October Monthly Meeting

The Natural World of Japan: From Mudstone to Mugworts
Presented by Dr. David A. Johnson
Thursday, October 20, 2011 - 7:00 P.M.
Birmingham Zoo Auditorium

The Birmingham Audubon Society Monthly Meeting will have a distinctly international flavor when Dr. David Johnson, Professor of Biology at Samford University, speaks at the October meeting. Dr. Johnson will take us on a personal tour of Japan (mainly southwestern Japan), drawing from his 21 years of experience of teaching, traveling and just living in the country.

His presentation will cover a variety of topics pertinent to Japan: some basic earth science, climate, flora and fauna. Particular attention will be focused on plate tectonics as it relates to earthquakes and the volcanoes of Kyushu, fossil hunting, and plants of everyday importance in traditional Japanese life.

Dr. Johnson was educated at Samford University, B.S (Biology) 1971, M.S. (Biology) 1973, and Emory University, where he earned his Ph.D. (Genetics) in 1977. He taught at Concordia College, in Moorhead, MN from 1976 to 1986 before moving to Fukuoka, Japan to teach at Seinan Gakuin University from 1989 to 2008. Since 2008 he has been on the faculty at Samford University, in the Biology Department.

In addition to his academic pursuits, Dr. Johnson has also served as a missionary with the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board 1986-2003; and as a missionary in informal partnership with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship 2003-2008.

2011-2012 Audubon Teaches Nature Series

An Introduction to the Spiders of Alabama
Sunday, October 23rd, 2:00 p.m. ~ Mike Howell, Guest Speaker
Oak Mountain Interpretive Center Auditorium

I am happy to announce that the 2011-2012 slate of Audubon Teaches Nature (ATN) seminars has been confirmed and I think you'll like the choice of seminar speakers and topics. Some are familiar favorites while other speakers and topics are new to the series.

The ATN seminar series is a joint effort of the Alabama Wildlife Center, Birmingham Audubon Society, Friends of Oak Mountain and the Oak Mountain Interpretive Center. The seminar topics were selected to appeal to a range of natural history interests for all age levels and it is especially hoped that families with children will attend together. After all, the family that plays together stays together!

The first speaker in the series is well known to BAS members and the Birmingham conservation community. Dr. Mike Howell, co-author (with Ron Jenkins) of the book Spiders of the Eastern United States, will inaugurate the series with a presentation on the spiders of Alabama. Mike will introduce us to the common spiders found in this region, helping us to understand their field marks, habitat preferences and other characteristics of each species. After the program and weather permitting, he will escort us into the field to demonstrate firsthand how to locate and identify spiders commonly found in Alabama woodlands. This will be a fascinating, educational and exciting program for the whole family; bring your children for sure!

(Continued on page 5)
9 August through 31 August, 2011

As of 9 August, the Sargents report that this has been a banner year for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds - the largest migratory population at their feeders they have ever seen. Sugar water consumption has been three plus gallons a day during the period. They fully expect this to continue through mid-September. Hot weather APPEARS to have no effect on the migrating hummers.

Other sightings were:

8/26 Common Nighthawk; An entertaining evening watching “Bullbats” in Homewood (HP).
8/26 Chimney Swift (150-200); An abandoned chimney at 7th Ave. South, the old Jim Burke Automobile building (GH).
8/28 Warbling Vireo (early Mountain Region record); Cahaba River, Hoover (GJ).
8/31 Double-crested Cormorant; Green Heron (a family of four); Wood Duck (12); Hoover Treatment Plant (AC, HW).

Contributors: Alice Christenson
Greg Harber
Greg Jackson
Hans Paul
Bob and Martha Sargent
Harriett Wright

Please submit sightings for November/December FF at least five days before the October 1st deadline to:
Ann Miller, 520 Yorkshire Drive, Birmingham, Al. 35209

The Birmingham Audubon Society gratefully acknowledges the following gifts and memorial donations:

In memory of Wilma Lindberg from Elbera G. Reid and Ranny & Cheryl Kittinger
Moss Rock Preserve - 1/2 Day Trip
October 1, 2011 - 7:00 a.m.

Moss Rock Preserve is popular nature preserve located in Hoover, and on this trip we will observe some of its unique flowers, scenery and hopefully some birds as well. Migration will be at its peak. We will first walk trails through the Boulder Field to visit the largest sandstone glade in the area during the peak bloom of the rare Nutfall's Rayless Goldenrod. The glade also supports natural bonsai pine trees of various species including longleaf as well as the rare Georgia Oak. This area can produce some good migrants such as Cape May Warbler. A Sora (a species of rail) was even observed here once in the fall. There is potential for butterflies as well.

From the glade we will backtrack and drive to the Wills family residence for a break. This area along the northern edge of the park has great views all the way to Oak Mountain State Park. Its position on the ridgeline makes it very productive for various migrants including Least Flycatchers. The adjacent power line right of way may produce some early winter sparrows. If stream flows remain in to October we will wrap up with a short drive and walk to a waterfall on some new city land acquisitions next to the park. For those more adventuresome we will offer an optional tour of the extremely beautiful Boulder Gorge area on the new city land acquisitions.

The initial quarter mile roundtrip walk to the sandstone glade involves following trails down and back up a moderate slope, crossing a streambed (which will be dry) and navigating the gradual slope of the sandstone glade.

The stop at the Wills residence involves limited walking on relatively flat terrain. The short walk to and from the waterfall will involve a moderate slope, while the optional extended tour of Boulder Gorge involves a 2-mile loop including some steep slopes. Bring water and a snack.

Travel Plans: We will meet in the parking area for the Boulder Field at 7:00 a.m.

Chief Ladiga Trail, Piedmont, AL
October 22, 2011 - 7:00 a.m.

We'll continue our trend of visiting birding sites in east Alabama with a trip to the Chief Ladiga Trail – a Rails-to-Trails project that runs through Piedmont, AL. (You can read the details about the trail at http://www.jsu.edu/epic/CLT.html). Given the time of the year, we'll hopefully enjoy some wonderful fall color while we’re enjoying our trek along the trail. The trail is flat and the surface paved, so this is a particularly good trip to take if you prefer an easy walking surface.

We'll start the morning at the Piedmont Sports Park entrance to the trail. There is a small creek here and the trail traverses scenic farm and field habitat. Lunch will be at the Sports Park, streamside.

Following lunch we'll make our way to the visitor center in Piedmont for a restroom break before continuing east on CR-70 (Vigo Road) to another section of the trail that passes through riparian forest habitat along Terrapin Creek. This too is an easy walking path. If you wish to bring your bike and spend part of the day biking the trail, feel free to call the trip leader in advance of the trip to discuss your options.

Travel plans: Depart 7:00 a.m. from the Eastwood McDonald’s, located at 1569 Montclair Road and caravans east on I-20 to exit #185 (Oxford-Anniston), where we'll catch AL-21 north to the Piedmont Sports Park. Those who wish to meet us in the Oxford area should be at the McDonald’s Restaurant on AL-21 north of the interstate at this exit (#185) at 8:00 a.m. Please notify the trip leader if you intend to meet us here. Bring scopes, binoculars, water, drinks, lunch, a full tank of gas, insect repellant, and sunscreen.

For further details and/or questions, please call our trip leader Greg Harber at 205-251-2133.

Remember, BAS field trips are free and open to everyone; all ages are welcome.
CHOO-CHOO Birding!
By Shirley Farrell

The ground vibrates and a high-pitched whistle breaks the silence, as the train rolls by. This is not the current experience hikers, birders, and bicyclists have on the Chief Ladiga Trail. This trail stretches through Calhoun and Cleburne counties and ends at the Alabama-Georgia border. Years ago this trail was train tracks but thanks to the Rails-to-Trails project, the public can enjoy this trail. The Chief Ladiga Trail is the first Rails-to-Trails project in Alabama. Plans to connect the trail to the Silver Comet Trail in Georgia are underway which will create a 90 mile trail for non-motorized travel! The mission of the Rails-to-trails project is “create a nationwide network of trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors to build healthier places for healthier people...” These trails are free and open to the public. Throughout America there are over 1,600 trails covering over 19,000 miles. Alabama has 11 rails-trails covering 65 miles but the Rails-to-trails project has helped to develop 20 trails total. Chief Ladiga is the longest trail in Alabama at 33 miles long. This trail “follows a former CSX railroad corridor. The rail-trail is named for the Creek Indian leader who signed the 1832 Cusseta Treaty, surrendering the tribe’s remaining land in the area.” (http://www.traillink.com/trail/chief-ladiga-trail.aspx)

At one of the trailheads (entrance to the trail) you can see the historic settlement of Borden Springs. This settlement was a mineral springs resort during the late 1800’s-early 1900’s. People from all over the United States would stay here and enjoy the cool water, but not enough people came to keep the resort in business and it closed 1933.

The trail winds through wetlands, swamps, streams, agricultural fields, upland forests and bottomland forests providing birders with opportunities to see many, varied and sometimes unusual birds, especially during the fall and spring migrations.

Join Birmingham Audubon for an all-day field trip to the Chief Ladiga trail on October 22, 2011 and enjoy the various habitats and birds species!

For a map of the trail go to http://www.chiefladiga.com/
As the Education Director for Birmingham Audubon Society, it is my job to excite both other educators and students about birds. One resource available to not only me but also to teachers around the state is the Flying WILD bird curriculum. This curriculum touches every discipline from Language Arts, Science, Math, Social Studies, Art, and Physical Education as well as Environmental Education. The main purpose of this program is to provide activities that teach middle-school students about birds, their migration, and conserving bird habitats, and best of all it is FREE when you attend a one-day workshop!

Imagine your students “becoming” birds as they take their own migration journey. As they move through one activity, they face the dangers that natural birds face during their migration twice a year. Students learn that feral cats are not the only dangers that await birds as they fly; there are also the reflections on tall skyscrapers, electrical wires, and pesticides too. Because birds make this journey from north to south and back again, students learn that many different states and people are responsible for providing care for these birds and the outcome of their future.

There are activities on bird beak adaptations, what kinds of feeders to put up for the birds that are in your area, and oil problems and how to help. Since we just went through the oil spill in the Gulf last summer, this activity has a ton of impact! Speaking of the oil spill, there are many activities in the book that focus on feathers and their structure, too.

Sketch a bird, while making observations at an outdoor feeder, or brush up on your photography skills. You can make a bird out of recycled materials and create your own bird species and tell everyone where it lives, what the habitat requirements are, and what it eats. There are endless possibilities when it comes to the art activities.

Culture and literature meet hand-in-hand when you teach children about the proverbs from around the world, write poetry in different forms, and start bird journaling. Students can then become citizen scientists by identifying and counting the birds in their backyard. Every student becomes an important part of a global study so scientists can monitor the population of individual species and figure out why certain species are vanishing, so they can correct the problem before the species ends up on the endangered list.

If you are interested in attending a Flying WILD workshop, and/or hosting a bird festival at your school, contact me and I will be happy to assist you. Birds are a big part of our world because they are everywhere. This is what makes it easy to study them and that is why it is so easy to become excited about these fascinating creatures.

You can always reach me via email at: educationdirector@birminghamaudubon.org or at (205) 714-8228.

FlyingWILD
By Helena Umber-Wamble

Be sure to come early and enjoy some refreshments and conversation in the Observation Room at the Alabama Wildlife Center, then, when it is time for the program, we will proceed to the Interpretive Center for the presentation.

Other topics in the series are:

**Discovering Alabama ~ Your Ticket to Nature’s Finest Show**
Sunday, November 20th, 2:00 p.m. ~ Doug Phillips, Guest Speaker

**An Introduction to Birds of Prey**
Sunday, January 15th, 1:00 & 3:00 p.m. ~ Southeastern Raptor Center, Auburn University

**Great Backyard Bird Count ~ Citizen Science You Can Do!**
Sunday, February 19th, 2:00 p.m. ~ Greg Harber, Guest Speaker

**Bluebirds Among Us ~ The John Finlday Bluebird Trail**
Sunday, March 18th, 2:00 p.m. ~ Patsy Scott, Guest Speaker

**Hooray for Honeybees ~ Workers in your Garden!**
Sunday, April 15th, 2:00 p.m. ~ Sallie Lee, Guest Speaker

**Fabulous Frogs and Terrific Toads ~ Learning the Frogs and Toads of Alabama**
Sunday, May 20th, 2:00 p.m. ~ Stephen Glasgow, Guest Speaker
Did You Ever See a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron Fishing in Your Yard?
By Carolyn Roberson

For four years, I have watched (sometimes from my kitchen window) Yellow-crowned Night-Herons nest, breed, and raise young in a neighborhood oak tree.

June 22, 2011 – A heavy thunderstorm blew through, causing little “rivers” of water to wash down the street. As the last few drops of rain were falling I looked across the street. Where the pavement meets the grass of my neighbor’s lawn, a little rivulet of water was gushing down to the gutter, and there I saw a juvenile YCNH. It’s not uncommon this time of year to see the juveniles on fences and rooftops as they test their flying abilities, so I had to watch him for a minute before I realized what he was doing. He was standing on the pavement beside the gushing rain water and he was fishing! Instinct or Mother Nature tells him to stand beside running water and look for fish, minnows, crayfish, etc. Sure enough, this baby stabbed at something in the water - a bug? A leaf? Who knows? I laughed to see him fishing in rain run-off, but at the same time I was in awe of how he knew what to do (if not exactly where). After a minute or two, a car came down the street and he took flight; I was pleased to see him flying well.

The juveniles are still hanging around the nests, so perhaps Mom is still feeding them. But soon she will lead them to the creek and they have to feed themselves. And I know they can do it - I’ve seen it from my own backyard.

Editor’s Note: By the 2nd week in July, nobody was at the nests. Everybody was fishing in the creek.

(Moss Rock, Continued from page 3)

(approximately 0.6 mile. Go through one traffic circle (roundabout) and look for angled parking spaces on your left and right. When headed this direction, Moss Rock Preserve will be on your left.

Direction from I-459 via Exit 13, Hwy 31 (Riverchase Galleria): Take exit #13 (Hwy 31) and head north towards Vestavia. Turn left on Patton Chapel Road and stay straight for approximately 3 miles to the 2nd traffic light, which is the intersection of Preserve Pkwy. To get to Boulder Field, turn left on Preserve Pkwy and drive approximately 1.5 miles. Go through one traffic circle (roundabout) and look for angled parking spaces on your right and left. When headed this direction, Moss Rock Preserve will be on your right.

Follow this link to read more information about Moss Rock Reserve: http://www.hooveral.org/Default.asp?ID=485&pg=Moss+Rock+Preserve

Trip Leader: Ken Wills. Questions call his cell at (205) 515-9412.

BAS Membership/Flicker Flashes/E-Mail Questionnaire

In an effort to better serve the interests and needs of the members of the Birmingham Audubon Society, we are asking you to complete and return a short questionnaire.

BAS is in the process of implementing an email system. Our plan is to send at least one email monthly to everyone on our email list. This monthly message will contain links to our website and possibly other website to help you quickly access pertinent information. In addition, we may use the system to send out last minute messages regarding BAS activities (field trip cancellations, impromptu field trips, etc.).

Eight times a year, BAS mails over 1500 copies our newsletter. Some of these are read and kept for personal reasons, some are read and then discarded, and some are discarded without ever being read. We now have the ability to allow members to opt-out of receiving printed copies of Flicker Flashes if they so desire.

All the information printed in Flicker Flashes is available on the BAS website at www.birminghamaudubon.org. Additionally, the website has timely information about BAS activities and projects well beyond the scope of the Flicker Flashes newsletter. As a conservation organization and prudent stewards of the resources entrusted to us, BAS is concerned about distributing unwanted copies of the newsletter. Therefore, we are asking you to notify us of your preferences as follows:

(Continued on page 7)
~ Membership Application ~

Birmingham Audubon Society/National Audubon Society*

☐ Birmingham Audubon Society
New Members and Renewals $20.00
Seniors (62 or better) $15.00
Full-time Students $15.00

Make check payable to: Birmingham Audubon Society
Send application and check to:
Birmingham Audubon Society
c/o McWane Science Center
200 19th Street North
Birmingham, AL 35203-3117

☐ National Audubon Society
New Members* $20.00
Seniors (62 or better) $15.00
Full-time Students $15.00

* NAS will contact you directly for membership renewal

Make check payable to: National Audubon Society
Send application and check to:
National Audubon Society
c/o McWane Science Center
200 19th Street North
Birmingham, AL 35203-3117

Name: ________________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________
City, State and Zip code: _________________________________________________
Phone: (      ) ______________________  Email: ______________________________

☐ I want to opt-out of receiving a printed copy of Flicker Flashes (please provide us with your email address)

My check for $___________ is enclosed.

Phone: (205) 714-8227
Birmingham Audubon Society C1ZA0000Z
Birmingham Audubon Society is tax exempt under 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code

* There are two ways to become a member of Birmingham Audubon Society:

1. Join Birmingham Audubon Society without National Audubon Society affiliation. This chapter only membership provides you access to all chapter activities and benefits. All dues stay in Birmingham to support local activities. You will not receive the National Audubon magazine.

— OR —

2. Join National Audubon Society. Birmingham Audubon Society serves as a local chapter of the National Audubon Society. Joining National Audubon Society also provides you a membership to Birmingham Audubon Society and access to all chapter activities and benefits. You will receive the National Audubon magazine. Your dues support the work of National Audubon Society and a small percentage of your first year dues are returned to the Birmingham Audubon Society for local efforts.

BAS Membership/Flicker Flashes/E-Mail Questionnaire

(Continued from page 6)

1. Would you like to opt-out of receiving printed copies of Flicker Flashes? _____ Yes _____ No (If yes, please consider allowing us to put you on our email list. Your email address will NOT be shared with anyone!)

2. Would you like to be included on our email list? _____ Yes _____ No (If yes, please provide your email address on the form above)

Responses can be submitted as follows:

Via mail (preferred) – enter your personal information above (on the membership application), check your preferences to the two questions above and mail this entire page to the BAS office at the address listed above.

Via email – email the information requested above to: Audubon@mcwane.org

Via phone – call the BAS office (714-8227) and provide the information requested above.

Your input is valued and we want to encourage you to return this survey so that we can better serve you as a BAS member!
Correction: The yearly calendar indicates that AOS will be meeting at Guntersville State Park in January 2012. In actually, they will meet at Lake Point State Park in Eufaula. We apologize for this error.