

Flicker Flashes

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The Birmingham Audubon Society

For conservation and greater knowledge of
all wildlife, wilderness and natural resources

MARCH MONTHLY MEETING

The Walls Of Jericho, a North Alabama Treasure

Presented by: Eric Soehren, Terrestrial Zoologist
Alabama Department Of Conservation and Natural Resources
Thursday, March 20, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.
Birmingham Zoo Auditorium

Our March meeting will be a “virtual” tour of the Walls of Jericho tract, from atop the plateau down to the crystal clear creek-bottom, showcasing a number of the property’s unique natural attributes. Eric’s program will feature not only birds, but also wildflowers, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, and more. The Walls of Jericho property was acquired several years ago by the Forever Wild Program and is serving as a catalyst for additional property conservation efforts in northeast Alabama. This biologically rich area holds multiple treasures, many of which Eric will include in his presentation.

Eric Soehren is from Jacksonville, Alabama and attended Jacksonville State University for both his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Biology with an emphasis in ornithology. Following graduate school, Eric accepted a position with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), State Lands Division (SLD). He currently serves as the Terrestrial Zoologist for the SLD Natural Heritage Section. Much of his work is directly associated with the Alabama Forever Wild Program; a state-administered land acquisition program.

Some of Eric’s responsibilities include conducting field surveys for rare and poorly known faunal species and performing ecology-related research on Forever Wild lands. His work provides

important information that assists in guiding the management of these lands for conservation and recreational opportunities, which helps insure that some of Alabama’s special natural areas will remain preserved and managed appropriately for the public’s benefit.

Eric is also involved with several conservation restoration projects on Forever Wild lands. In addition to his work responsibilities, Eric also serves as the Vice President of the Alabama Ornithological Society, the Alabama coordinator for the USGS Breeding Bird Survey, and a review member on the Alabama Bird Records Committee.

Additionally, Eric is federally permitted to band birds through the USGS Bird Banding Lab and operates a Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) station on the F.W. Wehle Nature Preserve in Bullock County, Alabama.

Attend and enjoy this program

Please come early at 6:45 to socialize and enjoy some refreshments. Guests are welcome.

Hans Paul,
VP Programs

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: **A Reminder:** The Flicker Flashes is available in pdf format on the Birmingham Audubon Society’s web site at :
: <http://www.birminghamaudubon.org/>. Although we make every effort to ensure your newsletter arrives in a :
: timely manner the mail delivery can be un-predictable. If you notice any broken links or missing files you may :
: contact the BAS webmaster at baswebmaster@birminghamaudubon.org or by clicking the “Contact Us” link :
: found at the bottom of the BAS Home Page.
:.....

2007 BAS Christmas Bird Count Report

Saturday, December 22, 2007

Birds: Infrequently or 1st time reported: Northern Shoveler, Redhead, Horned Grebe, Least Sandpiper, Eurasian Collared Dove, Calliope Hummingbird and Vesper Sparrow. Herons were well represented by Green at the Zoo, Black-crowned at Eastlake Park, the injured Yellow-crowned in Valley Creek at Rickwood and 50 (new high count) Great Blue. Between 1934 and 1999, Bald Eagle had one count week record. Since then we have recorded it 6 times and this year we had two birds reported by two different parties. Cooper's Hawk was reported by 8 of 10 parties and the total of 23 is a new high, which almost doubled the previous high count of 12 set last year. Vultures set new high count totals with 46 Turkey and 24 Black. Loggerhead Shrike seems to be edging toward joining Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Northern Bobwhite in the no longer recorded group. We had 2 this year; the high count was 37 in 1966.

Effort: 10 parties, 27 observers, 2 feeder watchers, 77.75 hours in the field plus 2.5 hours owling and a total of 381 miles traveled on foot and by car.

Participants: **Andrew Haffenden**, Mac Braid, **Greg Harber**, Bill Turnock, **Mary Lou Miller**, Lida Hill, Elisa Majia, Gena McWilliams, Catherine Hodges, Cindy Pinger, **Stan Hamilton**, Dana Hamilton, **Frank Farrell**, Shirley Farrell, Harriett Wright, **Pelham Rowan**, Lee Nick, Cathy Nick, **Helen Kittinger**, Rick Kittinger, Ty Keith, Sue Hutchison, **Maureen Schafer**, Lee Brewer, Martha Dagg, **Ted Weems**, **Sharon Hudgins**, David George

Compiler
David George

Canada Goose	269	Belted Kingfisher	24	Eastern Towhee	82
Wood Duck	22	Red-headed Woodpecker	21	Chipping Sparrow	64
Gadwall	2	Red-bellied Woodpecker	78	Field Sparrow	83
Mallard	23	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	31	Vesper Sparrow	1
Northern Shoveler	1	Downy Woodpecker	39	Savannah Sparrow	92
Redhead	2	Hairy Woodpecker	7	Fox Sparrow	8
Ring-necked Duck	113	Northern Flicker	75	Song Sparrow	196
Lesser Scaup	1	Pileated Woodpecker	8	Swamp Sparrow	48
Pied-billed Grebe	21	Eastern Phoebe	29	White-throated Sparrow	262
Horned Grebe	6	Loggerhead Shrike	2	Dark-eyed Junco	181
Great Blue Heron	50	Blue Jay	312	Northern Cardinal	189
Green Heron	1	American Crow	1329	Red-winged Blackbird	3945
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	1	Fish Crow	3	Eastern Meadowlark	51
Black-crowned Night-Heron	5	Carolina Chickadee	224	Rusty Blackbird	42
Turkey Vulture	46	Tufted Titmouse	129	Common Grackle	20039
Black Vulture	24	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	Brown-headed Cowbird	358
Bald Eagle	2	White-breasted Nuthatch	20	Blackbird species	357
Northern Harrier	3	Brown-headed Nuthatch	63	Purple Finch	45
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	Brown Creeper	7	House Finch	127
Cooper's Hawk	23	Carolina Wren	100	Pine Siskin	18
Red-shouldered Hawk	18	Winter Wren	1	American Goldfinch	378
Red-tailed Hawk	35	Golden-crowned Kinglet	15	House Sparrow	44
American Kestrel	4	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	69		
American Coot	7	Eastern Bluebird	89		
Killdeer	38	Hermit Thrush	5		
Least Sandpiper	5	American Robin	1100		
Wilson's Snipe	2	Northern Mockingbird	112		
Rock Pigeon	938	Brown Thrasher	35		
Eurasian Collared-Dove	1	European Starling	1149		
Mourning Dove	875	American Pipit	60		
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Cedar Waxwing	1589		
Great Horned Owl	2	Yellow-rumped Warbler	138		
Barred Owl	7	Pine Warbler	12		
Calliope Hummingbird	1	Palm Warbler	2		

BAS Half-Day Field Trip Saturday, March 1, 2008 Roebuck Springs and East Lake Park

Our half-day field trip this month will feature two local birding favorites: Roebuck Springs and East Lake Park. Our first stop will be Roebuck Springs (Don Hawkins Park) where we will get close-up views of gorgeous Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers. We should also see several woodpecker species, as well as brown-headed nuthatches, sparrows, yellow-rumped warblers, and other winter passerines. Last year a Merlin was an unexpected treat at this park. We will then continue down First Avenue North to East

Lake Park, where we hope to observe a variety of ducks and Black-crowned Night-Herons.

Travel Plans: Meet at the McDonald's on Roebuck Parkway at 7:30 a.m. To get there take I-59 N to the Roebuck Parkway exit (134), turn left and cross the Parkway. Turn right into the CVS lot. After the field trip, those who wish to stay can join us for lunch at the Golden Rule BBQ in Irondale. For more information contact Frank Farrell at 815-3554 or Frank_Far@msn.com.

March Field Trip Saturday, March 29, 2008 Bankhead National Forest

Come join us on this birding, wildflower field trip to the beautiful Bankhead National Forest and Sipsey Wilderness. Writing about this field trip two months before it happens makes it difficult to predict exactly what we may see, because we do not know what the weather will be like. With fairly decent weather, we should see some good birds and early spring wildflowers.

Once we all gather at the Sipsey Recreation Area, and because some of this will be in the Wilderness Area, we will break into groups of 10 to 12, and go to different sites. The groups can bird their area and then come back to the Recreation area and swap sites. At lunch time we will picnic at the Recreation Area. Be sure to start out with a full tank of gas AND bring water and a picnic lunch. After lunch, for those who wish to do so, we will visit other areas of the forest to bird and look for wildflowers. For those who

make a full day of it there are places to eat dinner on the way home.

Travel Plans: Meet Frank Farrell at the Wal-Mart in Sumiton on US 78 at 7:30 a.m. To get there from Birmingham, go west on I 20/I 59 to Exit 123 and the junction of US 78 and Arkadelphia Road; go west on US 78 for about 20 miles, the Wal-Mart is on the right. From here, continue west on US 78 for about 16 miles to AL 195; go right and north on AL 195 for about 24 miles (go through Double Springs) to its junction with US 278 and AL 33; go straight across this intersection and go north on AL 33 for 12.7 miles to Winston Co 6 and turn left and go west about 3.8 miles to the Recreation Area parking lot on the left. Do not cross the bridge. NOTE: this is a fee area. Ann and I will meet the group here. If you have any questions call Ann or Bob Tate, 967-0304.

Audubon Sessions Sanctuary Workday Enjoy a Morning of Good Work and Good Company Saturday, March 15, 2008 - 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. Lunch at the Golden Rule BBQ in Irondale

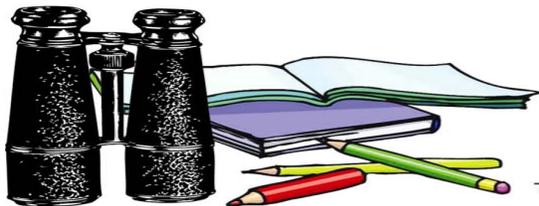
The Sessions Sanctuary is interesting undeveloped property in Mountain Brook on Shades Creek that was donated to the Birmingham Audubon Society as a bird sanctuary by the late Mr. & Mrs. Tram Sessions. The BAS Sanctuary helps protect the Cahaba River watershed.

Please join us for the workday at the Sessions Sanctuary on Saturday, March 15 at 9:00 a.m. Bring your work gloves and, if you have them, a pair of plant clippers. Plans are to meet at the end of Forest Glen Drive, near the Sanctuary. We will do some work re-

moving invasive plants and enjoy a tour of the property to observe plant, animal and bird life.

To reach the Sanctuary, in Mountain Brook, proceed east (away from the Zoo) on Montevallo Road. At the Crestline area, turn right at the signal light on to Montrose Rd, bear right onto Old Leads Road, turn left onto Forest Glen, proceed to the end of Forest Glen and meet us at 9:00.

John Swan, 933-6469 & Ellen Mc Laughlin, 595-0806
Co-Chairs, Sessions Sanctuary Property



Conservation Corner

Notes from the Conservation Committee

American consumers drink more bottled water every year, in part because advertising campaigns have succeeded at convincing us that it is somehow safer or better than tap water. In general, bottled water is no cleaner, or safer, or healthier than tap water. In fact the federal Environmental Protection Agency requires far more rigorous and frequent safety testing and monitoring of municipal drinking water. The Food and Drug Administration does not require bottled water to meet the EPA's standards for tap water.

Bottled water takes a significant toll on our environment. Oil is required to make, move, and transport millions of plastic bottles. Making bottles emits toxic chemicals. About 86% of empty plastic water bottles in the U.S. land in the garbage where they can take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Many environmentally sensitive consumers

who like the convenience of portable bottles use a reusable container such as a stainless steel bottle with a non-toxic coating that is baked into the interior walls. There is much less chance for bacteria build-up with these bottles as opposed to plastic containers. One company that makes these containers is SIGG, and they can be purchased at most outdoor stores in various sizes and styles.

To learn more about bottled water visit www.foodandwaterwatch.org or www.sierraclub.org and type "bottled water" in the search box.

The Conservation Committee offers a writing table at most BAS General Meetings to give members an opportunity to make public officials aware of environmental issues. We furnish the printed post cards and stamps. If you have a suggestion for a timely issue, you may contact the Conservation Committee Chair at Lidahill@charter.net.

Audubon Teaches Nature

Alabama Wildflowers ~ Beauty Abounds at Oak Mountain State Park

Presented by Drs. Larry Davenport & Mike Howell, Guest Speakers

Sunday, March 2, 2008 at 2:00 P.M.

The Alabama Wildlife Center at Oak Mountain State Park

Wildflowers add a colorful component to the landscape, and Alabama is blessed with a wealth of species. Some are common and found in all parts of the state, while others are quite rare and confined to unique habitats. Drs. Davenport and Howell are authoring a book on Alabama Wildflowers; come learn which species are found within Oak Mountain State Park and the central Alabama region.

Following the program, and weather permitting, there will be a nature walk in the park to observe early blooming wildflowers and lingering winter birds. Bring your binoculars and wear comfortable walking shoes. Park admission is \$3.00 per person but the program itself is free; please come join us for an afternoon at the park.

Remember, the Alabama Wildlife Center will serve cookies and punch in the Observation Room before the seminar. And door prizes will be awarded too, but you must register and be present in order to win.

Our next seminar in the series:

The Underwater World of Oak Mountain State Park

Sunday, April 6th, 2:00 PM

Dr. Bob Stiles and David Frings, Guest Speakers

Come early for fellowship and refreshments in the Observation Room at The Center!



Activities for Fledgling Naturalists

Knock, Knock – Who's There? Woodpeckers

One destination of the half-day field trip this month is to Roebuck Springs. You will usually see Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers on the pond or in the creek that meanders through the golf course. I always look forward to seeing woodpeckers. All but one species can be seen in this area. Woodpeckers live all over the world except in Australia and Madagascar.

Their coloring helps them blend in with the trees. All male woodpeckers have red somewhere on their heads. The Red-headed Woodpecker has red all over its head whereas the Red-cockaded Woodpecker has a small bit of red on the sides of its head. Our state bird, the Northern Flicker or "Yellowhammer," is a woodpecker, too. Its favorite food is ants! To be able to reach the insects woodpeckers have a sticky tip on their tongues, which can be up to 4" long.

Woodpeckers are very unique. What other bird can drill holes in wood?! Their beak acts like a chisel and a crowbar to help the woodpecker remove the bark to find insects or create a cavity for nesting. The woodpecker will tap the bark and then listen for the insect to move. When the bird hears the movement, the wood-

pecker will chisel at the wood until he finds his meal. While insects make up the largest part of the woodpecker diet, they will also eat fruit, seeds, and nuts.

Their tail feathers are very stiff and help the bird prop itself on the tree. Most of these birds have two toes pointing forward and two toes pointing backward to help them grip the tree.

The tapping or drumming is also a form of communication. They tell other woodpeckers that this territory belongs to them or they are looking for a mate. Why don't they get a headache after all that tap, tap tapping?

That's because the woodpecker has a thick skull with spongy bone to cushion the brain and the whole body absorbs the shock of the tapping.

We have 7 woodpeckers (Pileated, Hairy, Downy, Red-bellied, Red-headed, Red-cockaded, and Northern Flicker) that stay in Alabama all year long and one woodpecker (Yellow-bellied Sapsucker) that spends the winter in the South. Suet feeders hanging in your yard will attract the woodpeckers.

Crossword Puzzle

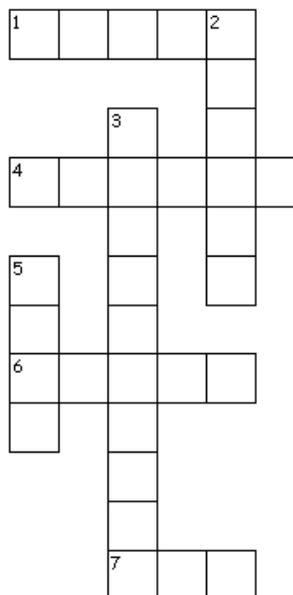
Created by Puzzlemaker at DiscoveryEducation.com

Across

1. another food eaten by this bird
4. - type of skull
6. where this bird creates its nest
7. color on the head of all male birds of this type

Down

2. what this bird uses to get insects
3. type of bird in Kid's Corner
5. another food eaten by this bird



Birmingham Audubon in Education

BAS AWARDS MINI-GRANTS TO LOCAL TEACHERS FOR NATURE AND CONSERVATION PROJECTS, PROGRAMS, & FIELD TRIPS

The Birmingham Audubon Society awarded 38 education mini-grants to teachers in Jefferson and Shelby counties for the academic year, 2007-2008. The financial support for the grants comes from the Diana Stobert Sessions and Paul Trammell Sessions, Jr. Foundation. BAS is very grateful for the Sessions' generosity.

2007- '08 mini-grants:

1. Bluff Park Elementary School - \$250 - Ecoscape/outdoor science center, Caroline Adams
2. Brighton Elementary School and Lipscomb Elementary School - \$250 - Cahaba River Society field trip, Dr. Bette Kersting Bell
3. Paine Intermediate - \$225 - Ruffner Mt. Nature Center classroom speaker, Ann Bettis
4. Jonesboro Elementary School - \$247- Zoo field trip, Latosha Billups
5. Homewood High School - \$250 - Bird feeding stations, Linda Boostrom
6. John E. Bryan Elementary School - \$245 - Nature trail, Robin Miller Brower
7. Jonesboro Elementary School - \$248 - Bird feeders, binoculars, Zoo field trip, Peggy Brown
8. Edgewood Elementary School - \$243 - Loupes for outdoor nature study, Jamie Burton
9. Bluff Park Elementary School - \$250 - Ecoscape/outdoor science center, Pamela Conville
10. Jonesboro Elementary School - \$247 - Zoo field trip, Taura Craig
11. Grantswood Community School – \$229 – Field trip to Botanical Gardens, Trish Cummings
12. Jonesboro Elementary School - \$248 - Zoo field trip, Keisha Daniels
13. Kermit Johnson Elementary School - \$250 - Outdoor classroom, Dianne Davis
14. Avondale School - \$250 - Outdoor classroom, Joy Doering
15. EPIC School - \$250 - Field trip to Southern Environmental Center, Audrey Fine
16. N.E. Miles Jewish Day School - \$248 - Organic garden, hummingbird garden, field trip to Southern Environmental Center, Susan Greene
17. North Highland Elementary School - \$250 - Field trip to Botanical Gardens, Yvonne Hare
18. Chelsea Middle School - \$250 - Outdoor classroom, Cornell University Project Feeder Watch, Michelle Haube
19. Minor Community School - \$250 - Zoo field trip, Tracy Hughes
20. Paine Primary School - \$250 - Zoo field trip, Susan Johnson
21. Jonesboro Elementary School - \$247 –School pond, Becky Murray
22. Shades Valley Jeff. County International Baccalaureate High School - \$250 - Peterson bird field guides, Marilyn Niemann
23. Gresham Elementary School - \$250 - Field trip to Botanical Gardens and books, Jeff Patterson
24. N.E. Miles Jewish Day School - \$250 - Green Day materials, Lauren Perlman
25. & 26. Phillips Academy - \$490 – Two grants for field trip for 2 classes to The McWane Science Center, Caroline Polson
27. Paine Primary School - \$250 - Field trip to Zoo, Anne Pratt
28. Clay Chalkville Middle School - \$250 - Bird watching area of outdoor classroom, Michael Radeke
29. Glen Iris Elementary School - \$250 - Field trip to U.S. Space and Rocket Center, Pamela D. Rogers
30. Arthur Elementary School - \$250 – Science and nature books, Brenda Roy
31. Grantswood Elementary School - \$250 - Bird Viewing Station, Florence Selman)
32. & 33. Phillips Academy - \$500 – Two grants for field trip for 2 classes to The McWane Science Center, Vieshell Tatum
34. Jonesboro Elementary School - \$249 - Field trip to Zoo, Toni Taylor
35. Lipscomb Elementary School - \$250 - Transportation for Science Olympiad Team tournament, Anetra Thrash
36. & 37. A.G. Gaston School - \$470 – Two grants for materials for outdoor garden, Timothy Vann, Donna McCollum, Shirley Taylor
38. Jonesboro Elementary School - \$249 - Field trip to Zoo, Lareka Windsor

To gain a better sense of the nature of the projects and programs that the mini-grants help fund, read mini-grant recipient Caroline Adams' response on the application form to a question about what she hoped to accomplish with her project:

"We want to provide children with real-life exposure to and experience with nature. We want students to know Alabama's native wildlife and plants. We want to provide hands-on outdoor learning opportunities using skills from all subject-areas to explore nature in a fun, safe, and exciting way. If children learn to care about the natural world when they are young, then hopefully they will continue to want to care for plants and animals in Nature for their entire lives. We hope to set up at least 7 outdoor learning-stations so that each grade-level can have their own "outdoor classroom" on our one-acre lot. (Bluff Park Elementary, Hoover) We hope to have features such as a "pondless" water-feature, nature trails, nesting boxes

Cont'd from previous page:

for native birds, plants that are native to Alabama, a compost area, and many other features. We want the students to learn about wildlife in an outdoor setting, instead of just talking about it inside the walls of a school building. We want to attract wildlife and study the animal tracks and "signs" that they leave. The more that children know about the animals and plants in their backyard, the more likely they are to care about them".

Please also read part of a report sent to the BAS Education Committee upon completion of a mini-grant funded field trip to the Botanical Gardens. The report was written by Trish Cummings, a second grade science teacher at Grantswood Elementary School in the Jefferson County School system.

"I thank the Birmingham Audubon Society so much for helping our 2nd graders at Grantswood to be able to afford the trip to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens... Our children listened to the story of George Washington Carver with such interest. They were so excited about digging the peanuts sweet potatoes, and picking the cotton. Our "city children" often are not exposed to these aspects of country living... Thank you for reaching out to our children to make a difference in their education and their lives. We are proud of our children at Grantswood and are trying to give them every opportunity to successfully learn how to live and make a living".

Education Committee

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Clip along dotted line

~ Membership Application ~

Birmingham Audubon Society/ National Audubon Society

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: () _____

Introductory membership ~ \$20.00
Includes quarterly subscription to **Audubon** magazine and 8 issues of *Flicker Flashes*, the chapter newsletter.
Senior (62 & older) and student (full-time) memberships available for \$15.00.
(Preferred method of payment for all new members is through the chapter, using this form).

Regular membership/Renewals ~ \$20.00
The National Audubon Society handles membership renewals through their Membership Data Center. Contact them at 1-800-274-4201 or write them at:
P.O. Box 52529,
Boulder, CO 80322-2529.
Submit renewals directly to NAS.

My check for \$_____ is enclosed.

Please make check payable to: National Audubon Society

Mail this form and check to: Birmingham Audubon Society
P.O. Box 314
Birmingham, AL 35201

Birmingham Audubon Society *AOO7XCH8

March 2008

- 1 *Flicker Flashes* articles due, April issue
- BAS 1/2 day Field Trip, East Lake & Roebuck Springs
- 15 BAS Sanctuary workday (1/2 day)
- 20 Board Meeting, (BZA) 5:45 p.m.
- General Meeting, BZA 7:00 p.m.
- 29 BAS Field Trip, Bankhead National Forest

April 2008

- 1 *Flicker Flashes* articles due, May/June issue
- 5 Family Bird Walk - Birmingham Zoo 7:30 a.m.
- 11-15 Spring Tour trip #1
- 16-20 Spring Tour trip #2
- 18-20 AOS Spring meeting - Dauphin Island, AL
- 20 Earth Day at the Gardens, 1:00 – 5:00 P.M.
- 24 Board Meeting, (BZA) 5:45 p.m.
- General Meeting, BZA 7:00 p.m.
- “Members Favorite Slides”
- 26 43rd Annual BAS Spring Bird Count

Birmingham, Audubon Society
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
P.O. Box 314
Birmingham, AL 35201
Business Office:
200 19th St. No.
Birmingham, AL 35201
(205) 714-8227

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