

Flicker Flashes

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The Birmingham Audubon Society

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

BAS Field Trip Noxubee NWR May 9-10, 2008

On May 9th Birmingham Audubon will travel to Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge just west of Brooksville, Mississippi, to experience its various offerings. Once there we will be escorted by Margaret Copeland, resident Red-cockaded Woodpecker expert. In addition to an RCW site, we will visit the Bluff Lake Boardwalk, which winds through a cypress island on the edge of Bluff Lake and ends with a great view of the lake and a large cattle egret rookery. There are benches along the way to rest and enjoy the sounds of the area or just to stop and watch the birds.

After that we might proceed to the Scattertown Trail, one of the newest and steepest trails, located in the Beavils Hill area of the Refuge. This 1.75-mile loop-trail is constructed on the ridges of the red hills and is one of their most scenic trails. The view from the trail shows an excellent example of the red hills community of vegetative types.

Another option would be the Morgan Hill Trail. Connecting the parking area to the Morgan Hill Overlook, the trail takes one through an Alabama Black Belt Prairie Restoration area. Or perhaps we will go to the Goose Overlook. This thirty-foot high observation platform is accessed by a 150-foot walk and overlooks the Dickerson Arm of Bluff Lake, a favorite birding and wildlife viewing area.

If you choose to spend the night, we will regroup on Sunday morning and go to the Plymouth Bluff Center, an education complex administered by Mississippi University for Women and located on the Tombigbee River. Our options there and in the Starkville/Columbus area are numerous.

We are in the process of finalizing our plans for this full day or overnight trip. (It's your choice.)

We plan to meet at the Galleria McDonald's on US 31 in Hoover. Departure will be at 6:30a.m. If you would like to get breakfast, please arrive no later than 6:00a.m. Travel time to Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge is approximately 2½ hours. We will travel directly to their new Visitors' Center for a rest stop. In addition to a sack lunch and full tank of gas, bring your morning and afternoon snacks, plenty of water, bug spray, and binoculars.

Because our plans are still fluid you will need to contact our trip leader Jessica Germany if you are planning to accompany us on this trip. She can answer your questions and provide information about accommodations in Columbus, Mississippi. Contact her at 595-0814 or e-mail at jhgermany@bellsouth.net.

John Robinson, our campout chairman, has graciously provided the following information for those who may wish to camp that weekend:

Camping Friday and Saturday nights (MAY 9, 10) will be at Choctaw Lake, in the Tombigbee National Forest. The campground is about 25 miles from the Noxubee NWR. You may make reservations here: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/mississippi/tombigbee/index.shtml>. Choctaw Lake is a dammed portion of the Noxubee River. See description here: http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/mississippi/tombigbee/recreation/choctaw_lake/index.shtml. Directions to Choctaw Lake: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/mississippi/tombigbee/vicinity/choctaw/index.html>

For more details, contact John Robinson (H) 877-3855, and for last minute details (C) 410-0378.

SoSo for the Record

Sightings - February 29 through March 30, 2008

March 15th was a special day for a group of four birders. Their outing to Perry County produced **eleven Bald Eagles**. This surely must be a record for west central Alabama. The first four were found near Heiberger at the nest that has been there for several years. Two were on the nest at the Marion Fish Hatchery and the rest were flyovers in that general vicinity. This was indeed an exceptional birding day. (MS,JG,LB,MD).

The exceptional number of **Purple Finches** being banded at Hollins continues with the latest total of 1050 birds!(MW).

A few vireos, warblers, swallows, and **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** are being reported, a sure sign that spring migration is on its way.

Other birds seen were:

2/29 **Cliff Swallow, early?**; Colbert Co (DS).

3/1 **Barn Swallow, early?**; Hartselle (SMcC).

3/8 **A four grebe day- Pied-billed (250), Horned (75), Eared, and Western;** Guntersville (SMcC).

3/5 **Ross's Goose;** Near Bessemer (GJ).

3/14 **Louisiana Waterthrush;** Audubon/Sessions Sanctuary along Shades Creek (EM).

3/22 **Black-throated Green Warbler;** Birmingham (SD).

3/24 **Ruby-throated Hummingbird;** Irondale (RR).

3/30 **Green Heron; Vireos-White-eyed, Yellow-throated, and Red-eyed; Parula and Prothonotary Warblers;** Perry Lakes Park, Perry Co (GH,EH).

Contributors:

Lee Brewer
Martha Dagg
Scot Duncan
Jessica Germany
Greg Harber
Edith Hunt
Greg Jackson

Steve McConnell
Ellen McLaughlin
Rick Remy
Maureen Shaffer
Damien Simbeck
Mary Wilson



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

Summer Field Trips ~ Summer Breeders, Kites, Wood Storks and More!

Saturday, June 7, 2008 (Talladega National Forest – Bull's Gap)

Saturday, July 26, 2008 (Autaugaville and Prattville)

Saturday, August 2, 2008 (Gainesville and Aliceville)

This summer we are once again offering three field trips. A number of us who participated in the Alabama Breeding Bird Atlas project found several new birding sites where we can enjoy some of Alabama's less common breeding birds. Our first trip will take us to one of my favorite places – Bull's Gap in the southern reaches of the Talladega National Forest east of Sylacauga. The elevation at this southern terminus of the Skyway Motorway is 1600-1800 feet. 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 2nd 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 7th trip: Be prepared to leave at 6:30 a.m. from the Brook Highland Wal-Mart on US 280. We will car pool and caravan from there to the McDonald's in Sylacauga, at the intersection of CR 511 and W Fort Williams Street, for breakfast and a bathroom break. We won't want to delay here because we'll want to take advantage of the morning hours when the birds are likely to be in full song. This trip will involve hiking on terrain that is sometimes rocky, so be prepared with sturdy shoes. The Motorway gradually ascends in altitude before leveling off and the hike becomes less strenuous at this point. Bring a lunch with you and plenty of fluids, snacks, insect repellent, appropriate attire for a summer day and a full tank of gas. We should be back in Birmingham by mid-afternoon.

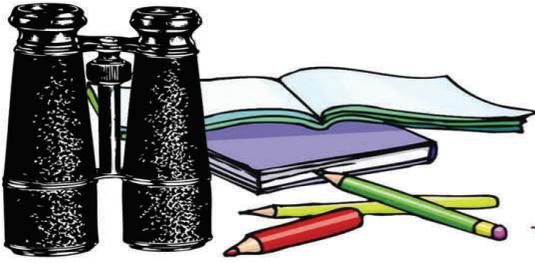
Saturday, July 26th trip: We will likely head to the Prattville/Autaugaville area as we did last year but there is a chance we may travel to the Camden area instead. Some summers the kites are there in large numbers just prior to their arrival at the Autaugaville "Kite Field." Depending on the scouting reports we may opt for Camden, which would give us a chance to visit the local gallery to view the famous quilts of Gees Bend.

Whether we go to Camden or Autaugaville, our departure point will be the same however: the McDonald's 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.

Saturday, August 2nd trip: The ever-popular Galleria McDonald's 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



Using the Internet: How to Stop Spam and Junk Mail

- *** Dmaconsumers.org, The Direct Marketing Association's site, provides consumers with an "opt-out offer." Pay \$1 to have your name removed from mailing, tele-marketing, and e-mail lists. The association also provides helpful hints to protect you from identity theft.
- *** Optoutprescreen.com exists to "stop the credit-card-offer madness." Once you sign up on the site, you can choose to "stop receiving all those offers permanently or for five years at a time."
- *** Catalogchoice.org offers a free service to help you cut off the catalogues for good. Simply click and select which ones you no longer want - rather than having to call each company to cancel.

Special Fundraising Opportunity to Protect Habitat on Dauphin Island!

Recently, the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, in partnership with the Coastal Birding Association and Mobile Bay Audubon Society, hosted International Migratory Bird Day on Dauphin Island. Malkolm Boothroyd, a 16-year old birder from Whitehorse, Yukon Territories, Canada, gave the evening program and spoke about the 12,000-mile "Bird Year" bike trek across the North American continent he and his parents began on June 29, 2007. Fittingly, we experienced a fallout of birds on the island that day, with thousands of Indigo Buntings and Orchard Orioles flying all over the island. Numerous species of warblers, vireos and tanagers were documented as well.

Malkolm's quest is to see as many bird species as he can on his fossil fuel free journey, and to raise awareness about bird conservation efforts and the need to protect the habitat on which they, and we, depend.

We had a pleasant surprise right before the evening program commenced: a generous donor has pledged a dollar for dollar match for all the money we raise before May 31, 2008 - up to \$5,000! What a fantastic challenge and opportunity this presents to affirm our commitment to protecting habitat on Dauphin Island!

We cannot let this challenge go unmatched!

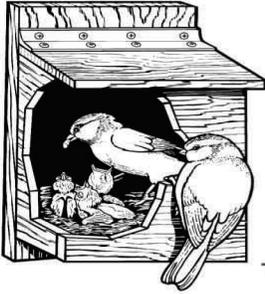
Name: _____ Amt of Donation: _____

Address _____ Telephone: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address: _____

Please make your check payable to DIBS, Inc. and mail this form and your check to: Mary F. Porter, DIBS Treasurer, P.O. Box 1295, Dauphin Island, AL 36528-1295.



The Migration Invasion is Here!



Kid's Corner

Activities for Fledgling Naturalists

It's the bird migration invasion! Our summer birds are returning from their winter "vacation spots." Most of our summer birds cross the Gulf of Mexico and land along the coast VERY tired. The birds feed and rest until they have the strength to fly back to their breeding grounds. Generally, birds from the northern part of North America return first. There are 4 major flyways for bird migration. See map here: <http://www.birdnature.com/flyways.html>

- **Atlantic Flyway** – birds fly along the Atlantic coast and go to the Caribbean Islands or South America along the eastern side of the Caribbean Islands.
- **Mississippi Flyway** – birds fly along the Mississippi River and cross the Gulf of Mexico.
- **Central Flyway** – birds fly through the central Plains and cross into Mexico along the eastern and central part of the country.
- **Pacific Flyway** – birds fly along the Pacific coast and through the central part of California and cross into Mexico along the western part of the country.

What causes the birds to migrate? They do not wake up one morning and decide to take a vacation. Many scientists believe that the length of the daylight determines when the birds will fly south. The first day of Summer (June 20 or 21) is the longest day of the year; the dates change from year to year. After that date each day has a shorter day length until Dec. 20-21 when we have the shortest day of the year. It is an advantage for the bird to migrate. Winters in the north are cold and there is less food. Flying south provides a warmer climate for the bird, as well as more food to eat, too. Birds generally migrate at night when the temperatures are cooler and predators, like hawks, are sleeping. The birds use several clues to help them find their way to and from their summer and winter homes. They use the earth's magnetic field, landscape features (such as mountain ranges, rivers, coastlines), wind patterns, and star patterns. We call those star patterns constellations.

Most songbirds fly at an altitude of 500 to 4000 feet. Some birds can fly at higher altitudes. The highest building in the U.S. is the Sears Tower in Chicago, IL. It is 1,415 feet high or 432 meters. Light aircraft, the small planes, fly between 4,000 – 10,000 feet. A great chart to see the average height of where migrating birds fly in relationship to mountains and airplanes is at <http://www.paulnoll.com/Oregon/Birds/Avian-migration-altitudes.html> (Don't forget to ask your parent's permission before using the Internet.)

We have birds that live in our area year-round and do not migrate. These birds are Northern Cardinal, Carolina Chickadees, and our state bird, the Northern Flicker, or Yellowhammer. We have birds that live in our area only during the winter. These birds have migrated south from the Northern U.S. and Canada. Some of these birds are White-throated Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Purple Finches. We have bird species that increase in numbers during the winter. How does that happen? These birds are joined by northern birds who have migrated south. These birds include American Robins, Red-tailed Hawks, and Great Blue Herons. Then we have birds that leave for the winter and migrate to Central and/or South America. These birds include the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Indigo Buntings, and Purple Martins.

New York Audubon has a great migration game online. You choose a bird and help it migrate. Ask your parents if you can play Mission Migration at <http://ny.audubon.org/missionmigration.html>

Doppler radar, which is used to detect storms, can also pick up the birds flying at night. It's a great way to know if you should get to the coast to see the migrating birds when they first arrive! If you can't go to the coast then grab your binoculars and head to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Birmingham Zoo, Ruffner Mountain, or Oak Mountain State Park to see the invasion. Keep your eyes open; the invasion is here!

(Continued from previous page)

a variety of hardwood and pine forest and high elevation meadows, known locally as grassy balds. Whigg Meadow is one such bald.

We have chosen as our base of operations the town of Tellico Plains, the western terminus of the Cherohala Skyway (www.cherahala.com) and for our lodging Telliqual Fall Log Cabins. They are like no log cabins you have ever seen. The management of TFLC has been most helpful with our plans and has blocked out the weekend of September 12-14, 2008 for our group. Depending on the number of guests, a volume discount of 10% will be given and they will waive sales tax on prices as we are a non-profit group. Here is their website: <http://www.telliqualfalls.com>.

We have planned some surprises for our field trippers. This website for Tellico Plains <http://www.hometown.aol.com/tellico/cherahala> may be helpful with the history of the area and various local attractions. In addition to TFLC, both commercial and

Forest Service campgrounds abound, along with RV parks and primitive camping is permitted on Whigg Meadow. Indian Boundary Recreation Area, which is 12 miles from Whigg Meadow, has a campground with restrooms and showers.

We are still in the planning stages for this field trip. However, we do need a preliminary lodging headcount by June 1st. (No commitment will be required until all details are finalized). If you think you might be interested in accompanying us on this wonderful trip, please contact Maureen Shaffer at 205-822-8728 or email shanach@charter.net or our Administrative Director, B. J. Allen at our office 205-714-8227 or audubon@McWane.org by June 1st. A mailing list will be established so we may contact you with further details.

See you at the Meadow!

Maureen Shaffer and B.J. Allen
Trip Coordinators

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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

May 2008	July 2008
3 BAS Spring Campout	26 BAS Field Trip, Prattville & Autaugaville
10 BAS Field Trip, Noxubee N.W.R., Mississippi	August 2008
15-18 31 st Annual Audubon Mountain Workshop Mentone, AL	2 BAS Field Trip, Gainesville & Aliceville
June 2008	September 2008
7 Talladega National Forest, east of Sylacauga (Note date change from 6/21)	12-14 BAS Field Trip, Whigg Meadows

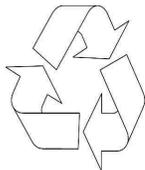
Summer Planning Meeting

The Summer Planning Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 10th at a place and time to be announced. We welcome your input and suggestions for meeting speakers and field trip destinations. Please consult your September 2007 issue for the names and phone numbers of the appropriate committee chairmen.

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