

Flicker Flashes

Published by
The Birmingham Audubon Society

For conservation and greater knowledge
of birds, their habitat, and natural world

Aububon Teaches Nature Becoming a Better Birder: Using Field Marks to Identify Birds

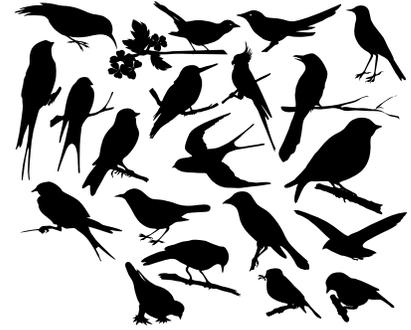
Greg Harber, Guest Speaker
Sunday, March 20, 2016, 2 P.M.
Oak Mountain Interpretive Center

Have you ever desired to become a better birder or wanted to feel more confident about your bird identification skills? If so, then this program is for you! Identifying birds can be a challenge, especially when confronted with an unfamiliar species, but there are steps one can take to make the process a little easier.

Field marks are those traits, behaviors or marks on a bird that one can use to help, when trying to identify a bird. This program is geared toward the beginning or intermediate birder who wants to improve their skills by

learning to identify birds by their field marks. Once you know the key field marks, you will be a pro in no time!

Programs are held at the Alabama Wildlife Center at Oak Mountain State Park and the adjacent Oak Mountain Interpretive Center. Admission to the park is \$5.00 per person, but the program itself is free. Come early to enjoy refreshments at the Alabama Wildlife Center and the birds at the feeders, then when it is time for the program we will move to the auditorium.



Next month's program:

Baby Bird Season

Scottie Jackson and the AWC Team, Guest Speakers
Sunday, April 24, 2016, 2 P.M. - Alabama Wildlife Center

Alabama Audubon Coastal Bird Spring Survey

Alabama's Audubon Coastal Bird Spring surveys will soon be underway! Volunteers will be surveying Alabama coastal bird populations in Mobile and Baldwin counties from March 20 to May 30. This data is critical in monitoring the abundance of these coastal populations, several of which are threatened. This program was created in the aftermath of the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, and these programs have been implemented in all five Gulf of Mexico states. In addition to spring surveys, fall surveys (August 20 - October 30) and winter surveys (January

10 - February 20) are also performed as well as a coastal nesting bird stewardship program during the summer nesting months. If you are interested in participating, please email Andy Coleman, BAS Program Director, at andycoleman@birminghamaudubon.org.



Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop is Coming!

Thursday, May 5 - Sunday, May 8, 2016
See page 6 for additional information.

March Half-day Field Trip Turkey Creek Nature Preserve

Saturday, March 5, 2016 - 8 A.M.

Turkey Creek Nature Preserve, a local natural gem; is the home of both outstanding natural beauty and the vermillion darter, an endangered fish species found nowhere else in the world. Acres of woods divided by the fast flowing Turkey Creek also provide habitat for wintering birds. These outstanding natural features help make the area a site on the Appalachian Highlands Birding Trail.

We should expect to see cedar waxwings, pileated and hairy woodpeckers. Winter wrens are sometimes seen along the stream near exposed tree roots. Goldfinches and sparrow species should also be seen.

Plan to join us on Saturday, March 5 at 8 a.m. for our half day field trip. Bring snacks and water, Binoculars and cameras are welcome. Binoculars will be available for loan for those that might need them. We will meet at the small museum there at the preserve.



Pileated woodpecker- Thinkstock by Getty Images

Directions: From I 20 E/ I 59 N take exit I 28 Tallapoosa St/ Hwy 79. Continue for approximately 12 miles. Turn left onto Narrows Road, travel 0.25 miles to the entrance of Turkey Creek Nature Preserve.

GPS: 33.700684-86.690295

Trip Leader: Susan Barrow -
(H)205-942-8667 (C)205-253-8667

March All-day Field Trip Perry Lakes Park and Eiland Cahaba Outdoor Laboratory

Saturday, March 19, 2016 - 7 A.M.

If spring is your favorite season of the year, and you enjoy both natural and cultural history then this field trip is for you. While our first destination, Perry Lakes Park, is familiar, the Eiland Cahaba Outdoor Laboratory of Judson College will be a new destination for us.

Early spring at Perry Lakes Park, a site on the Alabama Birding Trails Black Belt Loop, features an abundance of wildflowers and early arriving Neotropical migrants such as purple martins, northern parulas and prothonotary warblers. The park also features several Auburn Rural Studio projects - unique structures that draw their inspiration from, and complement their Spanish moss draped surroundings. We will have lunch at the park's pavilion before traveling to our next destination located a short drive away on the east bank of the Cahaba River.

The Eiland Project is a 347-acre historic homestead that serves as an outdoor classroom for Judson College. Here, we'll spend the afternoon exploring the trails, visiting the historic buildings and trekking to the Rock Bar - a sandbar on the Cahaba River that forms the western boundary of the property. We will compile a list of the birds we find here to share with our Judson College hosts.

Meeting Place and Travel Plans:

Our meeting place is the parking lot at the McDonald's at I 73 I Montgomery Hwy, Hoover, AL

35244, across from the Galleria. We will depart from here at 7 a.m. and caravan, via I-459 and AL Hwy 5, to Brent where we will make a rest stop at the Wendy's at 8 a.m., before arriving at Perry Lakes Park between 8:30 and 8:45 a.m.

GPS N 32.69808 W -87.259219

This will be an all-day trip, so bring a picnic lunch, drinks and snacks. Remember, weather this time of year can be changeable, so dress appropriately. Have a full tank of gas. Binoculars and spotting scopes are welcome on this trip, and binoculars may be borrowed from Birmingham Audubon for the trip. For those who wish, supper may be shared at a local restaurant at day's end.

Trip Co-leaders: Greg Harber, 205-251-2133, home/evenings, or 205-807-8055, day of field trip only, and Matt Hunter, 205-915-8186.



Prothonotary warbler -
Thinkstock by Getty Images

All Birmingham Audubon field trips are free and open to the public.

March Membership Program

Mirroring the Natural World: Strawberry Plains Audubon Center Work in Productive Habitat

Birmingham Botanical Gardens - First Floor Classroom
Thursday, March 17, 2016 - 7 P.M.

Native plants and productive habitat have been part of the fabric of Strawberry Plains Audubon Center since it was founded near Holly Springs, Mississippi. The 3000 acre Strawberry Plains complex, near Memphis, includes hardwood forests, wetlands, native grasslands and a trail system that connects the varied habitats with historic buildings. Known by many for the annual Hummingbird Migration & Celebration Festival, Strawberry Plains is also home to the only native plant nursery among Audubon Centers throughout the country.

It was during a Hummingbird Festival about seven years ago that Kristin Lamberson, Interpretive Gardens Specialist, invited the author of a new book* linking productivity of native plants to abundance and diversity of wildlife to present at the Hummingbird festival. That author, Doug Tallamy, continues to share his work through the festival next scheduled for September 11-13, 2016.

Speakers Lamberson and Mitch Robinson, Education and Land Manager, lead the center's efforts to promote the use of native plants through on-site programming as well as regionally through projects including one underway at the University of Mississippi with the help of students, birders, faculty and staff. Strawberry Plains Audubon Center and Birmingham Audubon are among pilot programs of National Audubon's Bird Friendly Communities focus on native habitat. Lamberson, Robinson, other staff members and a legion of volunteers will host the Spring Native Plant Sale May 20-21, 2016 at Strawberry Plains.

Kristin Lamberson has been working on staff at Strawberry Plains for 12 years, both growing and promoting the use of native plants. Mirroring the natural world in her landscape designs she creates sanctuary for wildlife as well as people.

"By allowing the wild into our life through the venue of the cultivated landscape, we give ourselves the opportunity to experience magnificence in the small and grandeur in the common, while giving those who lack a human voice a place to flourish!"

Mitchell Robinson returned to his native Mississippi in 2013 to invest his skills and energies in a familiar landscape and culture. Mitch graduated from the University of the South, Sewanee, in 2007 with a B.S. in Natural Resources and the Environment, and most recently served for five years as the Education Coordinator, Land Manager and Interim Director at Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve in Austin, Texas. His expertise includes endangered, threatened and invasive species management; interagency and non-profit collaborations; research design; private lands consultation; and naturalist education.

**Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants,* Douglas W. Tallamy, Forward by Rick Darke



Kristin Lamberson



Mitch Robinson

Birds and Brews

Limestone Park, Alabaster, Alabama
Thursday, March 27, 2016 - 2 P.M.

One of Birmingham Audubon's Urban Bird Habitat Initiative sites, Limestone Park is an interesting combination of wetlands, grasslands, and Tupelo gum swamp that provides habitat for wading birds, swamp and marsh birds, grassland species, and some waterfowl in winter. You will also find songbirds and shorebirds in migration at this site. Best birds are anhinga (breeds in and around the park), and bobolinks, dickcissels, and grasshopper sparrows (late spring). Roseate spoonbill is sometimes spotted here in summer. There is a handicapped-accessible birding observation deck overlooking the wetlands on the north-western side of the park, with adjacent parking for all. Located in a rural industrial area in southern Shelby County, this park preserves a rich remnant of the habitat mosaic that makes this area especially attractive to birds. The Birmingham

Audubon's Conservation Committee is currently working with the City of Alabaster and other partners to reintroduce prairie and enrich the habitat at this popular birding site.

Directions: From I-65 in Shelby County, take exit 238 to US 31 South. Follow US 31 south for 4.2 miles, turning right onto a gravel road with a yellow pipe gate. The address is 2400 Highway 31 South, Alabaster, AL 35080. There is no admission fee. The gate to the park is open from 6 a.m. to dusk, throughout the year. The gate is just past Saginaw Pipe and the entrance sign of a mobile home area.

Meet in the parking lot close to the first lake you encounter on the gravel road leading into the park. Please join us at 2 p.m. for a fun and educational afternoon. We will have binoculars to loan to those who need them. After we are through looking at birds, we will reconvene at the nearby Jim and Nicks Restaurant.

For more info email: Hans Paul at: cooterpl4@gmail.com



SoSo for the Record

Sightings December 5, 2015 through January 22, 2016

On December 13, 2015 Scot Duncan and Charles Grisham had a nice surprise as they discovered an adult Little Gull at Wilson Dam. Later, Duncan recorded a second one (immature) at the same location. Of course this special gull is a rarity for Alabama. According to Greg Jackson we have 10 prior Alabama records, the last one occurring in 2008. This is the first time more than one was found. It occasionally breeds in the Great Lakes area, and maybe more farther north near Hudson Bay. Needless to say, these two gulls had many visitors.

Other Sightings:

- 12/5 **Black-chinned Hummingbird**; Montgomery (LG,AG).
- 12/11 **Buff-bellied Hummingbird**; Foley. (Banded by FB).
- 12/20 **Masked Booby**; Dauphin Island. (AH).
- 1/10 **Western Tanager**; Clay ,Another rarity (BA).
- 1/18 **Red-breasted Nuthatch**; Homewood (AM).
- 1/19 **Common Loon**; Avondale Park Lake, possibly injured (KW).
Red-throated Loon (adult); Guntersville (GJ).
- 1/21 **Fox Sparrow (3)**; Cherokee County (JI)
- 1/22 **Whooping Crane (5)**; Sandhill Crane (5000); Wheeler Refuge

Contributors:

Bianca Allen
 Fred Bassett
 Dwight Cooley
 Scot Duncan
 Larry and Andrea Gardella
 Charles Grisham
 Andrew Haffenden
 John Imhof
 Greg Jackson
 Ann Miller
 Ken Wills

Please, send sightings for April Flicker Flashes at least five days before the March 1 deadline to Ann Miller, 520 Yorkshire Drive, Birmingham, Al. 35209, annmiller520@aol.com



Black chinned hummingbird -
Thinkstock by Getty Images



Western tanager -
Thinkstock by Getty Images



Masked booby-
Thinkstock by Getty Images

Beginner Bird Walk at Limestone Park

Sunday, March 13, 2016 - 2 p.m.

Want to learn more about the birds that you have been seeing? The Beginner Bird Walks are designed to help you become a better birdwatcher. Families with children age five and up, as well as adults without children, are invited to attend our Spring Beginner Bird Walk at Limestone Park.

Limestone Park is part of our Urban Bird Habitat Initiative and is a site on the Alabama Birding Trails. Its diversity of habitats support a large variety of bird species, and almost 175 species have been documented so far. During our trip, we may see wood ducks, American coots, eastern meadowlarks, loggerhead shrikes, tree swallows, and migrating warblers. We may also have the opportunity to view the release of a bird rehabilitated at the Alabama Wildlife Center. Last year, we enjoyed the release of a yellow-crowned night heron.

Birmingham Audubon members will be available to help you find and identify those birds and to share their spotting scopes for looks at the distant birds. Loaner binoculars will be provided for use during the walk. A parent or grandparent must accompany children. Please RSVP by calling Josey Crider at 205-719-3678 to reserve your spot. Reservations will be accepted through Friday, March 11. Include in your message, the number of adults and children in your party, your phone number, and email address. After you are registered you will receive an email confirmation.

Directions to Limestone Park:
From Birmingham south on I-65 to exit 238. From the exit take US 31 south for 4.2 miles. After passing Saginaw Pipe on the right, turn right onto a gravel road with a yellow pipe gate. The address is 2400 Highway 31 - South, Alabaster. Look for the Limestone Park and Alabama Birding Trails signs at the entrance.

Book Review

Southern Wonder: Alabama's Surprising Biodiversity

By R.Scot Duncan, The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa (2013)

ISBN: 978-0-8173-1802-4
436 pages (plus front matter)
15 Chapters, plus Notes, References, and Index
Foreword by Edward O.Wilson

Alabama is a beautiful state. It says so on the roadside signs that greet you on entering Alabama by the interstate highways, but anyone with eyes to see knows that for themselves without having to be told. It is also scenically quite diverse, from the mountains of the tail-end of the Appalachian chain, to the Tennessee River valley and edge of the Cumberland plateau in the north, to the pine forests of the coastal plain and white sand beaches of the Gulf coast in the south, and much else in between including the largest river and stream system east of the Mississippi. What may not be so obvious is the amazing biodiversity; the huge variety of all kinds of plants and animals, and the ecosystems that they comprise that has its foundation on this physiographic diversity. This is what Scot Duncan reveals to us in his marvelous book.

Chapter one, entitled "Number One in the East" outlines this remarkable diversity, for which it outranks all but four much larger, western states, and Chapter two, "A Tale of Two Mice," uses the example of the Alabama Beach Mouse to illustrate just how precarious the situation is with much of the state's animal and plant life. The next three chapters give an account of the geology and its evolution over the eons, as well as climate, that have made Alabama what it is today. Then Duncan takes us on a journey through all of the physiographic provinces in turn, including the continental shelf off-shore, and describes in elegant and eminently readable fashion their specific ecosystems, including the trees, flowering and other plants, and the aquatic as well as terrestrial critters that depend on the particular types of vegetation, water-bodies, and geological substratum. The amount of information presented is large, more than the average reader, including this reviewer, can fully absorb, but that is not the point. Overall, we are led through a mind-boggling account of the wildlife, both plant and animal, of Alabama the beautiful.

To say that Duncan's book merely scratches the surface is no criticism, but simply to point out that the subject matter is vast, and to describe it in even currently known detail would require multiple volumes that would deter all but academic specialists. Yet the author could

not have written in such an appealing manner if he did not possess an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the subject. Duncan is an Associate Professor and Chair of the department of Biology at Birmingham-Southern College, a position formerly held by the late Dan Holliman, who was well-known and loved by all in the state's environmental and wildlife conservation community. Duncan's own field of study includes plant, forest, stream, and avian ecology, and conservation biology, and his research focuses on Longleaf Pine forests, the Bibb County dolomite glades, and the Cahaba and Black Warrior River watersheds. His accomplishments including this book show him to be a worthy successor to Holliman. A further accolade is the generous foreword written by Edward O.Wilson, the eminent socio-biologist, ant expert, and Alabama native.

The University of Alabama Press has served Duncan well: the book is beautifully produced and lavishly illustrated with excellent full-color photographs, many of them taken by the author.

Southern Wonder can be recommended to all who claim to love Alabama, but those who truly do will probably already have acquired and read it to their delight. For politicians and civic leaders it should be required reading, with any hint of demoral amounting to automatic disqualification for office!

- By Michael Russell



Southern Wonder author, Scot Duncan



Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop

Thursday, May 5 - Sunday, May 8, 2016
Alpine Camp, Mentone, Alabama

NEW THIS YEAR! A one day participation rate of \$175!

Join Birmingham Audubon in exploring the natural history and ecology of the southern Appalachian Mountains at the 39th Annual Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop on May 5 through 8 at Alpine Camp.

A broad overview of the natural sciences and regional culture is provided through classes on topics including animal ecology, beginning and advanced bird identification, stream biology, mammals, insects, reptiles and amphibians, geology and fossils, canoeing, mountain crafts, and many more. Classes take place on the campus of Alpine Camp, around Mentone, an old Alabama resort area, and on the waters of the Little River.

The rich tradition of our nature-based workshop was inspired by Blanche Dean's Nature Workshops, which began in the 1950s exploring a blend of local fauna, flora and geography of Alabama. In 1984, the late Dan Holliman of Birmingham Southern developed a broad curriculum for the workshop he described as an activity that "has attracted naturalists who are intrigued by the concept of 'outdoor' education."

We invite you to look over the schedule and the faculty/course descriptions to get a better understanding of why the Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop has attracted nature lovers for generations. There are separate programs for adults and Young Naturalists. You will find the curriculum and registration information at this link (available March 1, 2016): www.regonline.com/birminghamaudubonmountainworkshop

This year we will be offering a one day participation rate of \$175. Come stick your toe in the Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop water. At this price, you can sample a Friday or Saturday at camp. Try this one-day experience by taking classes, eating camp meals, and enjoying the scenic beauty for a special price.

The Young Naturalist Program offers a curriculum for children ages 5 to 12. The Young Naturalist courses and activities are taught and supervised by our academic adult faculty along with our guest director and Birmingham Audubon's staff. Young Naturalists love this program that includes lots of hands on activities with extensive science and nature based learning.

The 2016 Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop requires online registration. You register for the workshop and make all class selections on line. Class sizes are limited. Timely registration ensures best class selection.

Birmingham Audubon member (1).....	\$290
Birmingham Audubon nonmember (1).....	\$315
Young Naturalist (includes t-shirt).....	\$265
Mountain Resident member (2).....	\$275
Mountain Resident nonmember (2).....	\$300
One Day Participation (3)	\$175

Registration prices will increase by \$25 after April 22, 2016
Onsite registration will be \$370 per person

- (1) Registration includes tuition, room and meals, beginning with Thursday evening meal and ending with Sunday lunch.
- (2) Registration includes tuition and meals beginning with Thursday evening meal and ending with Sunday lunch.
- (3) Registration includes one day (either Friday or Saturday) of camp activities (classes and evening activities) and meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner).

Birmingham Audubon members must be on our member roll. A good indicator of whether you are a member is if you get our Flicker Flashes publication. Please email the registrar if you are unsure of your membership status.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Registration is fully refundable less a \$25 administrative fee through April 15. Half of the registration fee will be returned for cancellations made between April 16-22, 2016. No refunds after April 22, 2016.



Join and Support Birmingham Audubon

Are birds, wildlife and our natural habitat of interest to you?

If so, we invite you to be a part of a community that enjoys, values and protects birds and our natural world.

Founded in 1946, the Birmingham Audubon Society is Alabama's leading non-profit organization engaging people in the enjoyment and conservation of birds, their habitats and the natural world. With your support, we involve people through recreational birding, by extending their horizons with education programs, and by engaging them in conservation actions such as planting trees, counting birds, and working with local, state, and national policy makers.

There are many ways you can support Birmingham Audubon

Please join us and make a difference for birds and your quality of life, right here in Alabama!

Membership

Take the first step and become a Member of Birmingham Audubon. Get connected with our *Flicker Flashes* newsletter. See birds by participating in one of our free field trips, and learn something at one of our free monthly programs.

Make a Donation

We rely on your support and are proud to work on your behalf to restore wildlife habitat, conserve areas that are important to birds, and inspire appreciation and understanding of our natural world. Your generous donation, above and beyond the basic membership dues, is an important source of funding which allows Birmingham Audubon to facilitate our vital mission of connecting people with birds and the places they live.

Your memberships and donations support:

- Free monthly programs on natural science topics
- Free field trips led by expert birders to great birding / cultural locations
- Opportunity to attend Annual Banquet and Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop
- Introduction to great locations to see and observe birds
- Exposure to knowledgeable birders
- Travel opportunities to regional, national and international birding locations
- Graduate student research grants
- Local and statewide conservation initiatives
- Adult and student education initiatives
- Local, state and national conservation initiatives
- Alabama Birding Trails support

Birmingham Audubon Society Membership Application

Join Renew **Annual Membership: \$ 20.00**

Donation to support the programs & projects of Birmingham Audubon: \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

Please make check payable to:

Birmingham Audubon Society

Please charge my credit card

Visa MasterCard

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Birmingham Audubon Society is an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Your donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Please keep my donation anonymous

Yes No

I want to receive communications electronically

Yes No

I want to be contacted to learn about volunteer activities

Yes No

If you are interested in joining National Audubon Society, visit: www.audubon.org

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Birmingham Audubon Society
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

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Suzanne Langley, Executive Director
Andrew T. Coleman, Ph.D., Program Director

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Consider gifting a membership to Birmingham Audubon

www.birminghamaudubon.org
or 205-719-3678

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April 2016

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