitary**, and small numbers of **Least Sandpipers** were regular at the Hague Dairy lagoon through August along with cameo appearances by individual **Pectoral, Semipalmated** and **Western Sandpipers**. But the big shorebird show took place at Lake City's Alligator Lake Preserve. On August 24, Rex Rowan responded to a report from Verlyn Willis that a large number of shorebirds were gathering in the drying lake bottom. Rex found a rare **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** and a **Great White Heron** (a color morph of Great Blue Heron that breeds only in the Keys). In the days that followed, Pat Burns, John Hintermister, and others reported large numbers of peeps, including Western and Semi-palmated, Pectoral, and **Stilt Sandpipers** in double digits, and goodies like **Wilson's Phalarope**, **Sanderling**, and **American Avocet**.


By the time you read this, fall migration will still have some wind but as November rolls around, it will be in the record books. Then, it will be time to scout more open areas for stray flycatchers such as **Least, Ash-throated**, and **Scissor-tailed**, and **Western Kingbird**. And remember we had a beautiful male **Vermilion Flycatcher** on Payne's Prairie Basin last winter. Vermilions hold a remarkable loyalty to

wintering territories. By late November, Chapman's Pond can be loaded with ducks and anything can show up at places like the Post Office, Red Lobster, and Home Depot retention ponds. November will also be peak time for blackbirds at the Hague Dairy, and your best chance for **Yellow-headed Blackbird**. Also in November, the fields around the Dairy can be alive with incoming sparrows. That's a whole 'nuther story...

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through September 10 2006.


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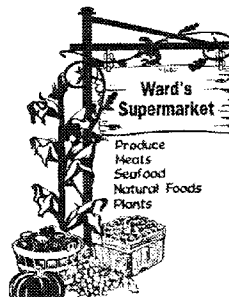
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Alachua Audubon Society will be selling organically grown Christmas trees and wreaths as a fund raiser. Artificial trees, made with metal and plastic, last an average of 6 years in your home but last an eternity in the landfill. Real trees are biodegradable and, if grown responsibly, contribute to a thriving ecosystem. Many farms are located on land that was pasture or fallow, thus are not supplanting existing forest and offer excellent edge habitat.

But not all trees are as green as they appear. Most farms use an arsenal of fertilizers, insecticides, and fungicides to encourage the trees to form a perfect, storybook shape. Those chemicals seep into local watersheds, affecting people and wildlife. In addition, trees may have been treated just prior to cutting, bringing the chemicals right into your home. Organically grown trees and wreaths are cultivated without the use of toxic chemicals.

Our source farm in Virginia is within its local Christmas Bird Count circle, reporting such species as Pine Siskin, Red Crossbill, Brown Creeper, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Ruffed Grouse. To see the farm and the tree species grown there, visit: <http://www.swva.net/tbd/>.

The number of trees is limited so we must have your order by **October 15<sup>th</sup>**. To order:



Size	4'-5'	5'-6'	6'-7'	7'-8'	8'-9'	9'-10'
Douglas Fir	\$39	\$43	\$50	\$54	\$64	\$94
Blue Spruce	\$39	\$43	\$50	\$54	N/A	N/A
Fraser Fir	\$49	\$56	\$64	\$73	\$85	\$113
Undecorated 18" wreath			\$32			
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- Send an email before **October 15<sup>th</sup>** with your order, name and phone number to: **AASChristmas-trees@hotmail.com** (no email? Call 373-6598)
- We will contact you to give you payment information.
- Orders must be picked up at Harmony Gardens (Greenery Square on Newberry Rd.) on **December 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>**.
- Call Bruce Christensen at 373-6598 with any questions.



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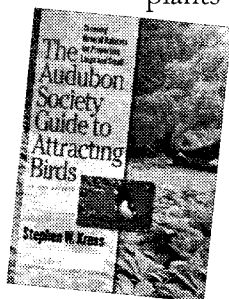
**Book Review: The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition**

By Stephen W. Kress

Cornell University Press, 2006, 466 pp, \$24.95

Review by Bruce Christensen

A book about "creating natural habitats for properties large and small," individual chapters are devoted to backyard habitats, forest, grassland, scrubland, and wetland management, nesting structures, feeding birds, plant selection (with a strong bias towards native species, including only a few non-invasive exotics with a well-demonstrated value for wildlife), and conservation tips. Kress discusses the effects of edge versus interior habitat, cavity trees and snags, building appropriate water sources from birdbaths to backyard pools to very large ponds. He discusses minimum acreage necessary of each type of habitat for effective preservation of different species, with an emphasis on declining species. General principles for bird house construction are given along with dimensions appropriate for over 30 species and exact plans for many of these. Kress suggests habitat modifications that favor non-cavity nesters.



In each ecosystem chapter Kress describes about a dozen plants that are excellent for wildlife food or cover. In another chapter he divides the United States into 5 regions and offers further suggestions for (mostly) native plants appropriate for each of these regions.

For each plant he delineates its value for wildlife, mature size, soil type, light requirements, fruiting period and type, and best growing zones. For the southeastern states, for example, he discusses in some depth 16 species, and lists the pertinent information in chart form for 102 more species.


While overall I loved the book and highly recommend it, I did find a few weaknesses. The book contains scattered use of references. Much of the information Kress backs with data from studies, but he only includes the references for those studies sporadically. At times Kress offers a taste when what I want from him is a feast. This pertains to the charts describing plants instead of a fuller text description, as well as useful lists of websites that are far from comprehensive. Kress shows, not surprisingly being from New York, a bias towards eastern plants and bird species. The few faults I find are sins of omission, not commission. I loved what Kress supplied; I just wanted more of it. The second edition is much expanded from the first; perhaps the third will be even bigger and better. But don't wait for that. Bottom line: best bird landscaping book out there. You can get a copy locally at Wild Birds Unlimited or Goerings Book Store.

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## CRANES, CRABS & THE GUADALUPE

Federal protection programs apparently aren't all they could be. That was one message from a recent excursion we made aboard the *Wharf Cat*, a 120 foot touring vessel out of Rockport, Texas. Our destination was the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge where we hoped to observe a few wintering Whooping Cranes. The cranes were in residence and seemed not at all wary of our boat. We came across around 20 of the birds, gathered into family groups. Whoopers, unlike Sandhill Cranes, do not assemble in large flocks. According to on-board naturalist, Ray Little, the Whooping Crane population has "soared" past 200 individuals. It's the largest number seen since the days when there was a legitimate fear this species would become extinct. But a threat that the current protection programs hasn't been able to adequately address is lurking on the horizon.

The birds' winter diet at the refuge consists mainly of juvenile blue crabs. There are plenty of crabs for now, but juvenile blue crabs require brackish water. As Little explained, the crabs' most comfortable level of salinity is

about half that of seawater. If the water becomes more salty the crabs leave or just die. An increase in saltiness at the refuge is a distinct possibility. The main stabilizer of the refuge salt regime is the Guadalupe River. It's inflow into the refuge maintains the ideal level of salt both for crabs and for cranes. In recent years, coastal Texas has received more than a normal amount of rainfall, compensating for decreased river flow. Agriculture and industry is reducing the Guadalupe to a much lower than normal level. These forces have so reduced the flow of the Rio Grande that this river at times doesn't even reach the Gulf of Mexico. So, wildlife officials are worried about the inevitable return of drought conditions, during which the waters of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge will see an increase in salt content. The interconnectedness of all of this is woefully familiar to biologists and others who concern themselves over the fate of the world's plants and animals. Salt levels rise, crabs disappear, cranes are left with an inadequate food supply on their wintering grounds. Malnourished cranes are more vulnerable both on their winter range and as they begin their long mi-

*continued on page 7*

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gration to Canada in the spring. Could it happen? According to Ray Little, the possibility cannot be discounted.

This possible tragedy to the Aransas cranes makes all the more important the efforts to establish a second population of these magnificent birds here in Florida. In spreading the risk, you dilute the danger of extinction. We should do whatever is necessary to postpone the day of reckoning for North America's largest bird.

Dana & Nancy Griffin

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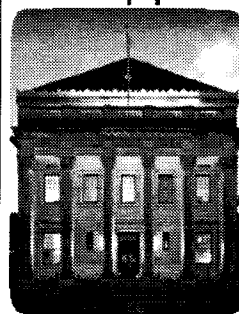
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## Save the Date: AAS Holiday Party

From 7 to 9 PM on **December 8<sup>th</sup>**, AAS will host a holiday party at Goerings Books Store. Goerings will donate a portion of all purchases that evening back to the chapter. Eat and drink, visit with other Audubon members, and bid at the silent auction featuring wares from local artisans and businesses. To donate an item or service to be auctioned, please contact Helen Warren (377-7755). To contribute a food item, please contact Susan Sommerville (378-2808). More details to come in the December *Crane*.

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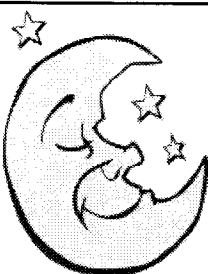
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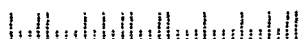
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October-November 2006



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