



The Crane

Alachua Audubon Society

Volume 49 Number 1 August – September 2007

2007-2008 Field Trip Season Begins!

Local standards, day-trip standards, special events, and overnights! Get out there!

Alachua Audubon Society's field trips are for everyone. If you're a true novice or a seasoned veteran, a long standing member or a transient guest, this field trip season has great options for you. Among the nearly 30 trips offered this season are local standards to Bolen Bluff during passerine migration and LaChua Trail as sparrows are arriving for the winter. There are many day-trip standards such as a springtime excursion to Ocala National Forest or mid-winter to Alligator Lake. Make room in your schedule for a special event trip such as our overnight to Tall Timbers Research Station featuring sparrow banding. Help us kick off the season in Cedar Key by joining Capt. Doug for a shorebirding trip by boat.

The next issue of the Crane will feature AAS' new Conservation Lands Field Trip Program, a collaborative effort to bring general interest programs to a broader audience. See the AAS Yearbook or visit the website for program dates and other details.

September & Early October Field Trips

Sunday, September 9

Backwaters of Cedar Key with Capt. Doug Maple
Limited availability - Call WBU [352-381-1997] to reserve a spot or for details. Captain Doug Maple 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.

Saturday, September 22, 8:00 AM

O'Leno State Park

Meet John Hintermister in the Winn-Dixie parking lot in High Springs. Don't forget the **\$4.00/vehicle park entry fee**. Explore the mixed hardwood river banks to the sand pine upland for passerine migrants at the beginning of fall migration's peak. Difficulty: 2

Saturday, September 29, 8:00 AM

Palm Point

Meet Michael Meisenburg at Powers Park (east of Gainesville on SR 20). Explore this migrant hot-spot during the peak of migratory bird movement. The lake margin can often be good for early arriving winter residents. Difficulty: 1

Sunday, September 30, 8:00 AM

Split Rock

One of Gainesville's newest nature parks, Split Rock's dense forest and limited access provide a retreat for nature enthusiasts. Explore the diverse floodplain of Hogtown Creek for migrants. Meet Mike Manetz at Sweetbay at 2002 SW 34th St. and caravan to Split Rock from there. Difficulty: 2

Saturday, October 6, 8:00 AM

Chastain-Seay

Meet trip leader Bob Carroll at the tag agency on NW 34th Street just south of US-441 and caravan to

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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 pro-
mote 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
Oct-Nov Crane:
Sept 15th**



With little rain through early summer, water levels in Alachua County and much of Florida remained very low. This led to multiple sightings of two of our more welcome but unpredictable summer visitors, Roseate Spoonbill and Black-necked Stilt. Several of each species were seen periodically and by various birders on the Prairie Basin, Newnans

Lake, and at the Deerhaven ponds. The stilts likely nested here as they sometimes do when water levels are low enough. The spoonbills were mostly immatures wandering after the nesting season.

Migrant shorebirds started to show by mid-July. Rex Rowan had a Spotted Sandpiper at Newnans Lake on July 18. John Hintermister found a locally-rare Western Sandpiper July 23 at Chapmans Pond, and, three days later at Deerhaven ponds, twenty Least and several Pectoral Sandpipers, plus a couple of Lesser Yellowlegs.

The first migrant warbler of fall was a Black-and-white Warbler reported July 6 by Carmine Lanciani from his NW Gainesville yard. On July 18 Rex Rowan spotted two Prairie Warblers at Palm Point. The following day two Louisiana Warblers were reported, one by John Hintermister at Gum Root Swamp, and the other by Rex along Camp Canal. John also had a remarkably early Kentucky Warbler July 30 at his birdbath. John and I did a warbler hunt at the southern end of the county August 5 and found five Louisiana Waterthrushes, three Black-and-white Warblers, and the first two American Redstarts of the season.

A most unexpected sighting came from the property of John Menoski in the northwest part of the county. On July 29 John was visited by an adult male Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. This species breeds mainly in south-central U.S. and western Louisiana, and only a few stray into Florida during migration, and those that do don't usually show up here until November. Fortunately John was able to get photographic documentation.

By the time you receive this issue of the Crane fall migration will be well under way. American Redstarts, Prairie and Yellow Warblers should be fairly common at Palm Point. Ovenbirds should be piling up at San Felasco Hammock. Watch for skulking Kentucky Warblers there as well. Two of the more prized warblers of early fall are Golden-winged and Cerulean Warblers. Bolen Bluff and San Felasco are good places to look. By early September watch for the first wave of migrating Red-eyed Vireos and Veeries as well as incoming Chestnut-sided and Blue-winged Warblers. Experienced birders please keep Sat., Sept. 15 open for the Fall North American Migration Count.

Thanks to those who shared sightings through August 5, 2007

Chastain-Seay near Worthington Springs. Chastain-Seay is a riparian woodland park with boardwalks and trails on the upper Santa Fe river. Difficulty: 2

Sunday, October 7, 8:00 AM

San Felasco Hammock – Millhopper

Meet trip leader Steve Hofstetter at San Felasco trailhead on Millhopper Road. Don't forget the **\$2.00/vehicle access fee**. Meandering streams, sinkholes, ridges, and slopes set the stage for a very diverse bird habitat during fall migration's peak. Difficulty: 2



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CATCHING A MEAL IN THE BEIDLER SWAMP FOREST

On a recent trip through South Carolina's low country, we arranged to stop off for a day of birding at the Francis Beidler Forest. Located near Harleyville, this 13,000 acre refuge brings the birder into an intimate relationship with a truly magnificent swamp forest. In fact, the local name for this forest is the Four Holes Swamp. The refuge is jointly managed by the Audubon Society and the Nature Conservancy and allows access to the heart of the swamp by including a board walk nearly 2 miles long. We visited the refuge in early June, a time when Prothonotary Warblers were everywhere. We even spotted briefly a lone Swainson's Warbler. Northern Parulas competed with the Prothonotaries for domination of the air waves. Songs poured down upon us from the canopy.

But the highlight of the walk occurred where we came across an Eastern Cottonmouth swimming along parallel to the board walk. The waters of the swamp were rapidly disappearing. South Carolina, like most other Southeastern states, is reeling from years of drought. Our encounter with the snake caused us to interrupt our board walk hiking to observe our surroundings. Shortly after the snake had disappeared, a pair of Yellow-crowned Night Herons appeared on the far bank of this narrow slough of water. One of the birds made its way into the water, standing very still with its neck extended forward. The bird was gazing intently at something in the water and paid little attention to us. We could see the telltale wakes of mosquito fish on the surface of the water and assumed the bird had a minnow lunch in mind, but, no, what the Night Heron had spotted was a fat crawfish. It plunged its long beak into the chocolate-colored water and came up with a large crawfish whose claws the bird very quickly and almost surgically removed. The clawless body of the crustacean was immediately swallowed, and the fisher went back to hunting its next meal. While all of this was transpiring, our attention was diverted by a Barred Owl that had taken possession of a branch on a tree near the board walk. The owl also had its eyes on another crawfish. The big bird launched itself off the branch and glided down to the water's surface on the far side of the slough. With a couple of strong wing flaps, it regained altitude, this

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President's Report

Inserted into this issue of The Crane you will find a guide for making eco-friendly seafood choices. I hope you will use it to make wise decisions. In recent years we have learned that seafood is very healthy, due primarily to its omega-3 fatty acids. These molecules are manufactured by marine phytoplankton and accumulate in the tissues of many saltwater fishes. Unfortunately, the awareness of the health benefits from a diet high in fish along with the burgeoning human population has placed enormous demands on fish populations.

Growing up in western New York, I remember my father talking about catching blue pike in Lake Erie. Closely related to walleye, blue pike were fished into extinction by commercial fishermen before I was born. Like birders that keep a life list of species they have seen, I keep a life-list of fish I have caught. Unfortunately, my ability to augment that list with a blue pike was taken by others who thought that their needs were more important than those of future generations. Contrary to what some believe, commercial fishing can lead to extinction. With governing boards dominated by commercial interests, government agencies tasked with managing fisheries have dismal track records. Too often, scientific data is been ignored so as to not place economic hardship on commercial fishermen, but this approach has only perpetuated the situation and delayed the inevitable. Ten years ago President Clinton gave disaster relief money to commercial cod and flounder fishermen in New England after stocks collapsed, but why should taxpayers bail out those that are entirely responsible for their situation?

One solution for incorporating sustainability into fisheries management is for third parties to publish their own recommendations based on available data. The Blue Ocean Institute has done just that and we

have provided it for you as an insert here. I checked out their website and was surprised to see how thorough it is. I haven't bought any farm-raised catfish since I learned that catfish farmers kill thousands of Double-crested Cormorants every year and I have been puzzled when catfish is continuously recommended as being sustainable. The issue is discussed at Blue Ocean's website and their recommendation is adjusted accordingly. I was impressed with the website and would recommend it to learn more about this subject. If you go to their site, make sure to click on "Learn about the evaluation process" for an informative article from the Society for Conservation Biology.

Using our power as consumers to circumvent our (mis)managing agencies with this free-market approach gives us power that we otherwise do not have. We hope to have another guide in the next issue of The Crane from the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Please use them, and make the person you are buying your fish from aware that you are trying to make a decision based on sustainability.

Michael Meisenburg

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CHRISTMAS IN OCTOBER

AAS will be selling organically grown Christmas trees and wreaths as a fund raiser again this year. The number of trees is limited so we must have your order by October 31st. To order:

- Send an email with your name, order, and phone number to gatorbob23@yahoo.com (no email? Call Bob Carroll—281-3616).
- We will contact you with payment information and to let you know when and where to pick up.

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Fraser Fir	\$49	\$56	\$64	\$73	\$85	\$113
Undecorated 18" wreath		\$32				
Undecorated 24" wreath		\$38				

time clasp in its talons a dandy sized crawfish. The owl returned to the same branch and proceeded to dine on its catch, claws and all.

Later at the refuge headquarters we related our observations to one of the staff members. He told us that the receding water has left lots of crawfish vulnerable to predators. The raccoons, he remarked, have taken to eating just the abdomens, the most coveted part of the animal, discarding the rest of the body so they can return to the water and catch another. So, it's dinnertime in the Four Holes Swamp, and there are plenty of diners and diners to keep the birder entertained and the critters full.

As we were leaving the refuge, we reflected on what we'd just witnessed. This scene undoubtedly has been played out for thousands, likely millions, of years. Long before binocular-swinging humans invaded such a habitat, crawfish have been disappearing down the gullets of opportunistic predators. We're just pleased we could be on hand to see such a rich vignette of natural history drama.

Dana & Nancy Griffin

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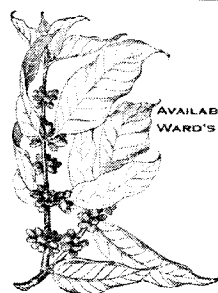


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Birds and Conservation in Costa Rica

In March I was fortunate to join nineteen other teachers on a study trip to Costa Rica, sponsored by the Toyota International Teacher Program and organized by the Institute of International Education. One of the main purposes of the trip was to expose teachers to the biodiversity and conservation efforts in Costa Rica. I was hoping to get to know the country a little better, bring back some ideas I could use in my seventh-grade geography classroom, and, since I had never been to Costa Rica in winter, to get a better feel for avian diversity there. I wasn't disappointed on any count.

Our first stop as we stumble off a red-eye and onto the streets of San Jose was the National Institute of Biodiversity, which is trying to catalog all plant and animal species in the country. The guiding principle is that the greater the knowledge about the country's biodiversity the more compelling the reasons to preserve it. To that end they have trained "parataxonomists" from various regions of the country to explore for new species in the areas where they live. Since the inception of this program, over 2,500 new species of plants and insects have been described. InBio, as it is called for short, also negotiates contracts with pharmaceutical companies wishing to search for potential medicinal plants in Costa Rican forests. This demonstrates the economic value of protecting forests, and the contracts provide a source of revenue for other conservation projects. Since 1991, twenty-seven patents have been issued for compounds discovered under this program.

InBio also has a very nice environmental park that tries to recreate some of the different types of forests and habitats in the country. The park also provides an oasis of green in an urban environment, and there we saw several familiar neo-tropical migrants, including Summer Tanager, Wood Thrush, Yellow, Tennessee, and Chestnut-sided Warblers, plus some Costa Rican goodies such as Blue-crowned Motmot and Grayish Saltator. (Several co-participants, especially the science teachers, were very keen on having birds pointed out and identified, and by the end of the trip at least a few claimed to be birding converts.)

We also learned about an initiative called "Peace with Nature" put forth by Oscar Arias, the current Costa Rican president. It establishes twelve government com-

mittees to study and make recommendations toward different aspects of conservation such as the financing of protected areas, conservation of energy, conservation education, land planning, and dealing with solid waste, toxic and dangerous chemicals. One could view this as another case of good intentions destined to bog down in bureaucratic hell, but it was refreshing to hear of a president who at least acknowledges the need to make peace with nature.

Later on the trip we heard a talk on another government program called Environmental Services Payments, which pays private landowners if they agree to manage their forests in responsible ways, including mapping and recording trees on their property, limiting the percentage and diameters of trees cut, limiting the cycle of cutting, leaving seed trees, and noting endangered species.

We also spent a few days at an exciting college called EARTH University. Here we saw undergraduate students from all over Latin America studying techniques of organic farming and other eco-friendly agriculture. One of the projects we toured was an organic dairy farm with a bio-gas collector that created enough electricity to power the entire dairy operation. They also developed and patented an organic mixture which hastens the decomposition of cow and pig manure so that there were few flies and little of the smells we normally associate with a dairy. At the school's banana processing operation the students recycle residual parts of the banana plants into paper and paper products. Students are required every Wednesday to volunteer for projects in the community such as setting up gardens at schools. One afternoon we ate a wonderful lunch at a small open-air eatery where EARTH students had taught the owner to farm organically. The owner, a single mom, had enthusiastically taken up the idea and proudly gave us a tour of her gardens where she grew produce for her restaurant. The goal of most of the students I talked to was to return home and spread these ideas and perhaps even start a school like EARTH in their own countries.

The birding highlight of the trip was a half-day visit to the Organization of Tropical Studies research station at La Selva. This is one of the premier primary rainforest ecology study sites in the Americas; at any given time there are between twenty and thirty research

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projects going forward there. I signed up for a bird walk during which we noted forty-five species in two hours, including several lifers such as Snowy Cotinga, Semi-plumbeous Hawk, and an endearing pair of Black-capped Pygmy-Tyrants attending a nest. It was encouraging to see such a splendid example of what conservation efforts can preserve and protect.

Not so encouraging was a visit to the U.S. embassy. There we heard officials speak negatively of Costa Rica, describing it as a declining and "broken" country. This dim assessment is largely due to the fact that Costa Rica has resisted approval of the Central American Free Trade Agreement. In this complex treaty there are provisions Costa Ricans fear would strip them of their right to regulate land development in their own way. It would give foreign investors a much freer hand to, say, build a ten-story condominium on the beach without interference from disapproving Costa Rican laws and courts. With more Americans and Europeans choosing to retire in Costa Rica, American land developers and real estate companies are eagerly following. Under intense pressure from the U.S. government to accept the provisions of CAFTA, Costa Ricans are fearful they could lose control of their own environmental destiny.

While Costa Rica suffers many of the ills and growing pains of a developing country, the level of commitment to conservation from elementary school children to the highest level of government is truly remarkable. But with pressure from the U.S. and other foreign interests anxious to push more resorts and sprawling gated communities, one wonders how long Costa Ricans can protect what remains of their little corner of paradise.

Mike Manetz

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Community Calendar

- **Aug 23** Friends of Paynes Prairie Film and Forum Series, 6:00pm
- **Aug 25** Sierra Club canoe paddle, Silver River
- **Sept 1** Sierra Club Ardisia pull, San Felasco
- **Sept 11** Florida Native Plant Society local meeting, 7:30pm
- **Sept 21** Friends of Paynes Prairie Film and Forum Series, 6:00pm
- **Oct 5-7** Florida Native Plant Society Members' Retreat, Clermont

Additional details may be found at the web sites of the organizations mentioned:

Florida Native Plant Society <http://www.fnps.org/>
Florida Native Plant Society Gainesville Chapter
<http://www.fnps.org/pages/chapters/chapterpg.php?keyword=PaynesPrairie>
Friends of Paynes Prairie
<http://www.prairiefriends.org/>
Sierra Club, Suwannee-St. Johns Chapter
<http://florida.sierraclub.org/ssj/>

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The Crane

August - September 2007

Audubon Adventures

The start of the school year means we are now soliciting sponsors for classroom sets of Audubon Adventures. If you have been a sponsor in the past you know how important this program is to Alachua County students. For some children it's the first exposure to learning about the environment, wild birds, and other animals. Who knows? In one of the classrooms you sponsor there may be a future ornithologist who one day may say, "I became interested in birds back in elementary school from a publication called *Audubon Adventures*."

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