President’s Message

What’s Ahead for Birmingham Audubon?

This has been a year of renewal for BAS!

- A year of searching for added vitality and strength
- A year in which we are clarifying our vision for the future
- A year for invigorating our dedication to the birds

Education and Conservation are terms that keep resonating through our meetings and we are reviving hidden energy to tackle the obligations involved.

You – the membership – will see that you are needed!

This is my swan song. I have had a wonderful time interacting with all of you and with our thirty-four good board members, but a new administration will now take off flying toward a new year. That new year should be most exciting.

Your very responsible board of directors had a retreat in January. We met at the Alabama 4-H Center overnight with a super facilitator, Todd Steadman, and reamed out the old ideas and replaced them with refreshing new ideas and came home very tired. After many hours of follow up meetings, it is evident that success is at our finger tips. We are emerging with a strength of determination to continue what is best about Birmingham Audubon and to administer an added level of achievement.

Some of our goals involve increasing active membership; offering additional educational opportunities; increasing our reach in conservation advocacy; teaching birding through our field trips; continuing great membership programs; activating our web site (www.birminghamaudubon.org) to be more useful.

You are a birder – right? You love nature. There are more than a thousand of you on our membership roster. There is a rich history of dedicated people behind the successes we’ve experienced in the past sixty years. You, the new generation, will determine how nature and the avian species are treated in the years to come.

Volunteers will be needed if we are to carry through a wonderful new agenda. Anticipate that you will want to volunteer as well as to participate in our programs. I want you to look forward to the September Flicker Flashes and the start of our new year. In the meantime, we should look in this issue for the summer field trips to see Swallow-tailed Kites and such.

And now, indulge me as I profusely thank the wonderful board of directors who put up with me and worked so hard toward effecting a revitalization for BAS. I thoroughly enjoyed being your president. I offer the best to the new administration as we all continue in our attempt to foster the respect for which Birmingham Audubon Society has been well known.
SoSo for the Record

Sightings February 27 through March 29, 2009

An ordinary day became an extraordinary day 28 March when a Black-legged Kittiwake was sighted at Logan Martin Dam. Greg and Debi Jackson spotted this rarity with a flock of Bonaparte’s Gulls. Also present were two adult Laughing Gulls. Needless to say, this caused an immediate urge for many birders to head for the dam.

Four banded Rufous Hummingbirds were still lingering in Alabama as late as 18 March even though their “peers” are already migrating through Oregon and Washington on the way to their breeding grounds. “Amazing stuff”, according to the Sargents. Also amazing was a recapture of a banded White-breasted Nuthatch on 12 March at Hollins by Mary Wilson, still going strong in its eighth calendar year!

Other birds seen were:

2/25  Geese- Greater White-fronted (84); Snow (70); Canada (74); Church Pond, Lauderdale Co (DS).
2/29  Bald Eagle (a pair); Lake Purdy (RR).

2/25  Tundra Swan; Co Road 53, Sandhill Crane (108); Crow Creek, Jackson Co. (SMcC).

3/1  Golden Eagle, (2); Possible? Near Jasper (HM).
3/4  Anhinga; Perry Co. near Hieberger (HW,AC).
3/6  Common Nighthawk (3); Trussville (BS,MS).
3/10  Warblers- Louisiana Waterthrush and Northern Parula; Clay (BS,MS).
3/11  Double-crested Cormorant (20); Great Blue Heron (35, some nesting); Bonaparte’s Gull (21); Purple Martin (10); Chipping Sparrow (25+); St. Clair Co. (HW,AC).
3/15  Common Merganser; White Pelican (many); Surf Scoter (6); (SMcC).
3/18  Warblers- Yellow-throated and Palm; Turkey Creek (HW,AC).
3/23  Ruby-throated Hummingbird, (Same date as 2008) Irondale (RR,SR).
3/28  Black-throated Green Warbler; Turkey Creek (HW).
3/29  Eastern Screech Owl, (red phase); One has taken up residence in a stone wall near 30th Street and Highland Avenue, nice photo (GH).

Contributors:  Alice Christenson  Rick and Susan Remy
               Greg Harber  Bob and Martha Sargent
               Greg and Debi Jackson  Damien Simbeck
               Harry Markham  Mary Wilson
               Steve McConnell  Harriett Wright

Please submit sightings for September FF at least five days before August 1st deadline to:
Ann Miller, 520 Yorkshire Drive, Birmingham, Al. 35209

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

Memorial for John B. Rudulph from Elberta G. Reid
Memorial for William R. Ireland from Elberta G. Reid
Gift from Lori Oswald and Hans Paul
Summer Field Trips
Summer Breeders, Kites, Wood Storks and More!

Saturday, June 6, 2009 ~ Cheaha State Park and Lake Chinnabee – Talladega National Forest
Saturday, August 1, 2009 ~ Autaugaville and Prattville
Saturday, August 8, 2009 ~ Gainesville and Aliceville

This summer we are once again offering three field trips. Last summer I nearly did in a small flock of BAS members when our hike at Bull’s Gap proved to be a bit too strenuous for the hot day we experienced last year, so this year I’m promising an easier day of it! We’ll visit instead other high elevation locations where we can enjoy some of Alabama’s less common breeding birds. Our first trip will take us to Cheaha State Park and Chinnabee Lake in the Talladega National Forest. Breeding birds we should find on the trip include Ovenbirds and Black-throated Green Warblers, Summer and Scarlet Tanagers and, if we’ve been very good little boys and girls, Blue-headed Vireos.

Later in the summer also offers some exciting birding opportunities too. Among these are kites and storks, and lots of them. If you have never witnessed the spectacle of Mississippi and Swallow-tailed Kites feeding on the wing, you are missing one of the most spectacular aerial shows on earth. Kites are regular late summer visitors to the Tombigbee and Alabama River systems in the upper coastal plain. It is truly a sight to behold, watching these graceful birds of prey as they soar over the fields, catching insects on the wing.

Hopefully, we will also see Wood Storks, especially on the August 1st field trip to Gainesville. Wood Storks have to be one of the homeliest creatures the good lord ever made, but in the air their striking black and white forms are beautiful sights indeed. You won’t want to miss any of these field trip offerings so mark your calendars now and be brave against the summer heat! Here are the details:

Saturday, June 6th trip: Be prepared to leave at 7:00 a.m. from the Eastwood McDonald’s on Montclair Road. We will caravan from there to Cheaha State Park via I-20, reconvening about 8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. at the Camp Store, located at the entrance to the park. After a morning of birding in the park we’ll have lunch here before descending to the lower elevation of Chinnabee Lake, to the west of the park. Once we have birded this area we can, for those who wish, head to a nearby spot in the national forest that proved to be an exceptionally good location for warblers back during the Alabama Breeding Bird Atlas project. Bring with you a lunch and plenty of fluids, snacks, insect repellent, appropriate attire for a summer day and a full tank of gas.

Saturday, August 1st trip: We will likely head to the Prattville/Autaugaville area as we have in previous years but there is a chance we may travel to the Camden area instead. Some summers the kites are there in large numbers just prior to their arrival at the Autaugaville “Kite Field.” Depending on the pre-trip scouting reports from Tommy Pratt we may opt for Camden, which would give us a chance to visit the local gallery to view the famous quilts of Gee’s Bend.

Our departure point will be the same however: the McDonalds on US-31 in Hoover, across from the Galleria. Plan to depart at 7:00 a.m. and caravan to our destination from there. We will have lunch at a local restaurant to take a break from the heat we will likely experience. Feel free to contact me a couple of days before the trip for further updates and I can give you a firm destination at that time.

Saturday, August 8th trip: The ever-popular Galleria McDonalds will serve as our departure point one last time. Plan to leave at 7:00 a.m. again. We will caravan west on I-59/20 to the rest area just east of exit #32. We will take a rest break there and then travel by way of CR-20 (exit #32) to the Gainesville lock facility on AL-39. Those wishing to meet us at the lock facility should be there at 9:00 a.m., at the access road on the east side of the river, south of CR-20. Once we have birded this locale we’ll head north toward Aliceville, making stops in the New West Greene community and other birding sites along the way. Lunch will be indoors at a local restaurant to add a boost to the local economy! Next we’ll head south down the west side of the Tombigbee River, looking for kites, Wood Storks and Grasshopper Sparrows along the way. The general store in Gainesville will be our final stop for the day, where an ice cream treat will surely fortify our sun-baked bones!

Remember, these trips will be daylong affairs so plan accordingly and bring plenty of drinks and snacks in addition to a full tank of gas, insect repellent, rain gear, and appropriate summer attire.

Trip Leader for all three trips: Greg Harber, 251-2133 or gharber@mindspring.com
Here follows a summary of issues addressed by the Conservation Committee and any action taken:

The Conservation Committee discussed methods and means of providing information to BAS members and the general public on both contacting elected representatives and reporting pollution occurrences, industrial spills, sewage overflows etc. Contact information for Senators and Representatives on both State and Federal level (phone numbers, links to websites, etc.) and for the appropriate agency or entity will be furnished in the Flicker Flashes on a regular schedule and will be posted on the website.

Endangered Species: New York State and New York City hosted 67 nesting pairs of Peregrine Falcons in 2008, a record-breaking number, more than double the population in the ‘90s. Numbers in what is called productivity categories also increased - breeding pairs, successful pairings and fledglings. NYC had 13 pairs, 2 more than in 2007. Through a restoration program, 169 young peregrines were released in the 70s and ‘80s throughout the state. In 1983, two pair of Peregrines nested on Throgs Neck Bridge and the Verranzano Narrows Bridge. By 2008, 9 of the 13 NYC pairs had produced 28 fledglings.

Five hundred Bald Eagles were counted in New York State during a recent Eagle Festival held in the Hudson Valley. Eight pairs of the species have stayed year round in the lower Hudson Valley.

Many interesting things have occurred in the past several weeks. One of particular interest is the passage of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009. After some debate, it passed both the Senate and House and was signed into law by President Obama on Monday, March 30. The bill sets aside some 2 million acres for public wilderness, including California’s Sierra Nevada Mountains, Oregon’s Mt. Hood, Rocky Mountain National Park, parts of Jefferson National Forest in Virginia, Idaho’s Owyhee Canyon, Pictured Rocks National Seashore in Michigan and Zion National Park in Utah. It adds a thousand miles of scenic rivers in nearly a dozen states and implements a 2006 legal settlement to restore the San Joaquin River in CA.

A controversial element of the bill was the construction of a seven-mile road through Izembek NWR to King Cove, Alaska, thus giving the residents access to airports and a hospital. A transfer of 61,000 acres to the wilderness system was the key factor in allowing the road. Passage of the bill also authorizes the NPS to purchase 1,656 acres of land to add to Little River Canyon Nature Preserve. The additional land will protect the canyon from development and allow the Park Service access to AL Hwy-176, the 11-mile scenic drive.

A plan to drill more than 18,000 natural gas wells on 1.5 million acres in Montana’s Powder River Basin was approved by the outgoing administration. The plan would phase in the drilling, which could be halted in the event of possible environmental damage. National Monument status was given to vast tracts of American controlled Pacific Ocean at the same time. The area includes part of the Marianna Trench and the Line Islands, a chain of mostly uninhabited reefs and atolls near the Equator and American Samoa and totals 195,280 square miles. It consists of habitat for hundreds of tropical birds and fish, including frigate-birds, terns, noddes, petrels, albatrosses, boobies and tropicbirds plus the Micronesian megapode, a bird that incubates its’ eggs with subterranean volcanic heat.

The previous administration five-year "midnight action" plan for leasing up to 300 million acres for offshore oil and gas drilling has been shelved by Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar. The reversal is intended to allow time to build a framework for offshore renewable energy development to incorporate "the great potential for wind, wave and ocean current energy." Secretary Salazar will do the following: First, add 180 days for public comment; Second, direct the Minerals Management Survey and the U.S. Geological Survey to assemble a report of all the information available about offshore resources by March 23; Third, hold four regional meetings (Alaska, the Pacific coast, the Atlantic coast and the Gulf coast) to gather the best ideas for how to move forward; and Fourth, issue a final rulemaking for offshore renewable resources as required by the Energy Policy Act of 2005. On Dec. 21, 2008, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced a decision to double
the rate of logging in 2.6 million acres of federal land in SW Oregon, despite objections from Oregon's governor and senior officials of the National Forest Service. Representatives of the timber industry and county officials applauded the decision, the former asserting that any increase in logging be done gradually and the latter hoping for a revival of the local economy. The State of California sued the Bush administration to block last minute endangered species rules that would reduce scientific input.

Following up on a story from our prior newsletter, investigations continued at the Interior Department concerning the interference of agency officials with scientific research to limit protection for endangered species. While most of the decisions involved Julie McDonald, a former deputy assistant secretary for Fish and Wildlife, the Inspector General was requested to broaden the investigations to include colleagues and more decisions. In a related story, the nominee for head of the EPA, Lisa P. Jackson, pledged to let science be her guide in administration policy and regulations. A decision by President Obama made on Jan. 26 will order EPA to reconsider past rejections of the application made by the state of California and 13 other states to set strict automobile emissions and fuel efficiency standards. The President will also direct the Transportation Department to finalize interim national regulations requiring the auto industry to increase fuel efficiency standards to comply with a 2007 law. Auto industry leaders assert that the California standards would have a devastating effect on domestic and foreign production. They prefer a national standard and phased-in regulations. Also, in California, Southern California Edison has agreed to buy power from Bright Source Energy's planned solar-thermal power plants-arrays of mirrors which heat fluid to drive turbines. Construction of the first 100 megawatt array is planned for later this year in the Mojave Desert. Power companies in California are under a state-imposed mandate to meet a "renewable portfolio standard" - 20% of electricity must flow from renewable sources by next year.

Regionally, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand an Appeals Court decision invalidating an agreement between the state of Georgia and the U.S. Corps of Engineers to allow Georgia to take a larger amount of water from Lake Lanier to use for Atlanta's drinking supply. The states of Alabama and Florida had contested the agreement, arguing that larger withdrawals would cripple river water flow downstream and the lake was constructed to provide hydroelectric power, not drinking water.

The recycling organization, Atlanta Recycles, working in partnership with the Green Foodservice Alliance, EPA Region 4, the Pollution Prevention Assistance Division of Georgia's Department of Natural Resources, has launched the Southeast's first Zero Waste Zone. Phase One focuses on downtown Atlanta's convention district and participating food service operators.

Ten participants, including the Georgia World Congress Center, the Hyatt Regency and Ruth's Chris Steak House, have pledged to recycle, to reuse spent grease for the production of biofuel and to donate or compost excess food or residuals.

In Phase Two, the program will be expanded to other locations in the convention district and Phase Three will include expansion of Zero Waste Zone to Buckhead, Midtown and other surrounding communities. Phase Four will expand the zone to the rest of the state of Georgia, the Southeast and eventually across the country.

The American Bird Conservancy's Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture has coordinated an effort to purchase 120,000 acres of major breeding habitat for Cerulean and Golden-winged Warbler on the Cumberland Plateau in east Tennessee. Partners in the acquisition were the state of Tennessee, the Nature Conservancy, Lyme Timber and Conservation Forest, L.L.C. The acreage adjoins Sundquist and Royal Blue Wildlife Management Areas.

Mobile's National Estuary Program released "State of the Bay" report which said the environmental health of Mobile Bay is in good shape but faces ecological challenges, primarily increased development causing storm water runoff. Positive news was that the sightings of manatees are on the rise, progress of salt marsh restoration on Mon Louis Island, dune protection for the Alabama beach mouse and the removal of Brown Pelicans from the Endangered Species list. In late January, the Gulf of Mexico Marine Fisheries Council considered opening federal waters to commercial fish farms. The plan will create a permitting process for aqua culturists to develop the farms, raising only native species (snappers and groupers) in underwater pens. Proponents assert that the farms will create jobs and reduce pressure on over-fished stocks. Critics argue that there are insufficient rules to prevent pollution from waste and uneaten food entering the water and disease from overcrowded pens.

Also, the Council recommended action by the National Marine Fisheries Service to close an area of the west coast of Florida to commercial long-line fishing. Long-line fishing (miles of fishing line with attached hooks) activity occurs where sea turtles forage for squid, crabs and other marine animals. The turtles can get caught on the hooks and drown. A report in September 2008 estimated that over an 18-month period, 974 turtles, the majority of which were loggerhead sea turtles (a threatened species), were captured by long-line fishing in the western Gulf. 325 turtles died, 430 were released and the fate of the remainder remains unknown. If the recommendation is implemented, the area would be closed for six months and possibly renewed for another six months. This will allow the Council to consider long-term solutions.

By: Maureen Shaffer
John James Audubon did it! Roger Tory Peterson did it! David Sibley did it and you can do it too! Do what, you ask? Why keep a nature journal! All the great naturalists kept (and keep) journals of their outdoor observations. To begin, make a copy of the cover of the bird journal. Then make as many copies of the inside pages (bird and habitat pages) as you want. Fold the pages and staple them together.

Now, grab a pencil (or colored pencils) and go outside to your favorite spot. Sit down and just watch the action around you. What bird do you see? Make a journal entry on the characteristics and behaviors of that bird. Sketch or draw the bird. Then sketch the habitat or write a description of the habitat. You could even add a few blank pages to your journal if you like to write stories or poetry about nature.

Take this journal and start your journey. Send copies of your observations to:

Birmingham Audubon Society
Attn: Kid’s Corner
P.O. Box 314
Birmingham, AL 35201

You might see your drawings and observation in the next Flicker Flashes. Then you are on your way to being the next renowned naturalist!

Bluebird Trail Update
Patsy Scott

Great news! The John Findlay III Bluebird Trail has now fledged over 16,000 bluebirds!

It is time to make sure that all your nesting boxes are ready for the new season (which is well underway at press time). Thank all of you that have turned in your trail results from the last nesting season. If you have not done so, please send your results as soon as possible.

Thanks for all you do to help the bluebirds. I would love to start communicating with everyone via e-mail, if possible. Please let me know if you are unable to check your portion of the trail this season.

If there are BAS members who would like to help with the John Findlay III Bluebird Trail, please call me at 995-5502 or e-mail me at mscott1x@bellsouth.net.

Outside Looking In ~ What They’re Saying About Us

Looking for Birds, Leprechauns in the Trees

Birders such as Cyndi Lubecke often choose travel assignments because of their proximity to birding habitats rather than for glamour, reports The New York Times. “Once, when required to choose between trips to New York City, Los Angeles or Birmingham, Ala., she picked Birmingham for the possibility of viewing the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, resident at nearby Talladega National Forest.”

Lubecke should make sure those are indeed birds she’s seeing in our trees. The Chicago Tribune reports one of the top Internet search items on St. Patrick’s Day was "Leprechaun in Alabama." "Residents report seeing this figure hiding in the trees at night. With that kind of detail, you just know it has to be real."

Greg Richter
Favorite Birds:

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Favorite Birding Spots:

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Journal created by Shirley Farrell as part of the Kid's Corner column of *Flicker Flashes*. This is a publication of the Birmingham Audubon Society.
Bird Journal

Bird Name:

Bird Description:

Size:

Color:

Beak Type:

Feet Type:

Leg Type:

Wing Type:

Sketch of Bird Seen

Bird Behavior:

Habitat of Bird:

Use this page to sketch or write more details.
McWane Science Center Discounts Available to BAS!
$10.00 off the Price of any Membership Category

Individual, Family and Grandparent Memberships Available

In order to be eligible for the $10 discount, BAS members must present a copy of the Flicker Flashes newsletter (addressed to them, by name, on label) at the ticketing counter. The discount cannot be used in conjunction with any other membership discount.

Web site: www.mcwane.org

Member Benefits

- Free admission to exhibit halls and parking in the McWane Science Center’s parking deck
- 20% discount in the Café and Gift Shop
- Free subscription to Eureka!, McWane Science Center’s newsletter
- Up to 30% discount on McWane Science Center camps and classes
- Free or discounted admission to over 270 science centers worldwide
- $1.00 off guest tickets and IMAX feature length movies
- Free email updates

~ 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).

☐ 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
May 2009
2 44th Annual BAS Spring Bird Count
7-10 32nd Annual Audubon Mountain Workshop – Mentone, AL

June 2009
6 BAS Field Trip, Cheaha State Park and Chinnabee Lake – Talladega National Forest

August 2009
1 *Flicker Flashes* articles due, September issue
8 BAS Field Trip, Black Belt Birding

Copies of *Flicker Flashes* can be viewed and downloaded from the BAS web site: www.birminghamaudubon.org