

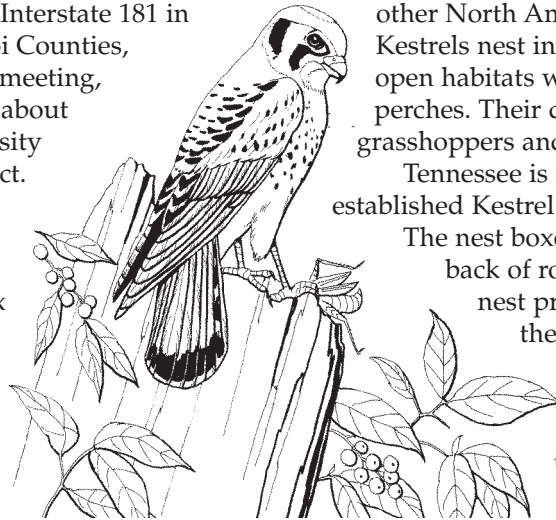
# through the biKNOXulars

Knoxville Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society

•1924-2004. Celebrating 80 years!•

## Kestrel Nest Box Study topic of Nov. 3 meeting

Last October, the J.B. Owen Fund awarded Jennifer Powers \$500 for her research project, "Reproductive Success and Natal Dispersal of American Kestrels Nesting in Boxes along Interstate 181 in Sullivan, Washington and Unicoi Counties, Tennessee." At the November 3 meeting, KTOS members will learn more about this East Tennessee State University (ETSU) graduate student's project. Powers' study focuses on the 25 American Kestrel nesting boxes located along I-181. Prior to her investigation, the nest box trail had been active for six seasons. Powers is evaluating the success of the trail and comparing it to trails in other regions.



About the size of a Blue Jay, American Kestrels, *Falco sparverius*, (formerly known as Sparrow Hawks) are the smallest falcons in North America. Unlike other North American hawks and falcons, Kestrels nest in cavities. They prefer to hunt in open habitats with scattered trees and other perches. Their diet includes small mammals, grasshoppers and small birds.

Tennessee is one of many states that have established Kestrel nest box trails along highways. The nest boxes usually are attached to the back of roadside signs. Snakes and other nest predators have difficulty climbing the metal poles used to support the signs, and accompanying nest boxes. In addition, the roadside locations provide the open habitat necessary for

(Continued on page 2)

 MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### November outings

#### Saturday, November 13, 1:00 PM

Hiwassee Refuge-Sandhill Crane Viewing Area, Birchwood, TN. See page 1.

#### Saturday, November 20, 8:00 AM

Sharps Ridge, Knoxville, TN. See page 2.

#### Saturday, November 13, 1:00 PM

Hiwassee Refuge-Sandhill Crane Viewing Area, Birchwood, TN  
Leader: **Harold Howell** (828-6302; howellh2@bellsouth.net)  
Chattanooga LEADER: **DANNY GADDY** (937-3842)

This will be a joint trip with the Chattanooga TOS. Meet at the Stokley Building parking lot, 320 N. Cedar Bluff, Knoxville, at 1:00 p.m. for carpooling to the site, or meet at the site at 3:00 p.m. The leader will bring a portable charcoal grill. Please bring hot dogs, drinks and "fixings." Come and meet members of the CTOS group, enjoy the peace and serenity of the area, the good company and observe the wildlife as it enters and leaves the area around the lake and the surrounding fields. We may also have a chance to see the

(Continued on page 2)

"Words are heavy like rocks...they weigh you down. If birds could talk, they wouldn't be able to fly."

- Marilyn Whirlwind, a character on TV's *Northern Exposure*, CBS 1990-95

## November outings *(Continued from page 1)*

Whooping Cranes as they come through on their southward migration led by the ultralights. Dress WARM!

### Saturday November 20, 8:00 AM

Sharps Ridge, Knoxville, TN

Leader: **Mark Campen** (mcampen7@hotmail.com cell 865-406-6377)

KTOS has adopted Sharps Ridge as a place about which we care deeply. We will hold the second scheduled cleanup operation from about 8:00 a.m. until noon. Please come out and help us maintain the area the way we wish to see it.

At least one other outing will be held this month, but the schedule is not firm at this time. If there is interest we will schedule a trail hike in the Smokies, possibly at higher elevations where we could try for Red Crossbills and Common Ravens. If there is a

particular place that you would like to have a scheduled hike, please let me know and I will do my best to schedule same. Best Regards,

-Harold Howell, Field Trip Coordinator

## Kestrel study *(Continued from page 1)*

Kestrels.

Come Wednesday, November 3 at 7 p.m. to room 117 in the UT Vet building to learn more about Kestrels and their use of roadside nesting boxes in Tennessee. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn how KTOS funds, specifically those from the J.B. Owen Endowment, are being put to use to help birds in Tennessee.

- Tracey Muise, program coordinator



OF NOTE!

## Shade grown coffee benefits birds

Just a reminder from the refreshment queen: We now have delicious shade-grown coffee brewing at our monthly meetings, so bring your own mug and enjoy a cup. Hooray for shade-grown coffee!

- Submitted by Janet McKnight

## Highland Rim Chapter to honor Luckado

The Highland Rim TOS Chapter will be celebrating the 80th birthday of Ruth Luckado at their December 7 meeting. At the event, Ruth will be given a Memory Box filled with various items designed to rekindle fond memories. The meeting will be at the Hillsboro United Methodist Church, Coffee County, Tennessee.

The chapter is asking for your remembrances to be included in the special box. Before November 15, please send your memories by e-mail or regular mail to one of the following addresses:

gdadams@infoave.net

Joyce P. Adams

676 Wilkerson Lane

Phone number: 931-962-0280

Winchester, TN 37398

Charlie Muise

Senior Teacher Naturalist

Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont

865-448-6709 ext 21

charlie@gsmiit.org

## KTOS Financial Report • November 2004

Compiled by Marie Oakes, Treasurer

	October	September	YTD
<b>Income:</b>			
. Dues	\$170.00	\$56.00	\$1,824.00
. Mugs & Patches	\$0.00	\$13.00	\$44.00
. Shade Grown Coffee	\$217.00	\$0.00	\$217.00
. Interest	\$40.45	\$0.00	\$160.82
. Dividend	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$26.38
. Owen Memorial	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$575.87
. Fuller Memorial	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>
Total Income	\$427.45	\$69.00	\$2,848.07
<b>Expenses:</b>			
. Newsletter	\$264.19	\$109.80	\$1,223.29
. Supplies	\$89.02	\$20.70	\$293.86
. Shade Grown Coffee	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
. DAF Application	\$75.00	\$0.00	\$75.00
. Member Dues to TOS	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$1,578.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$428.21	\$130.50	\$3,170.15
<b>Other:</b>			
. Foothills Conservancy	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
. Friends of UT Gardens	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
. Fuller Memorial	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
. Owen Award	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$1,000.00
. Transfer to J.B. Owens	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
. Memorials	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$100.00</u>
Total Other	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$2,100.00
<b>Account Balances</b>			
. KTOS Checking & Savings	\$2,988.28	\$3,025.63	
. J.B. Owen Memorial	\$6,401.37	\$6,364.78	
<b>Memberships</b>	175	175	

# Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge

## Restoration of Native Grassland Habitats

By Wayne H. Schacher • wshschacher@natreserv.com

*Author's note: This is the third in a series of newsletter articles on Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge in Knox County. The Knoxville Chapter of Tennessee Ornithological Society has actively supported the concept and development of SIWR, and its membership is providing invaluable information on avian fauna usage of the refuge, and other technical assistance. The partnership with KTOS at SIWR is most gratefully appreciated.*

The vision of Pete Claussen and the Seven Islands Foundation was to manage SIWR for increased habitat quality and diversity, to the benefit of native botanical and zoological communities. Attached to this vision was a management strategy to manipulate the landscape within its existing successional stage... to manage and maintain both early successional and woodland habitats where they occur at the project outset. Working from this premise, a Lands Management Plan (LMP) for SIWR was formulated and adopted by an Advisory Group of natural resource managers, professionals and advocates to guide efforts toward these objectives. David Trently with KTOS was an active member in this Advisory Group.

An emphasis had been placed upon management of the 325 acres of existing grassland-early successional habitats. From the previous newsletter, we know that these acres were in a variety of stages of early succession, ranging from recently cut hayfield, to standing grasses and forbs with differing woody stem densities and diameter sizes, to transitional thickets of winged elm, honey locust and red cedar. We also learned that all of these areas were dominated by fescue, a non-native, cool-season grass that grows in dense, continuous, sod mats and reduces habitat quality and diversity for many native grassland botanical and zoological species.

The first step in SIWR's grassland habitat management was to eradicate the fescue as thoroughly as possible, and to replace it with no-till plantings of several species of native warm season grasses (NWSG). Six species of NWSGs were targeted for planting: big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardi*), little bluestem (*Andropogon scoparius*), eastern gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*), indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) and sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*). To vary composition and diversity within the grassland habitats on SIWR, the LMP divided the early successional acreage into 13 Management Units (MUs). The MUs would be sown in a variety of NWSG species compositions and

densities, the intention being to simulate both tallgrass prairie and shortgrass prairie appearances at different locations. In certain MUs, the NWSG plantings were supplemented with native legume species or perennial wildflower components to add habitat quality and aesthetic appeal to the landscape.

The grassland habitat restoration work on SIWR began in earnest in late 2001 and early 2002 with a variety of creative and cost-effective efforts. In two MUs, temporary overgrazing was used to reduce dense standing fescue and forbs to ground level to enhance herbicide success and isolate the woody stems which were then bush-hogged to accommodate NWSG planting. In three MUs, a farmer was allowed two years to plant and harvest soybeans to take advantage of the herbicide applications he would employ.

In other MUs, extensive areas of woody thicket were removed by mechanical means or by hand to set back succession, facilitate herbicide application and NWSG planting.

Permitted winter and early spring controlled burns have been used on SIWR since 2002 for a variety of benefits. Burning eliminates standing dead herbaceous vegetation prior to spraying or planting, fertilizes new growth with ash residue, inhibits encroachment and growth of woody vegetation and prepares fields for no-till planting. Both controlled burning and follow-up herbicide applications provide reprieve to NWSGs from competing vegetation and enhance stand establishment in their second and third growth years.

To date, 181 acres of NWSGs have been planted and are in various stages of establishment. Another 34 acres in two MUs have been left in native broomsedge and flowering forb composition, or wetland-type communities. The remaining 110 acres will be planted within two years, or will be maintained in existing plant communities. Once established, the perennial NWSGs will be optimally managed using controlled burns on a two-three year rotation.

Collectively, the NWSG and other early successional habitats on SIWR will provide essential habitat to an expanded diversity and abundance of grassland-dependent, bird species and other vertebrate and invertebrate members of those communities.

*[Next Newsletter – Grassland-dependent avian species – how are they benefited by NWSGs? What species are using grasslands on SIWR? And what is the potential for expanded avian usage?]*



## Frightened owl rescue? No problem. - By Charlie Muise

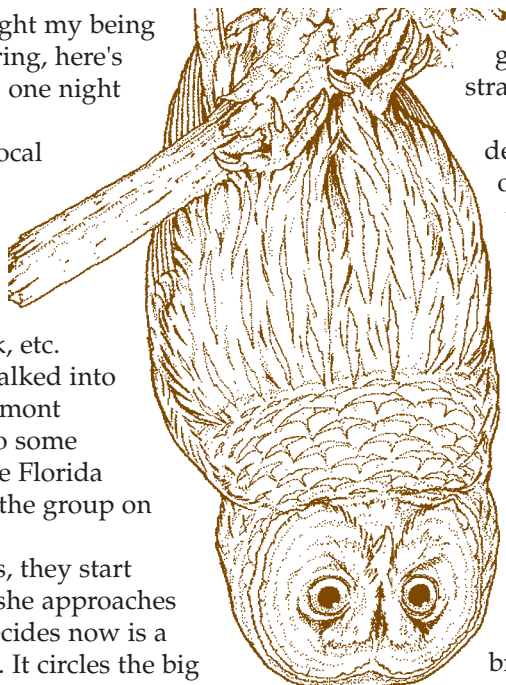
Ok, so just in case you thought my being a father was making me boring, here's the story of something I did one night recently.

Marcella Cranford is a local animal rehabilitator. She also does educational outreach, animal programs for kids. Her presentations include a 'possum, couple of snakes, couple owls, a hawk, etc.

One night at 8 p.m., I walked into the big meeting room at Tremont where she was presenting to some rowdy fifth graders from the Florida Keys. I was waiting to lead the group on a night walk.

Marcella thanks the kids, they start standing up and talking as she approaches her Barred Owl. The owl decides now is a good time to practice flying. It circles the big room once, then notices the door to the outside is open. Guess where the owl goes?

So we go out with flashlights to look. We were lucky and she spotted it. I told her to shine the light into its eyes, hoping that would keep it from flying (it had a jess on, so that would be dangerous if it stayed loose, it could get hung up). I took her car to get a ladder. Amazingly, it was still there when I got back. I leaned the ladder against the tree (had to be a Tuliptree—no low branches to climb). Unfortunately the tree is on a small hill. Which is covered in rocks, logs, a foot of leaves and dead grass. Leaning the



ladder against the tree, up I go. I get to the top step, and have to stand up straight and really stretch for the jess.

I get the jess, and of course the owl decides to try to fly for it. Somehow I stay on the ladder. Owl gets wrapped against the next limb over, which is about two feet beyond my reach. It's now hanging upside down, with all its attention focused on me. You ever see owl talons aiming for your face before? They look pretty big. So I do the only thing I could, I grab them. Well, I grabbed one. The other was too fast. So it grabbed me.

So now I'm on top of a 15-foot ladder. On a hill side. On wet leaves. Attached to an angry owl. In the dark. Kids, don't do this at home. Oh, yeah, and I'm also standing with my back to the ladder.

I can't untangle the owl because the branch is too far away. I can't leave the poor thing hanging there. So I reached down to grab my trusty Leatherman (with my right hand, my left is, um, currently occupied). Cut the jess. Owl swings down, releases my hand, tries to make a break for it, but I still have one talon. Fortunately I correctly predicted the arc and accommodate for it. Then I have to carefully climb backwards down the ladder with the angry owl trying to get free from me.

Wahoo. Think of that next time you go to your desk job.

## Operation Migration's Whooping Crane Class of 2004 *(Continued from page 6)*

*Ultimately, fourteen cranes made it through Operation Migration's flight training to become part of this year's class.*

*Each is designated by a number, the first digit stands for 2004, the next two digits represents their hatching order. All were hatched at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland and later completed their flight training at Necedah NWR in Wisconsin.*

*Here's this year's line-up:*

- #401 - Male. Hatched April 20, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 16.
- #402 - Male. Hatched April 21, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 16.
- #403 - Male. Hatched April 21, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 16.
- #405 - Male. Hatched April 24, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 16.
- #406 - Female. Hatched May 4, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 16.
- #407 - Male. Hatched May 5, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 16.
- #408 - Male. Hatched May 6, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 16.
- #412 - Male. Hatched May 9, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 30.
- #414 - Male. Hatched May 14, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 30.
- #415 - Female. Hatched May 16, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 30.
- #416 - Male. Hatched May 17, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 30.
- #417 - Male. Hatched May 17, 2004. Arrived at Necedah June 30.
- #419 - Female. Hatched May 29, 2004. Arrived at Necedah July 15.
- #420 - Female. Hatched June 3, 2004. Arrived at Necedah July 15.



## Presidential Perch

- By Charlie Muise

Hello KTOSers. As usual there are all kinds of great things to report. Thanks once again to Lyn Bales who puts all of this together for us, and to Cindy Day and Madeleine Hassil who are responsible for getting it into our hands, and Chuck Nicholson who puts it on the web page. Knox is one of the most active chapters in TOS, and lately it seems that perhaps we're the most active. Keep it up!

One of the big projects we have undertaken is the adoption of one of our favorite places to watch migratory birds. You haven't birded in this area until you've seen spring migration at Sharps Ridge. For years that area had many problems with garbage, vandalism and behavior that is not fitting for a family atmosphere. More diligent patrols by Knoxville Police and concerned citizens have greatly reduced these problems. Last year an overlook of the Smokies there was dedicated to JB Owens who was an extremely important member of not only this club, but the community. It would be a dishonor to JB's memory if the area falls into disrepair. It is primarily up to our club to maintain this area. Please help in any way you can. We will have cleanup days on Saturday, October 23 and Saturday, November 20. In addition to picking up litter, we hope to repair some damage to the rails and to paint over some graffiti. If you can't be there, but wish to help, you can do your part by simply going up with a trash bag any day of the year.

TOS has approved a posthumous Distinguished Service Award for Barbara Finney. Plans are in the works to present this award to her children, hopefully at the November meeting.

At least ten KTOS members were at the TOS Fall meeting in Cookeville on October 15, 16 and 17. Though this was a much less formal affair than usual (because it was not hosted by a particular club) it was a fun time. I probably speak for many when I say I learned a lot at the symposium. Lots of birds were found on the field trips including four wren species, a Merlin and some of the first sparrows of the fall.

The statewide organization continues to make progress on finances, and Mac McWhirter, the new treasurer, has a lot of good ideas. One thing I encourage chapter members to do is support the possibility that state dues may have to be raised. It costs a lot to continue to print quality publications, and the club has helped some very important research projects through the Conservation and Research Funding grant and the Goodpasture Award.

Dean Edwards is still waiting for a few folks to get him info from the Knox Fall count. Please contact him as soon as possible at the e-mail address at right.

Speaking of counts, it's not too early to start

planning a Christmas Bird Count or two. Birders of ANY ability are welcome and needed for all counts. Beginners will be paired up with seasoned counters. Folks who wish to stay at home and count birds in their own yard (if it's in a count area) are also needed. Please contact the compilers listed below so they can start to assign territories. Counters need to keep track of the number of hours they count and how many miles they travel by foot or road.

- **Smokies** - David Trently, dtrently@utk.edu
- **Knox County** - Sunday, January 2  
Dean Edwards, kde@angst.engr.utk.edu
- **Norris Dam** - Chuck Nicholson,  
cpnichol@bellsouth.net
- **Cades Cove** - Susan Hoyle, hoyle@cs.utk.edu
- **Hiwassee** - Kevin Calhoun, January 1

Jim Human found a Black-necked Stint in north-west Blount County. Shortly thereafter Rick Knight found one in Washington County. This makes five records in east Tennessee, with four of them this year.

Our recent order for shade-grown coffee was bigger than expected, which was great news. It tells me that our members are committed to doing what they can to help birds. We'll take an order at the meeting on Wednesday, November 3. If you can't make the meeting, please call me at home by Wednesday, November 10 and I can take your order.

Most of you know a bit about the new experimental flock of Whooping Cranes that are being trained to migrate from the upper Midwest to Florida. These birds are being raised in such a way as to not become accustomed to humans. Then they are taught to fly behind an ultralight, making stops at appropriate areas, until they reach Chassahowitzka Wildlife Area in Florida. The Class of 2004 left their breeding grounds just last week! (*See page 6.*) At one point in the 1940s there were fewer than 20 Whooping Cranes left in the world, all in the group that migrates between Canada and Aransas NWR in Texas each year. Great effort and expense has been used to attempt to bring these birds back from the brink of extinction. Meanwhile the first two Whoopers of the "Aransas" birds (probably not what Canadians call them!) arrived in Texas about a week ago. For more information on the "Florida" whoopers, go on-line to:

<http://www.operationmigration.org>

Every once in a while we get to see birds with unusual plumage. For instance, I banded a Louisiana Waterthrush at Tremont this year which had some pure white feathers on both wings. Unlike mammals, which are either albino, or not, birds can be "partially albino," having some pure white feathers or non-feathered parts, or they can be "albanistic" having faded-looking feathers. True albinism is apparently rare. For a picture of a truly albino bird:

<http://www.digiscoping.fi/harritaavetti/20040905a.html>

## KTOS Membership

Join or renew your membership in KTOS by mailing your annual dues to: **Marie Oakes**, 18 Rockingham Lane, Oak Ridge, TN 37830.

Membership fees are \$18 for an individual and \$20 for a family. Sustaining memberships are \$28 and a Life membership with TOS is \$200 with an annual fee of \$8 to the local chapter.

**DEADLINE** for December issue is **November 20**. Due to space restrictions, please try to limit your articles to 600 or 700 words.

For a color version of this or past issues go to "local chapters/Knoxville" starting at the TOS Home Page:

**HTTP://www.tnbirds.org**



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## Fourth whooping crane class begins odyssey -By Lyn Bales

**T**hese are exciting times! For the fourth year in a row, a group of endangered whooping cranes have been taught to follow ultralights in an attempt to teach the young, leggy birds how to migrate from Wisconsin to Florida. The effort to reestablish an eastern flock of migratory whooping cranes is unprecedented. To date, Canadian based Operation Migration (OM) has successfully trained 36 cranes how to find the sunshine state. Each year, after the group completes the 1,000-plus mile journey to Florida's Chassahowitzka Wildlife Area, the birds are on their own. And each year the group has migrated to Wisconsin and back unaided.

The original ultralight led trip takes longer because the entourage flies lower and makes more stops. On their own, the experienced adult cranes fly much higher and complete the return migration in only a few days.

The Class of 2004 left Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin on October 10. Below is an excerpt from the field report filed on-line by OM's Heather Ray.

*"The Journey Begins...At 8:48 a.m. (Eastern) Richard van Heuvelen lifted off from the East Site at the Necedah NWR in central Wisconsin with fourteen 5 to 6 month old whooping cranes following close behind. Fellow pilots Brooke Pennypacker and Joe Duff circled at a higher altitude; ready to fly the chase positions and it wasn't long before they were called into action."*

*"As Richard took off to the north, away from the fog bank that cloaked the area immediately south of the pen site, half of his flock broke away, turning back toward home. Brooke moved in to intercept, while Joe moved closer to Richard to pick up the five birds that chose to follow the group of reluctant-to-leave cranes. For the next 20 minutes the pilots changed leads several times in response to the birds' ever-changing plans."*

And so it begins. Follow their daily exploits on-line at:

[http://www.operationmigration.org/Field\\_Journal.html](http://www.operationmigration.org/Field_Journal.html)

To learn more about the "Class of 2004" turn to page 4.

*through the biKNOXulars*

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