

# Flicker Flashes

*Published by  
The Birmingham Audubon Society*

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

## President's Message *Shirley Farrell*

You always hear that time flies when you're having fun, or is it the older you are, the faster time seems to go? Well, either way, these last two years have flown by. I have enjoyed serving as your President and look forward to serving on the Board as your Past President. These last two years have brought a lot of changes to our organization. The biggest is the addition of the Administrative Director. We should be in a temporary office at the McWane Science Center soon. October 2007 you will find us in our new office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the McWane Center. We can't wait!!

While we have a part-time staff person to do the administrative duties, we need volunteers more than ever. We are asked more and more to help scout troops with merit badges, give talks to various groups about birds, wildflowers, environmental habitats, work with school groups, etc. The requests are endless.

What can you do to help Birmingham Audubon and to be a voice for the environmental community? How about becoming involved by volunteering to serve

on one of our many committees. We have something for everyone! The Education Committee needs volunteers to work with school groups, scout troops, and teachers. Our Speaker's Bureau needs speakers who can give talks during the day and in the evenings. The Conservation Committee is looking for volunteers to join the roundtable discussing environmental issues and to write letters/postcards to groups and officials for their good work or lack thereof. The Membership Committee could use a few extra hands when we exhibit at festivals and environmental gatherings. Our Hospitality Committee needs extra hands in coordinating the refreshments for our General Meetings every month. These are just a few of our committees needing volunteers.

You can contact the committee chair to let him/her know you want to be involved or sign up for a committee at the next meeting. Since we do not meet during the summer the next meeting will be on September 2007. This will be the first meeting after our summer hiatus. Until then, I thank you for allowing me to serve

## CLAY BIRDFEST

Clay Elementary School  
Saturday, May 12, 2007

Come to this free bird festival to learn about the birds in our area. As you enter, receive your bird band for a chance to win a door prize. Students will have bird activity booths with prizes. Come meet the birds from Camp McDowell, the Birmingham Zoo, and the Auburn Raptor Center. Representatives from Trussville's Wild Birds Unlimited store will be on hand to help you identify which feeders and seeds are most effective at attracting birds to your yard. We hope to see you there!

To reach Clay Elementary School, exit I-59 north at the Deerfoot Parkway exit. This is the second exit north of the I-459 interchange. Make a right turn at the end of the exit, crossing back over the interstate. Stay on this road until it ends at Old Springville Road. There is a BP gas station on the right and a shopping center on the left. Turn right. At the next light - about 1-2 blocks away - turn right again. This is the driveway for Clay Elementary School. You will see tents in the playing field on the right. Park in the lot and join the fun!

# ***SoSo for the Record***

## **Sightings - February 4 through March 26, 2007**

It was so appropriate that the first **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** reported locally, 20 March, was by the Sargents. As Bob always says "life is good."

The **White-winged Scoter** that was reported at 16 February by Jud Johnston at Lake Hutto, near Fayette, was still present on 13 March.

Spring migrants are beginning to trickle in, read on:

2/4 **Gulls- Ring-billed and Herring (300+)**; Neely Henry Dam (JS).

2/25 **American Goldfinch (200+)**; Odenville (JS).

2/26 **Fox Sparrow**; "First for my yard" Bluff Park (SB).

3/3 **Purple Martin; Rough-winged Swallow**; Cedar Creek, Shelby County (HK, LB, MS).

3/9 **Barn Swallow (2)**; Interstate 65/119 (JI).

3/10 **Blue-headed Vireo**; Perry County (HW, AC).

3/12 **American Tree Sparrow**; Shelby County, Reported by a Tennessee birder but was not seen again (RW).

**Tree Swallow (2); Vesper Sparrow (3)**; Shelby County (HW, AC).

3/14 **Common Yellowthroat**; Shelby County (HK, MC, SH).

3/17 **Ross's Goose; Rails- King (heard) and Sora**; Donovan Lake, Perry County (HK, TK, ER, PR, TW).

3/18 **Louisiana Waterthrush**; Little Cahaba River (RoK).

3/22 **Kentucky Warbler**; Irondale (RR).

3/24 **Osprey**; Highland Lake, Blount County (RB, MB).

3/25 **White-eyed Vireo**; Cahaba River (HK, RoK, RiK).

3/26 **Hooded Warbler**; Botanical Gardens (GH, HW).

### **Contributors:**

Sheila Bancroft  
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Maureen Shaffer  
Jim Sherrill  
Rick Waldrop (TN)  
Tom Wilson  
Harriett Wright



**Please submit sightings for the September issue of *FF* at least five days before the August 1<sup>st</sup> deadline to Ann Miller, 520 Yorkshire Drive, Birmingham, Al. 35209.**

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

Saturday, June 23, 2007 (West-Central Alabama)

Saturday, July 28, 2007 (Central Alabama)

Saturday, August 4, 2007 (Gainesville and Aliceville)

This summer we are offering three field trips. For the past five years a number of us have been participating in the Alabama Breeding Bird Atlas project and along the way we have found several new birding sites where we can enjoy some of Alabama's less common breeding birds. Our first trip will take us to west-central Alabama where Stan and Dana Hamilton discovered a number of interesting places worth a return visit. They'll be our guides on this special trip.

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 4<sup>th</sup> 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. If we're lucky we may even encounter the Sandhill Crane found last year south of Gainesville. 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 23<sup>rd</sup> trip: We have a long way to go on this trip so we'll need to leave at 6:00 a.m. in order to reach our birding destinations at a suitable time. Plan to meet at the McDonalds on US 31 across from the Galleria, and please be ready to leave without delay. This will be a long day so bring a lunch with you and plenty of fluids, snacks, insect repellent, appropriate attire for a summer day and a full tank of gas. Dinner, for those who remain with us for the duration, will be at a local restaurant on our return back to Birmingham.

July 28<sup>th</sup> trip: We will likely head to the Prattville/Autaugaville area as we did last year but there is a good chance we may travel to the Camden area instead. Last summer the kites were there in large num-

bers 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. 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. Bring your lunch on this trip too. Feel free to contact me a couple of days before the trip for further updates.

August 4<sup>th</sup> 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, 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! Finally, we'll continue south of town to see if we can duplicate our good fortune from last year and find a Sandhill Crane. Maybe we should be greedy and wish for one with young in tow!

Remember, these trips will be a day-long 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 Leaders:

June 23<sup>rd</sup> Trip:  
Stan and Dana Hamilton, 951-5630 or  
Stan\_Dana\_H@bellsouth.net

July 28<sup>th</sup> & August 4<sup>th</sup> Trips:  
Greg Harber, 251-2133 or gharber@mindspring.com

# BIRMINGHAM AUDUBON AWARDS

## 15 MINI-GRANTS TO LOCAL TEACHERS FOR CONSERVATION & NATURE

For the academic year, 2006-2007, the Birmingham Audubon Society awarded 15 mini-grants to local teachers to help fund field trips, guest speakers, and special projects relating to our conservation and education mission. Most of these projects and field trips would not be possible without the assistance provided by BAS. Our financial support for this mini-grant program comes from the Diana Stobert Sessions and Paul Trammell Sessions, Jr. Foundation.

### **BAS mini-grants for 2006-2007:**

**Mt. Olive Elementary, Jefferson County** - \$250 to create a butterfly garden and bird sanctuary at this K-5 school. Students researched plants that attract birds and butterflies, planted the garden bed, and observed and studied the birds and insects that were drawn to the plants this spring.

**Brighton and Lipscomb Elementary Schools, Jefferson County** - \$250 to take select students to spend the night at the Birmingham Zoo as part of the "Zoo Snooze" program. Read below about Dr. Bette Kersting Bell and her students' experience in a reprint of an article about it that appeared recently in the Birmingham News.

**Greenwood Elementary School, Bessemer** - \$500 for entrance fees, transportation costs, and educational materials relating to a field trip for first grade classes to the Ruffner Mountain Nature Center for their "Animals and Their Habitats" program.

**Paine Elementary School, Trussville** - \$225 for a traveling naturalist from Ruffner Mountain Nature Center to speak to three fifth grade science classes as a culminating experience of their study of ecosystems.

**Robinson Elementary School, Birmingham** - \$250 to establish a classroom aquarium. The teacher reported that the project had led to numerous mathematics and science experiences which the students are recording in a classroom booklet.

**Inglenook K-8 School, Birmingham** - \$1,000 for 4 classes to take a field trip to the Birmingham Zoo. Most of the children that attend this school have never been to the zoo. The teachers planned to prepare the children beforehand with units on animal behavior, and use the follow-up activities booklet which the zoo provides.

**Hewitt Trussville Middle School** - \$250 for a project entitled "Growing is Learning; Learning is Growing". The students will obtain a greater understanding of how plants grow and develop by creating gardens around the campus. The students will design the gardens, create

the budget, purchase the supplies, plant and maintain the garden.

**Avondale, Glen Iris, and South Hampton Elementary Schools, Birmingham** - \$750 for "GATE Wildlife Habitat" project. Joy Doering, a former recipient of a Birmingham Audubon scholarship to attend a national Educators Workshop, was awarded this grant to enable students to create "wildlife habitats" at these three schools. After designing the habitats, the students planted trees and shrubs, made a stepping stone path through the habitat, and built and installed several bird feeders.

**Crumly Chapel Elementary School, Jefferson County** - \$250 for the students to participate in the "Project Feeder Watch" program which was developed by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. This grant was awarded to Debbie Dumais, another BAS scholarship recipient to a national Educators Workshop. "Project Feeder Watch" provides students with a scientific opportunity to explore and identify North American feeder birds by counting them at feeders which tracks their abundance and distribution.

**Banks Middle School, Birmingham** - \$500 for 150 students to take a field trip to the Cahaba River where they participate in the Cahaba River Society's "CLEAN" program. The program teaches the concept of the schoolyard and backyard as part of a watershed by providing activities such as watershed mapping, seining for fish, water quality testing and macro invertebrate surveys.

**Louis Pizitz Middle School, Vestavia Hills** - \$250 for a project, "Let's Go Batty". The purpose of the project is to dispel the negative reputation of bats and inform the students of how productive bats are. The grant money is used to pay for a classroom speaker, for the students to make "bat" posters to share their knowledge with other classrooms on campus, and for duplication fees for "bat" brochures that the students will produce and distribute at a local grocery store.

**Minor Community School, Jefferson County** - \$250 for bus transportation for 80 students to go to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens for the "Alabama Woodlands" program. They will be led by a docent through the woodlands to discover how animals need plants and how woodland plants depend on animals. The docent provides the students with follow-up activities to take back to the classroom.

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**Homewood High School** - \$250 for a project, "Activate Awareness: A New Classroom Environment". The Environmental Club is creating an outdoor classroom at the high school. They are building places for the students to sit, they are installing a podium for the teacher, and they are planting flowers and shrubs in addition to putting up bird houses and feeders.

**Pathways, Inc.** - \$250 for field trips to Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, the Robert R. Myer Planetarium, the Southern Environmental Center, The Birmingham Zoo, and Oak Mountain State Park. The homeless children in the Pathways program benefit greatly by taking these field trips to places that they ordinarily would not have the opportunity to visit.

**A.G. Gaston Elementary School, Birmingham** - \$610 for the following projects of three sixth grade science classes: 1. "Fresh Air Learning Library" which consists of creating an outdoor classroom/theater with a pond, benches, bird feeders, and trees and flowers. 2. "Green Space for an Urban K-8 School". To upgrade a vegetable garden and to create a butterfly garden. 3. "Good Snake Alive" to purchase, create a habitat for, and maintain a classroom corn snake which will be studied extensively.

AUDUBON MINI-GRANT applications for the academic year, 2007-2008, will be available by mid-August on our website at [www.birminghamaudubon.org](http://www.birminghamaudubon.org).

## **'Zoo Snooze' Mixes Gifted with Critters**

Overnight adventure for students part of Audubon grant  
Saturday, March 17, 2007  
RAHKIA NANCE  
Birmingham News staff writer

Eleven-year-old Jemarcus Acoff usually spends his Friday nights at home. But last night, he and a group of classmates got to sleep where wild things roam during an overnight field trip to the Birmingham Zoo.

Jemarcus and the four other students from Brighton and Lipscomb elementary schools are part of a program for gifted students in Jefferson County.

After taking a two-finger pledge to ever-so-softly touch the wild animals, the students got up close and personal with animals such as a chinchilla, a White's tree frog, a bearded dragon and an alligator.

"I thought it was awesome," Jemarcus said shortly after petting a snake. "I didn't think we would be able to actually touch the animals."

The trip ties into a unit the students have been studying about the environment and Alabama landmarks, said teacher Bette Kersting Bell. It also serves as a way for the children to spend time with others in their peer group.

"A lot of the time with gifted kids, they're kind of like, 'I'm a little weird,'" Bell said. "They feel a little awkward. They know they're smarter than all the rest of the kids in the school."

Had Bell not applied for a grant from the Audubon Society, the students would not have had a field trip

this year, she said.

"My students rarely have an opportunity to do this," Bell said. "Typically Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts do this - groups that my students typically don't belong to."

Bell sought the \$250 Audubon grant after learning about it during a workshop. "A lot of times with teachers, unless we stumble on something like that, we would never know something like that is there."

The zoo offers the overnighter - called a "Zoo Snooze" - to organizations with members older than 5. Usually church and scouting groups attend.

Friday's group of students is the fourth or fifth school group that has participated, said Carrie Brooks, a Zoo Snooze organizer.

The snooze outing included a nighttime hike through the zoo and a carousel ride.

The students aren't the only ones who may not have had this experience if Bell hadn't received the grant.

"I've never spent the night at the zoo."

E-mail: [rnance@bhamnews.com](mailto:rnance@bhamnews.com)

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# May Field Trip & Campout

Saturday, May 19, 2007  
Pinhoti Trail & Coleman Lake  
Talladega National Forest

This month's all-day field trip will be to the Pinhoti Trail in the Talladega National Forest. Our target bird for the trip is the Bachman's Sparrow, but we will also find Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer and Scarlet Tanagers, and nesting Prairie Warblers. With any luck we'll also find at least a few of the Red Crossbills that breed in the area, and if we're very fortunate, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers too.

Since the Coleman Lake campground offers convenient camping facilities, those who wish might want to consider camping Friday night and meeting with the group about 9:00 at the Pinhoti trailhead parking area. Be advised that the camping is "on your own" and will not be an organized campout.

**Trip Directions:** We will meet at the Bruno's supermarket on Montclair at 7:00 a.m. (meet at the side opposite Blockbuster Video). From there we will carpool and caravan on I-20 E to the HWY 78 exit. We will stop at Hardee's for a coffee and biscuit break before continuing on to the Talladega NF. Bring a full tank of gas, food, and water. For further information contact Frank Farrell at (205) 815-3554 or Frank\_Far@msn.com.



## Volunteers needed for Special Birdwalk for the Sight-Impaired

Birmingham Botanical Gardens  
Saturday, May 19, 2007: 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.

People who live with blindness or low vision are just as interested in the world around them as anyone else. If you are around sight-impaired folks you will likely hear a conversation that goes something like this, "Hey, listen to that bird! It is so LOUD! It sounds like it must be staying in one place right now. I wonder what kind it is." Those who live with blindness and low vision are a curious bunch. They like to feed gulls at the beach, put out seed in feeders on the patio, and have birds as pets; but they rarely have someone who is both knowledgeable and patient enough to identify the birds they are hearing. The Birmingham Audubon Society in partnership with a rehabilitation teacher from the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services will be conducting a bird walk for the sight-impaired at the Birmingham

Botanical Gardens on May 19th. We still need volunteers to escort the participants along paths of the gardens as we listen for singing birds. It is not necessary to know all the bird songs; you can locate the birds visually and identify them for the participants by sight. All volunteers will need to participate in a short session on how to guide a visually impaired person prior to the birdwalk.

Why not help us share the wonderful world of birding with those who want to learn more about the world around us? If you are willing to help, please contact Bianca (BJ) Allen, 854-5233 or 715-9731 by no later than May 16, 2007.

The Birmingham Audubon Society wishes to thank the following individuals for their contributions and memorial donations:

**Contributions:**

Nancy Evans

**Memorial Gift:**

For: Idalene F. Snead

From: Grace Snead Osborne & William Snead

# BIRMINGHAM AUDUBON SOCIETY ENDORSES THE ALABAMA WATER AGENDA

The Birmingham Audubon Society has endorsed the Alabama Water Agenda. We will be responding to action alerts which will seek to accomplish goals to ensure healthy waters throughout the state. The Water Agenda was put together by the Alabama Rivers Alliance and the Southern Environmental Law Center with collaboration of a number of Alabama groups working for clean water, such as the Black Warrior Riverkeeper and the Cahaba River Society. It is designed to create permanent changes in water policy through proactive solutions. The groups reduced the threats to our rivers and streams to sixteen primary threats, then narrowed the focus to six priority threats. As a little background, Alabama ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation in total miles of constantly flowing streams. These supply us with drinking water and play a critical role in transportation, irrigation and industry. They generate power and serve as habitat for our wildlife and provide us with recreational opportunities.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management has only fully assessed only about 7% (by mile) of our rivers and 40% of those are considered to have poor water quality. The coalition will work to address the six priority threats, which are:

agency coordination and enhancement (there are six agencies in the state that are concerned with water quality, such as the Department of Public Health, but they do not coordinate their activities), enforcement, state agency funding, instream flow, stormwater and suburban sprawl. Each threat will have its own special campaign. You as a citizen of Alabama are invited to individually endorse the campaign. By participation we will show elected officials that clean water is important to the people of Alabama. We are encouraged to endorse the Agenda as individuals as well as taking part in groups who endorse the campaigns. As the campaigns take shape, we will be asked to contact elected officials. To find your state officials visit [www.legislature.state.al.us](http://www.legislature.state.al.us). You may sign up for action alerts and spread the word to others to get involved.

The Agenda is made possible by the generous support of The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation, Patagonia, Inc. and the World Wildlife Fund. To get involved and/or get information on the Agenda, please visit [www.AlabamaWaterAgenda.com](http://www.AlabamaWaterAgenda.com).

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## ~ 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

**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.

**Birmingham Audubon Society \*AO07XCH8**

## May 2007

- 4-6 North American Birding Festival  
Decatur, AL
- 10-13 30th Annual Audubon Mountain  
Workshop—Mentone, AL
- 19 BAS Field Trip & Campout,  
Coleman Lake, Talladega N.F.
- 19 Special Field Trip for the visually  
impaired to BBG

## June 2007

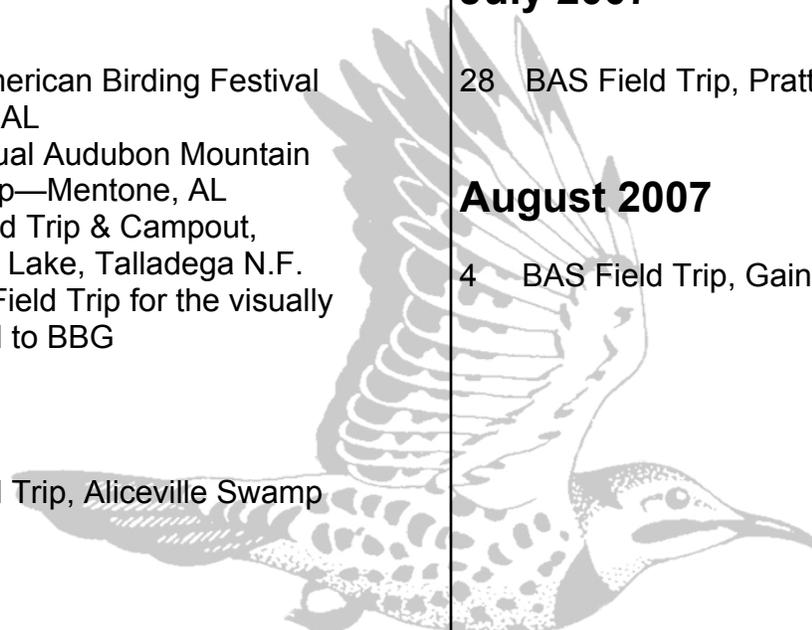
- 23 BAS Field Trip, Aliceville Swamp

## July 2007

- 28 BAS Field Trip, Prattville & Autaugaville

## August 2007

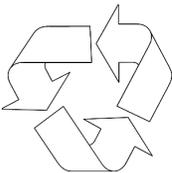
- 4 BAS Field Trip, Gainesville & Aliceville



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