



The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society
Volume 48 Number 6 June - July 2007

President's Report

Success is inspiring. After local scouts built 100 American kestrel nesting boxes with AAS, inspired Scoutmaster Skip Ingley asked if we would be interested in another nestbox building venture. The issue was discussed at the September AAS board meeting where it was decided that a Phase II sounded like a good idea. Eastern bluebirds were deemed the logical choice because similar habitat requirements to the kestrels would make finding installation sites for boxes easier. As he did for the kestrel box program, Bob Simons offered to provide the box design and to mount the boxes in the field. Bob calculated that it would cost \$600 for the materials required to make 100 boxes, and we applied for a grant from Audubon of Florida.

Three weeks ago AoF awarded AAS \$300 for the program. Alachua Audubon Society will cover the remaining cost. While Skip's scouts will soon begin constructing boxes, we are already in the midst of bluebird nesting season. However, eastern bluebirds may raise 2-3 broods a year and lay eggs through early summer. We hope to begin getting boxes up while they are still nesting. Some of our kestrel boxes had pairs of birds move in within hours. We hope to experience the same level of success. If all goes well, maybe we'll get another call from Skip asking about a Phase III.

Michael Meisenburg

2007-2008 Officers and Members to the Board of Directors

We were able to mix social and business activities at our spring end of the year pot luck, hosted again by Howard Adams and Barb Mollison. The food is always good, the company pleasant and entertaining, and the election of officers and members to the board went without a snag.

The leadership of the chapter will come with Michael Meisenburg as President, Bob Carroll as Vice President, Susan Sommerville as Secretary, and Dotty Robbins as Treasurer. Continuing on the Board of Directors will be Peter Ames, Kathy Haines, Marcy Jones, Phil Laipis, Cecelia Lockwood, Craig Parenteau, Stacy Porvasnek, Rex Rowan, Emily Schwartz, Bob Simons, Leslie Straub, and Alice Tyler. New members to the BoD will be Adam Kent, Geoff Parks, and Michael Drummond.

During the summer we will be getting together to plan field trips, discuss program ideas, and organize various interests so that we can provide you, the members, with many options to support birding and conservation goals.

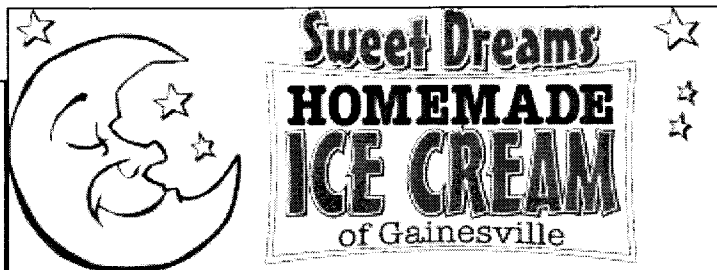
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and to promote sustainable
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**Deadline for
Aug-Sept Crane:**



Spring migration, as we experi-
ence it in central Florida, is gen-
erally pretty dull compared to
coastal areas. This spring was
quite an exception, though
things started slowly. Normally,
our first migrant warbler to pass
through is Louisiana Water-
thrush, but no one seems to
have reported one. Bob Wallace
helped make up for that with a

new early record March 30 for **Worm-eating Warbler**. At San Fe-
lasco Hammock April 8, I found the first **Northern Waterthrush** of
the season, plus at least five **Hooded Warblers**. Things started to pop
by mid-April. Peter Polshek reported a **Scarlet Tanager** April 12
from Bolen Bluff. The following day Ron Robinson had a **Redstart**
in his yard, and new-birder-in-town Jimmy Edmondson found two
Redstarts, a **Blackpoll** and a **Black-throated Blue Warbler** at Palm
Point. The next day he added two **Cape May Warblers** at Powers
Park.

The real show came the weekend of April 21-22. Most of our typical
migrant warblers continued to be seen in a measured way, but other
migrants such as orioles, grosbeaks, and buntings literally carpeted our
area in numbers not seen in a decade or more. Feeder watchers were
particularly delighted, as Bubba Scales of Wild Birds Unlimited re-
ceived at least forty phone reports of multiple **Rose-breasted Gros-
beaks** from back yard feeders. **Indigo Buntings** appeared in huge
numbers, and even **Painted Buntings** seemed more common than
usual. Linda Hensley's yard led the pack with eight Rose-breasted
Grosbeaks, four **Blue Grosbeaks**, seven **Baltimore Orioles**, two
Scarlet Tanagers, a Painted Bunting, and over forty Indigo Bun-
tings. Michael Meisenburg reported over twenty Indigo Buntings. My
yard had four Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, a Painted Bunting, and sev-
eral Indigo Buntings. In addition, many yards also had lingering
American Goldfinches in breeding plumage, adding to the display of
avian finery.

The same weekend produced good results in the field. An Audubon-
led trip to San Felasco Hammock tallied thirteen warbler species, a
Veery and two **Swainson's Thrushes** (both rare here in spring), a
Wood Thrush, a **Broad-winged Hawk**, and good numbers of In-
digo Buntings and Blue Grosbeaks.

Things returned to normal the last weekend of the month with spo-
radic warbler sightings: a Cape May here, a Blackpoll and a Redstart
there. Linda Holt had a pretty good morning May 4 in her Newberry
neighborhood, with four Redstarts, one Black-throated Blue and two
Worm-eating Warblers. Perhaps the most outstanding individual bird
sighting this spring came April 29 from Phil Laipis and Barbara Shea.
Lingering after an Alachua Audubon field trip at Lake Alice, Phil and

Barbara found a **Black-billed Cuckoo** out in the open in good light for several minutes. I believe this is the first spring sighting of that species in at least ten years.

There were a few unusual sightings of winter birds. Bubba Scales scored a new late record when he reported a **Golden-crowned Kinglet** in his yard March 27. John Martin found Five **Canada Geese** at Post Office pond April 12. Whether these were wild or domestic is anyone's guess. Mary Landsman found an **Audubon's race Yellow-rumped Warbler** April 18 while birding Dudley Farm. Technically "just another Yellow-rump," the Audubon's version is very rare here, and most people consider it more "attractive" than our eastern Yellow-rumps.

At the time of this writing, drought conditions have set in, and many local bodies of water have all but dried up. Alachua Lake on Payne's Prairie basin still had contracting water, which attracted numerous waders, nearly three hundred **White Pelicans** and a small number of shorebirds. Rex Rowan reported a few **Black-necked Stilts**, yellowlegs, and smattering of peeps April 23, along with our first **Bobolinks** of spring. At the dairy, water in the silo pond is rapidly disappearing, along with the nice little cattail marsh. Apparently the management is re-directing runoff from the barns, leaving the pond high and dry. There was, however, a mini-fallout of **Solitary Sandpipers** at the dairy on April 22. I counted twenty of them between the settling ponds and the lagoon.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through May 5, 2007

Umber Feather

Mist ascending in the dawn,
rising from the sparkling dew,
echoes forth a poignant call,
"Co-o-o—coo—coo—coo."

Sweet...so low...this somber drone,
flowing through the filtered light,
making known a nesting place,
safely hidden out of sight.

Light umber-gray, the feathers,
muted to protect her brood,
adorn a body, sleek and strong,
designed to forage for their food.

Tenderly she nuzzles
both hatchlings in the nest,
then swiftly flies across the fields
to satisfy her native quest.

Dark eyes intensely searching,
for the choicest seeds below,
fail to sense the savage hawk,
poised to strike a fatal blow.

The impact to the hapless dove
sends feathers flying in a burst.
The raptor, savoring his prey,
hungrily settles to the turf.

Umber feathers in a clump,
witness to the mournful tale
of this cataclysmic scheme
for aggressors to prevail.

—James Minick

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SHOREBIRDING AT CAPE MAY

If a face could launch a thousand ships, a feat apparently pulled off by one Helen of Troy, could a picture launch a birding expedition of over a thousand miles? We have no way of independently confirming Helen's prowess, but we do know that a picture included in Brian Harrington's marvelous book, *The Flight of the Red Knot*, moved us to schedule a trip all the way to Cape May, New Jersey to see things for ourselves. The picture in question shows a sandy Cape May beach, crowded with hundreds of red knots, ruddy turnstones, dunlins, and semipalmated sandpipers, all in gorgeous breeding plumage, all gorging themselves on horseshoe crab eggs. As impressive as the picture is, it comes with a dire warning. The red knot is in trouble. Numbers are way down. Though incredible as human fare, horseshoe crabs are being harvested to trap and feed eels which can be marketed. This activity is reducing a vital resource required by the long distance migrants. No one is sure how much longer beach scenes like that which we encountered in Harrington's book will be repeated. The prospect of our living during the final stages of the red knot phenomenon (Cape May natives wouldn't hesitate to use such a word) and yet passing up the chance to see it for ourselves was too much. We had to go.

Birding at Cape May is nothing if not organized, not entirely surprising at one of the premier birding sites in North America. We were directed to the Cape May Birding Observatory Nature Store. It resembled, in part, a military duty roster room. You tell one of the volunteers what you've come to see, birdwise, and you're given a detailed map and a set of marching orders: go to this beach or that, do not fail to be there at the stated hour, and be alert! Well, it worked. We were

directed to Cook's Beach, not far from Cape May, and we arrived in plenty of time, finishing off a large mug of coffee to insure that alertness would not be a problem. At first only a few red knots were present, but soon they started pouring in, first by the dozens, then in flocks of a hundred or more. A federal wildlife official we spoke to said these numbers have not been seen in several years. There's increasing room for hope that this beautiful shorebird will beat the odds. Help is coming in several forms. Forging beaches are cordoned off – strictly for the birds and the crabs – New Jersey and Delaware have passed new legislation regulating the crab harvest. What forces are propelling this action can be debated. It may be genuine concern for the birds or it may also be a recognition by local authorities that in these feathered migrants they have a golden goose. Birders pour hundreds of thousand of dollars into state economies. The great cod banks are gone. Wild salmon are in serious trouble. Maybe the powers that control the shorelines and other habitats frequented by migrating birds are having second thoughts before letting these resources go down the drain as well. We certainly hope so. Here are a couple of web sites for those interested in getting connected: www.cmbo.org or www.nj Audubon.org

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AAS to Sponsor Costa Rica Birding Tour

Alachua Audubon Society is sponsoring a two-week birding tour of Costa Rica in March or April of 2008. Exact dates will be determined this August to accommodate the availability and preferences of the participants. The itinerary has been prepared by Holbrook Travel with the assistance of trip leader and AAS board member Dr. Peter Ames. An experienced Costa Rican ornithologist will co-lead.

The 500-acre rainforest reserve surrounding Holbrook Travel's own La Selva Lodge will be one of the several areas visited during the AAS tour. Others include Villa Lapas in the dry forest of the Pacific Coast, La Enseñada Lodge, known for both forest and wetland ecosystems, Arenal Observatory Lodge near an active volcano, Caño Negro Natural Lodge near Caño Negro wetlands, the Savegre Mountain Hotel, famous for the Quetzal Research Center; and the Hotel Chalet Tirol near the Braulio Carrillo National Park.

Costa Rica has long been a Mecca for birders seeking high counts of tropical species. The country boasts about 830 species and tour counts of 375-400 species are not uncommon.

Costa Rica is famous as the Central American country that led the preservation of rain forest, with 30 national parks and wildlife reserves. Moreover, Costa Rica has dedicated sufficient resources to park management that poaching and illegal cutting have been held to a minimum.

The trip will cost \$2150 to \$2500 per person without airfare including a small donation to AAS. Air tickets will be available through Holbrook for about \$625-675, but some participants may wish to make their own arrangements. The trip cost will include all lodging, food, and transportation in-country.

Participation is limited to eleven with a minimum of seven. Your expressed interest will hold your spot but a non-refundable deposit (about \$200) will be required by September 1. If necessary, we will open the trip to other Audubon Chapters and the general public on September 1. To reserve a spot or for more information, e-mail or call Lisa Palmese at Holbrook Travel (lisa@holbrooktravel.com, 352/377-7111) or Peter Ames (peterl_ames@bellsouth.net, 352/367-4639).

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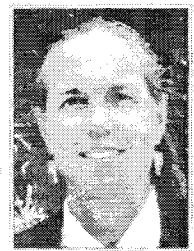
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The Crane
June - July 2007

THE HAWK IS DYING

"The Hawk Is Dying" is based on a 1973 novel by Harry Crews, a UF writing instructor and a well-respected writer of Southern Gothic fiction. The filmmakers spent most of November and December 2004 in and around Gainesville, shooting at Paynes Prairie State Preserve, Rainbow Springs State Park, and residential and commercial locations in north-west Gainesville. The movie stars Paul Giamatti, well known for his recent roles in "Sideways" and "Cinderella Man," along with up-and-coming actors Michael Pitt and Michelle Williams. George Gattling (Giamatti) finds little fulfillment as an auto upholsterer, the patriarch of a broken family, and the occasional lover of a lonely psychology student (Williams). When stricken with a family tragedy, George becomes obsessed with taming a wild, red-tail hawk. At his weakest moment, he locks himself into a battle of wills with a fierce creature that would rather die than succumb.

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