



# The Crane

## *Alachua Audubon Society*

Volume 49 Number 2 October – November 2007

## October & November Field Trips

### Conservation Lands Educational Field Trips

AAS introduces the Conservation Lands Educational Field Trip program (CLEFT) as a new direction in community outreach. CLEFT programs are designed to bring attention to local land conservation efforts. These trips are conducted on properties purchased to protect natural resources and will be co-led by a representative from the agency or organization that owns the land. CLEFT trips are designed to be educational experiences, so the emphasis will be on much more than birding.

#### **Saturday, October 20, 9:00 AM** **Barr Hammock**

The majestic Barr Hammock land bridge between Ledwith and Levy Prairies acquired through funding by Alachua County Forever in 2006. Meet senior planners with the county's Department of Environmental Protection Michael Drummond and Steve Hofstetter and AAS birding guide Adam Kent at Micanopy Gas (NW corner of I-75 and CR 234 in Micanopy).

#### **Saturday, November 3, 9:00 AM** **Morningside Nature Center**

Gainesville's premier nature park and one of the last remaining examples of fire-dependent longleaf pine woodlands in the area. More than seven miles of trails wind through sandhills, flatwoods, cypress domes, and habitat restoration areas. Meet Geoff Parks, Habitat Naturalist with the City of Gainesville, in the Morningside parking lot (approximately three miles east of downtown Gainesville on SR 26).

### Standard trips

#### **Saturday, October 6, 8:00 AM** **Chastain-Seay**

Meet Bob Carroll at the tag agency on NW 34<sup>th</sup> Street near Hwy. 441 and carpool to 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 Steve Hofstetter at San Felasco trailhead on Millhopper Road. Don't forget the \$2/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

#### **Saturday, October 13, 8:00 AM** **Bolen Bluff Trail**

Meet Mike Manetz at the Bolen Bluff trailhead (east side of 441 on the south rim of the prairie). Bolen Bluff is one of Gainesville's perennial favorite birding locations, especially during the peak of songbird migration. Difficulty: 2

Descriptions for

**Cedar Key**  
**Hamilton County Mines**  
**LaChua Trail**

Continued on page 7

**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>**

***Around  
The County...  
By Mike Manetz***

The first half of fall migration this year was the leanest in memory. Leading up to the migration count on September 15, not even our most intrepid birders were able to scare up anything close to the customary benchmark of ten warbler species in a single outing. Numbers of common birds

such as **Northern Parula** and **American Redstart** were distressingly low. There were a few good sightings of individual species, particularly **Cerulean Warblers**, but for the most part, as Rex Rowan put it, finding migrants was like "pulling teeth from someone who has no teeth". There were at least two factors contributing to this "Great Warbler Drought of '07". One was a protracted dry spell that left precious little standing water in the county. The other was a stationary front that stalled out in Georgia for what seemed like weeks, presumably bottling up birds behind it. The front remained in place long enough to belittle the best efforts of nearly forty Alachua County birders the day of the count. Our warbler tally on count day was the lowest on record, both in numbers and individuals; however, that didn't stop us from finding some interesting things. Rex Rowan's team found 34 **Common Terns** and 2 **Least Bitterns** at Newnans Lake. Ivor Kincaide reported 2 **Least Flycatchers** from River Styx, and Mary Landsman had another at Payne's Prairie State Preserve. Steve Hofstetter's team at San Felasco picked up a **Short-tailed Hawk**, and there were three **Bank Swallows** reported at the Hague Dairy.

Like warblers, shorebirds were in relatively short supply due largely to the lack of standing pools and ponds. In late August Chapman's Pond was low enough to attract a smattering of **yellowlegs** and at least one **Stilt Sandpiper** reported by Pat Burns, but the artificially controlled water level came back up and the shorebirds vanished. The most consistent concentration of shorebirds remained at the GRU Deerhaven ponds, but many of the peeps and others there remained too distant to specifically identify. The lagoon and settling ponds at the Dairy were fairly reliable for **Solitary** and **Spotted Sandpipers**, and on the day of the fall count a pair of **Pectoral Sandpipers** were present there.

We had a couple of **Hairy Woodpecker** sightings this fall. John Hintermister saw one near the boat ramp at Lake Wauberg August 23, and Craig Parenteau noted another September 5 at O'Leno State Park. Hairys are among the most mysterious resident species in our county. Rarely seen, their habitat preference seems to be pine flatwoods and sandhill, but they can show up unpredictably and in a

*Continued on page 3*



variety of habitats; and to my knowledge no one has ever located a nesting pair in the fifteen years I have been birding here.

Late fall migration is usually the fullest and most bountiful for birders. By early October, **Tennessee and Magnolia Warblers** become fairly common, and the **Redstart** migration will be peaking. October is also "Thrush Month", as **Veerys** give way to **Swainson's** and then finally **Gray-cheeked Thrushes**. October is when we most expect **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, **Indigo Buntings**, and **Scarlet Tanagers** passing through, so keep an eye on your bird feeders, fruiting dogwood trees, and Virginia creeper vines.

Thanks to those who shared their sightings through September 21, 2007

### Audubon Adventures Sponsors

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## BIRDING PERU

Of all the birding excursions we've managed to find ourselves on, the recent trip we took to Peru is in a class by itself. It still leaves us slack-jawed in amazement. Our leader, Steven Hilty, paraded us past 427 species across a range of habitats that perhaps only a country like Peru could offer. It's a trip for anyone with a love of birds and a taste for adventure.

This birding saga began along the central coast where we invested a few days scoping out such species as Humboldt Penguins, Red-legged and Guanay Cormorants, Inca Terns and Peruvian Boobies. At one rocky location we came across a curious little rock-hopping specialist, the Peruvian Seaside Cinclodes. There was even time allowed to investigate a fresh-water marsh situated behind some coastal dunes. Here we found Plumbeous Rails, White-cheeked Pintails, the gorgeous little Many-colored Rush-tyrant and the mind-expanding Peruvian Meadowlark. This bird resembles our Eastern Meadowlark in most respects except the Peruvian species has a flaming red chest and belly.

The tour moved on next to Cuzco in the high puna lands of Southern Peru. Steve had one spot in particular to show us, a large lake located southeast of town. The lake and its marshy shoreline were adorned with birds: Puna Ibis, Andean Gulls, Spectacled Teal, Andean Lapwings and the Giant Hummingbird. This hummer was working a lakeside set of flowering shrubs. At slightly longer than 7 inches, it exceeds the size of a Barn Swallow. The bird is aptly named.


From Cuzco we made our way southeastward by road, pausing for a few days at the Cock-of-the Rock Lodge. Incredibly enough, the cotingas, for whom the lodge is named, maintain a lek right along the road. Here, in the hour before dawn, we witnessed the

crazed antics and squawks of 9 males, each bird taking possession of a particular branch. In time, a female showed up, and the males abandoned crazy and went for full-blown bezeerk. What an experience!

The abundance of flowering shrubs and fruiting trees around the lodge tempts the birder to move no further than the open-air dining hall. From the comfort of your seat, you can savor a pisco sour while reviewing a parade of tanagers, typically more than a dozen species, and a bevy of hummingbirds of colors and forms never seen in North America. One cannot help but feel overwhelmed by the richness of the birdlife, and yet this spot had one more treasure to delight us with – the Lyre-tailed Nightjar. These extraordinary birds were found at dusk a mile upslope from the lodge. It was a courting couple. The male comes equipped with two tail feathers that are two feet long. Try to imagine the magnificent train of a Resplendent Quetzal attached to a Chuck Will's-widow. Bizarre!

The next phase of the trip involved a 7 hour boat ride down the rio Madre de Dios, encamping for 3 days at an old tea plantation, the Hacienda Amazonia (now used as a lodge for birders). Here and there sand bars jutted from the river and it was on these bars that


*Continued on page 5*



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we saw Horned Screammers, Orinoco Geese, the beautiful Capped Heron and Pied Lapwings. We were beginning to succumb to sensory overload and yet more fantastic birding lay ahead. The Hacienda Amazonia consists of a series of buildings positioned around a park-like plaza planted to breadfruit and avocado trees. From the plaza a network of trails departs, allowing access to acres of lowland tropical forest. Birds were everywhere. In the plaza near a viewing veranda the lodge owners had placed feeders which were loaded up with fruit – bananas, mangos, avocados, pineapples—several times a day. From dawn to dusk the feeders were visited by such species as Speckled Chachalacas, Red-capped Cardinals and Silver-beaked Tanagers. In a flowering shrub off to the side we spied each morning a male Rufous-capped Coquette, the signature hummer of the hacienda. Around an old ox-bow lake at the end of one of the trails flocks of ungainly Hoatzins gathered to roost. These guan-like birds with the punk-rock crest, are weird, and that may be the best technical term to describe them.

Our final destination, the Manu Wildlife Center, lay several miles further down river. The Center is but a small piece of the much larger Manu National Park. We were by this time in about as remote a corner of Peru as one can expect to reach, the southeastern corner that still harbors lots of wildlife. It's the kind of wildlife that, sadly, has been extirpated from much of the rest of the country. Tracks of jaguar can be seen along the river banks. Capybaras and tapir are not uncommon. In fact, we had a full grown tapir come into camp one evening. Overhead one hears the constant squawking of macaws. These large parrots roost in palm trees around the Center. The best display of macaws and parrots undoubtedly is to be viewed at the clay bank, a special location a couple of miles down river from the Center. Here hundreds of parrots and macaws gather each day to gnaw at the clay with their strong beaks. The clay helps the bird deal with toxins ingested with some of the fruits and seeds that form part of the birds' diet. Antbirds, Antthrushes and Antpittas are groups that are particularly diverse in this area. Our tour got to see 27 species over the course of a week.. And if squinting into dark undergrowth to scope a tiny Antbird isn't your cup of tea, there are always the canopy towers. Two towers (about 140 feet tall) are positioned out along two different trails leading from the Center. From the top of these structures

the birder gains a perspective that can only be called unique. Prepare to find species that rarely, if ever, make it to the lower strata of the forest. Our towers lists included such wonderful species as Black & White Hawk-eagle, White-fronted Nun-bird, Curl-crested Aracari, Plum-throated Cotinga and Bare-throated Fruitcrow.

Birding at this level of intensity had to end. Our circuits were starting to char themselves black. As we waited along a grassy strip for a small plane to deliver us back to Cuzco, a Pale-winged Trumpeter emerged from the forest to check on things. It was quite an appropriate send-off and only served to strengthen our resolve to return some day.

Dana & Nancy Griffin

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## Order your organic Christmas tree now

AAS will be selling organically grown Christmas trees and wreaths as a fundraiser again this year. Those of us that purchased wreaths and trees last year know that they were beautiful trees and of excellent quality. 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. They make great shelter for birds and other creatures when added to your brush pile.

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, story-book 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: [www.swva.net/tbd](http://www.swva.net/tbd).

The number of trees is limited so we must have your order by October 31st. To order:

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## Holiday Social December 7, 2007

Last year's holiday social was a great success and this year's can be even better. Mark your calendar now for Alachua Audubon Society's **2nd Annual Holiday Social** for December 7, 2007. This year the party is at Wild Birds Unlimited at 4215 NW 16th Blvd. More details including the time and duration of the event will be available in the next issue of the Crane.

Like last year, we will feature a silent auction fundraiser with a lot of great gift items. So, please, consider combining your holiday shopping with your holiday partying as a way of supporting AAS. WBU merchandise will also be available for purchase. A portion of the proceeds from sales generated during the event will be donated to Alachua Audubon Society. So, please, consider combining your holiday shopping

There will be food and drinks and music so that you can eat, drink and be merry as you socialize and shop.

If you are a business owner, we are asking you to donate an item or service that can be auctioned. If you possess particular skills and talents, then your services are also fair game for auction. Please contact Helen Warren at 214-7755 to donate to our silent auction.





## Community Calendar

- **Oct 5-7** Florida Native Plant Society Members' Retreat, Clermont
- **Oct 6** Sierra Club Ardisia pull, San Felasco Hammock
- **Oct 8-14** Ding Darling Days, Sanibel Island
- **Oct 9** Florida Native Plant Society local meeting, 7:30
- **Oct 12-14** ButterflyFest at Florida Museum of Natural History
- **Oct 12-14** Florida Keys Birding and Wildlife Festival, Marathon
- **Oct 19-20** Friends of Morningside Native Plant Sale
- **Oct 26-28** Florida Ornithological Society fall meeting, Sebring
- **Oct 26-29** Nature Coast Birding and Wildlife Experience, Cedar Key
- **Nov 3** Sierra Club Ardisia pull, San Felasco Hammock
- **Nov 13** Florida Native Plant Society local meeting, 7:30
- **Dec 1** Sierra Club Ardisia pull, San Felasco Hammock

Additional details found at the following web sites:

*ButterflyFest*

[http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/butterflyfest/field\\_trips.htm](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/butterflyfest/field_trips.htm)

*City of Gainesville*

<http://www.cityofgainesville.org/no/cepr.aspx>

*Ding Darling Days* <http://www.dingdarlingdays.com/>

*Florida Keys Birding and Wildlife Festival*

<http://www.keysbirdingfest.org/>

*Florida Native Plant Society*

<http://www.fnps.org/>

*Florida Native Plant Society Gainesville Chapter*

<http://www.fnps.org/pages/chapters/chapterpg.php?keyword=PaynesPrairie>

*Florida Ornithological Society* <http://fosbirds.org/>

*Friends of Paynes Prairie* <http://www.prairiefriends.org/>

*Nature Coast Birding and Wildlife Experience*

<http://www.ncbwe.com/>

*Sierra Club, Suwannee-St. Johns Chapter*

<http://florida.sierraclub.org/ssj/>

## October-November Field Trips Continued...

**Sunday, October 28, 6:30 AM**

### Cedar Key

Meet Rex Rowan in the Target parking lot. Cedar Key is a quintessential Florida birding destination where birders can often view flocks of shorebirds over one shoulder and flocks of songbirds over the other. Participants may want to stay in Cedar Key for lunch. Difficulty: 2

**Saturday, November 10, 7:00 AM**

### Hamilton County Mines

**NOTE: FULL DAY TRIP!** Meet an Audubon leader at the Tag Agency on NW 34th St. near Hwy 441 and caravan to meet leader Jerry Krummrich in White Springs. Explore a series of freshwater impoundments for ducks and their margins for sparrows. Difficulty: 3

**Saturday, November 17, 8:00 AM**

### La Chua Trail

Meet Howard Adams at the new LaChua trailhead on Camp Ranch Road. Look for wintering flycatchers, sparrows, raptors, and other winter prairie residents. Difficulty: 2

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October - November 2007

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- **Organic Christmas Tree and Wreath Fundraiser**
- **Holiday Social**

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