

Flicker Flashes

Published by the  *Birmingham Audubon Society*

Sipsey River Canoe Trip, Fayette, AL Saturday, April 13, 2013, All-day trip



Spring is almost here and with its return comes a new suite of birds we can expect to encounter on our monthly field trips. We are going to celebrate the return of spring in grand style with an April 13, 2013 field trip to Fayette, which will be unlike any we have taken in recent memory! The highlight of the trip will be a 2.5-mile canoe trip on the scenic Sipsey River. Northern parulas, prothonotary warblers and red-shouldered hawks are among the birds we can expect to see and hear while canoeing on the river.

You may bring your own drinks and lunch, but those of you who are BBQ aficionados may wish to pre-order your lunch

from Fayette's favorite BBQ institution: Sam's Smokehouse. Visit <http://baslunch.sipsey.org> to place your order, but please be prepared to pay Greg Harber, trip leader, for your meal on the day of the trip. The Friends of the Sipsey will provide sodas and bottled water for us.

Van Gravlee, our contact in Fayette, will be handling the details of arranging for enough canoes to accommodate our group, however, we need to assist him in this effort. Everyone – no exceptions - will need to wear a life jacket while on the river, but Van only has access to a handful of these, so we need to bring our own. I have made arrangements to rent 15 life jackets from the UAB Outdoor Pursuits office at a cost of \$4 each.

We would dearly love to be able to accommodate everyone who wishes to take part on this trip, but that requires timely action on your part. First, please contact me (Greg Harber, 205-251-2133/home or gharber@mindspring.com, preferred) and reserve your spot on the trip by Wednesday, April 3, 2013. Please provide your name and how many people will be in your party. Also, please let me know if you need me to reserve a life jacket for you. Obviously, it will be very helpful if you can provide your own life jacket (or canoe, even!). Reserving the canoes and life jackets by April 3 is critical if we are to have enough for everyone.

Meeting time and place: We depart promptly at 7:00 a.m. from the Fieldstown Road Shopping Center (655 Fieldstown Road, Gardendale, AL 35071) for Fayette via US 78/I-22 (Corridor X) to Jasper, and then Alabama Highways 69, Alabama 124 and Alabama 102 to Fayette – a distance of 77 miles (1.5 hours). Remember to dress for the weather and wear suitable attire for a morning on the river. Bring plenty to drink and a picnic lunch (unless you want to purchase take-out barbecue).

Trip leader: Greg Harber, 205-251-2133/home, 205-807-8055/cell (day of trip only, please) or gharber@mindspring.com.

APRIL FIELD TRIP

South Shelby County Wetlands Half-Day Field Trip Saturday, April 6, 2013

MEETING PLACE: McDonald's on U.S. 31, which is across from the Galleria. Address: 1731 Montgomery Hwy, Hoover, AL 35244. Please park in the lot across from the restaurant. Please consider carpooling.

DEPARTURE TIME: We will leave at 7 a.m. for the 25-minute drive down I-65 South to Limestone Park.

DESTINATIONS: Limestone Park and adjacent wetlands 2400 HWY 31S Alabaster, AL 35080 GPS N33.117.07 W86.45.43 (www.alabamabirdingtrails.com/sites/limestone-park/);

Ebenezer Ecological Preserve Shelby County Road 24 GPS N 33.10.02 W 86.48.33 (www.alabamabirdingtrails.com/sites/ebenezer-swamp/)

BIRDS WE MAY OBSERVE: At Limestone Park, we may observe waders, waterfowl and shorebirds from the Observation Deck, a joint project of Birmingham Audubon and the City of

Alabaster. The fields in the park are frequented by sparrows, Eastern bluebirds, Eastern phoebes and spring migrants. Adjacent wetlands may also host similar species.

Ebenezer Ecological Preserve hosts a diverse group of birds, mammals and plants. Warblers, woodpeckers and other woodland species may be present, along with wood ducks and waders.

Please bring along your binoculars, camera, water and snacks. The group may gather for lunch at a local eating establishment.

For further information or questions, please contact trip leaders: Maureen Shaffer 205-822-8728 (home) 205-222-2662 (cell), Anne G. Miller 205-902-1389 (cell) or Susan Barrow 942-8667 (home) 253-8667 (cell)

Flightless Birds and Unique Plants of New Zealand

ELLEN W. MCLAUGHLIN AND CARL SLOAN



**Birmingham
Audubon Program
April 25, 2013
Thursday 7 p.m.
Birmingham
Botanical Gardens
East Room**

**Among
New Zealand's
unique species are
two prominent
flightless birds, the
living Kiwi and the
extinct Moa**

New Zealand, "the land of the long, white cloud," is home to many species of animals and plants found nowhere else in the world. Among these are two prominent flightless birds, the living Kiwi and the extinct Moa. This program will describe the adaptations made by these birds to a flightless existence including skeletal changes, habitat preference, food procurement, reproduction and ecology.

In addition to the aforementioned birds, New Zealand is home to giant tree ferns and the great podocarp forests. These forests which are composed of endemic lichens and mosses and two primarily Southern hemisphere dwelling plant families, Podocarpaceae and Auriacariaceae, will also be touched on during this program. Some of the trees in these forests rival the eucalyptus and the redwoods as the largest in the world.

Ellen McLaughlin is a retired Professor emeritus from the Biology Department at Samford University. Her extensive travels include trips to New Zealand, China, Mongolia and the Middle East (Israel and Jordan). She currently teaches the following one-day courses for beginner naturalists offered through the Samford After Sundown continuing education program: "The Forest Floor", "Tree Bark Biota and Identification", "Use of the Microscope", "Insects", "Aquatic Biology", "Wildflowers" and "Beginning Birding."

Carl Sloan is a regular instructor at the Audubon Mountain Workshop, the Ruffner Mountain Nature Center and teaches Biology at Jefferson State Community College. He is known for his expertise on lichens, mosses, liverworts and ferns. Carl has visited New Zealand twice, where he has bicycled around the country.

Forty-eighth Annual Spring Bird Count Saturday, April 27, 2013



As I write this article it is March 1, and the weather forecast calls for a chance of snow flurries tonight and tomorrow morning. Is spring really around the corner? I'd like to think so, but I'll wait until the weather warms and plants start bursting forth from their winter dormancy before I believe it!

Regardless of tomorrow's weather forecast or the date, neotropical migrants are surely making their way north, and that means it is time for the 48th annual Spring Bird Count! This is a fun count, when we venture out to welcome our returning migrants. The count provides a wonderful opportunity to spend some time outdoors and watch the feathered parade as the birds follow their migration route north. Many of the local breeding birds will be well along in raising their young.

This all-day count will cover parts of Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair and Blount counties, and we will need as many participants as possible to adequately cover the area. Even though this is an all-day count, you may join a party for any part of the day if you only have a limited amount of time. It is essential though that you make arrangements now to join

a party on count day. Feel free to call me at 251-2133 for the names and phone numbers of party leaders in your area. You may wish to count the birds at your feeders and call or e-mail your report to me later. Rose-breasted grosbeaks will surely reward those who take the time to watch at home!

At the end of the day we will gather to compile our results, swap stories and share our adventures of the day. Those fortunate enough to find a real rarity should expect to provide appropriate written documentation. Anne G. Miller will host the compilation at her home in Bluff Park, located at 980 Shades Crest Road, Birmingham, 35226. Take the I-65 Alford Avenue exit (#254) and travel west approximately 0.6 miles. Turn right onto Pine Lane (third right) and then left at the T-intersection onto Shades Crest Road. Anne's house is third driveway on the right. Anne will provide light snacks. We plan to get started around 7 p.m. If you need additional directions, please call either Anne (822-6167) or me (251-2133).

Greg Harber,
For Bird Counts Committee

Indigo Snakes in Alabama: Conserving a Species and its Habitat



Sunday, April 28, 2013, 2 p.m.

The Orianne Society, Guest Speaker
Oak Mountain Interpretive Center, Oak Mountain State Park

The April Audubon Teaches Nature seminar will feature another topic we've never covered in the series: the Eastern indigo snake. Eastern indigos are perhaps the most beautiful snake in Alabama – and – they are also federally listed as threatened. Live specimens will highlight the program as members of the Orianne Society discuss conservation of these rare creatures and other inhabitants of the longleaf pine ecosystem such as gopher tortoises and Eastern diamondback rattlesnakes. If you have ever wanted to learn more about the longleaf pine ecosystem this is a great opportunity.

Come a little early if you wish, as there will almost assuredly be a good selection of birds at the feeders to help you pass the time while you wait for the program to start. Refreshments will be served in the Observation Room at the Alabama Wildlife Center beginning at 1:30 p.m. Then when it is time for the program to start, we'll walk to the adjacent Interpretive Center for the program. Be sure to bring your binoculars for a bird/nature walk after the program.

NEXT MONTH'S SEMINAR:

Soil Critters ~ It's a Tiny World under the Microscope
Sunday, May 19, 2013, 2 p.m. ~ Ellen McLaughlin, Guest Speaker (OMIC)

Audubon is Flying WILD:

The word is out, and educators are enjoying the beauty of birds. Teachers and naturalists from across the region have signed up and participated in Flying WILD, a program created by the Council for Environmental Education. This program helps train educators through hands-on bird activities, which they can then share with their students.

Migration, conservation, carrying capacity, biodiversity, bird identification, limiting factors along with physical characteristics and predatory relationships are just some of the topics covered. The educator's guide contains more than 40 activities that correlate to the National Science Standards. These activities cross through the curriculum as art, science, math, social studies and language arts and are all taught through the wonderful lives of birds. Birmingham Audubon has held four Flying WILD workshops this year, and four more are scheduled.

Teachers receive five hours of training, a Flying WILD educator's curriculum guide, a certificate of attendance plus free materials and tips to help begin teaching about birds. Identifying

birds and enhancing a bird habitat near the school are also discussed. The training session is completed with a bird walk around the school.

As the City Partner for the Council for Environmental Education, Birmingham Audubon is proud to support the Flying WILD Curriculum across the state. There are currently four active facilitators that present workshops in Alabama. It is through these dedicated facilitators that educators are learning to appreciate birds. Many birds and other animal species benefit when people learn more about conservation and habitat preservation. Students become aware of bird habitats around them, and they feel empowered to help improve those habitats.

Learn more about the Flying WILD program at:

www.flyingwild.org. If you would like us to present a Flying WILD workshop at your school, please contact Education Manager, Helena Uber-Wamble at 205-714-8228.

Check our website for up-coming workshop dates.

April Ecstasy

April is bewitching! April is hypnotic! For the birder, no month in the year holds the excitement of the returning neotropical song birds. There are not enough hours in the day to seek out, to listen, and to look for these feathered beauties. They have wintered in the Bahamas and on Caribbean Islands, in Mexico, as well as Central and South America. Now they are coming back to nest with us and raise their young.

Each day has its own surprise. Each day brings a new arrival, some to stay and nest, others to fly farther north. The miracle and the mystery of spring happens every year. No two days are alike; and the set changes with each rising of the sun. New flowers are opening each day, the trees are freshly green and the woods are filled with song. Arise with the dawn to hear the cacophony of bird song. The robin chorus is loud now, but wait for a pause to pick up a new voice. The mockingbird bursts into his ecstatic repertoire to tell everyone he owns the earth! All around you, the air is filled with song.

Those drab fall warblers begin to reappear in dazzling color that would grace a President's ball. One might call April, warbler month. Some thirty species are possible to see in our area. A few arrived in late March, while some wait until May. Besides the warblers, other migrant song birds are also returning

That first week in April: See an indigo bunting alight on the green grass, a blue grosbeak on a fence, a hummingbird at the sweet water, chimney swifts chattering in your chimney, an orchard oriole high in a tree, hear a wood thrush's first song, the wood-pewee's plaintive notes, the red-eyed vireo give his question and answer report. Warblers freshly arrived include:

blue-winged, palm, hooded, yellow, black-throated green and Northern waterthrush.

In the second week of April, look for: summer tanager, scarlet tanager, great crested flycatcher, and gray catbird. Warblers may include: prothonotary, worm-eating, Nashville, prairie, and cerulean.

Week three: rose-breasted grosbeak (they may spend up to a week at your sunflower seed feeder), yellow-billed cuckoo. Warblers: Wilson's, golden-winged, chestnut-sided, ovenbird, yellow-breasted chat, and American redstart.

Fourth week: veery, Swainson's and grey-cheeked thrushes. Warblers: Tennessee, magnolia, Cape May, blackpoll, bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Canada, and possibly a mourning warbler.

P. S. The birds have not read this Schedule!

There is no need to travel far during the month to glimpse these favored birds. Birmingham Botanical Gardens, The Birmingham Zoo, Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve, Oak Mountain State Park, and most any woodland habitat will be a site to watch for these returnees. Your own backyard may be the best place of all! Enjoy April, the most exciting month of the year!

Harriett Wright 03-09-01

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thomas A Imhof 1986. Occurrence of Alabama's Birds by Season and Region.

HHW- Records.



UP, UP AND AWAY!



Activities for Fledgling Naturalists

Look up! Do you see those small, streamlined birds with forked or swallow tails soaring through the air? These glossy, dark blue birds with reddish-orange to white chests and a blue breast band are barn swallows, *Hirundo rustica*. They return to Alabama early in the spring and can be found throughout the state.

As these birds fly, they grab and scoop insects to eat. They even drink as they fly low over the water. These birds are acrobats in the air. Twisting and turning while flying up and down as they chase their insect prey, which include moths, butterflies, beetles, wasps, bees, and mosquitoes. These birds feed over open fields and water. They even bathe while they fly by dipping their chests in the water. These birds have a steady wing beat with five to seven beats per second.

These birds used to build their nests in caves; however, they now build their mud nests on man-made structures such as eaves, rafters, carports, bridges, and yes, even in barns. Their nests are cup shaped and made of mud. These birds will reuse their old nests by cleaning out the debris and adding a new layer of mud. The worst part about having an

active barn swallow nest in your carport is the bird droppings. The female will lay three to five eggs cream to pinkish eggs that may have gray, lavender or brown spots. The eggs hatch about 15 days later. Parents will tend to the babies. Sometimes older brothers and sisters from an earlier brood will help feed the next group of babies.

After the breeding season, these birds will gather together in communal roosts. In one example in Michigan, barn swallows built their nests below osprey nests. They received protection from the fish-eating osprey, and ospreys were alerted to potential predators by the warning calls of the barn swallows. That's neighbors helping neighbors!

Birds & Bugs

X E A X H N M O T K M C V F C
N G V T O C T A B R R Y N F T
M O S Q U I T O Y P E R V I N
N I T R A M P L S F A E C L O
D A O R L U F M W B L D B C A
T W V O R R D W A I N I W Z I
Q J G P E V Q Z L S O H E B V
K O L T E B O I L K X H N S W
D E T Y L L N X O Q W A M A Y
A U N E Q V T M W I E J S R N
B M D T R G J E Y T I P S K G
M N D F N M B I E X W T Z C X
O C A V E W D F Z B N Q P S H
T T A Z R E N Q R E E B W V X
H R O N O U J H B W J N Z P Y

SoSo for the Record



Sightings from the field

Sightings:

January 27 through February 23, 2013

- 1/27 **Golden Eagle and 100+ Turkey and Black Vultures** were seen flying overhead. Clay (BS, MS).
- 2/18 **Rusty Blackbird** Roebuck Springs (SD).
- 2/19 **Loggerhead Shrike; Vesper Sparrow** Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport (KW).
- 2/20 **Tree Swallow (18 +)** Near Harpersville, **Tree and Northern Rough-winged Swallows** (small flock); Lake Purdy (AC, HW).
- 2/23 **Great Egret; Wilson's Snipe; Ring-billed Gull; Purple Martin; Palm Warbler** Limestone Park, Alabaster (KW, SG, JG, HP).

CONTRIBUTORS:

Alice Christenson, Scot Duncan, Sam and Jessie Griswold, Hans Paul, Bob & Martha Sargent, Ken Wills, Harriett Wright

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Please submit sightings for May/June Flicker Flashes at least five days before the April 1, 2013 deadline to:

Ann Miller: 520 Yorkshire Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209
annmiller520@aol.com

BARN	BEE	BEETLE
BUTTERFLY	CAVE	CLIFF
MARTIN	MAYFLIES	MOSQUITO
MOTH	PURPLE	SWALLOW
TREE	WASP	

Birmingham Audubon Society Officers for 2013-2014

Please welcome the following officers who have committed their time and talents to our organization for next year:

PRESIDENT:

Ken R. Marion is Emeritus Professor of Biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he teaches and has taught ecology, environmental biology, and field biology for more than 40 years. He is a former Chair of the Department of Biology and has served as a member of the Forever Wild of Alabama Board of Directors as well as several boards of local and state environmental organizations. He has served as President of the Alabama Fisheries Association, the Alabama Academy of Science, and the Association of Southeastern Biologists. His research has focused on the natural history of various reptiles, amphibians and fish with particular emphasis on how humans impact these species.

VICE PRESIDENT, PRESIDENT-ELECT:

Michelle Reynolds is a native plant enthusiast on a mission to teach others how to put nature back into the urban landscape. She has spent the last three years spearheading the native plant restoration and rain garden projects at the LEED certified Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve, where she serves on the Board of Directors. She is on the Board of Directors at the Alabama River Alliance and is an Outdoor Classroom Consultant for the Alabama Wildlife Federation. As a contributing writer and blogger for Alabama Gardener Magazine, she hopes to reach readers and help them connect to larger ecological issues. When she is not talking, working, writing, or thinking about gardening, she is designing and making slipcovers and nature inspired fabric art in the studio behind her house.

VICE PRESIDENT, CONSERVATION:

Kathy Stiles Freeland, a native Alabamian, has been active in conservation in the state for more than 40 years both as a volunteer and as Executive Director of two conservation organizations. She was a founder and Executive Director of Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve in Birmingham, and established and served as the Executive Director of Alabama's first chapter of The Nature Conservancy. While at TNC, she was a leader of the effort to establish the Alabama Forever Wild Land Trust. After a second stint of service at Ruffner Mountain, leading a capital campaign to build a new LEED certified environmental education center, she was employed in 2012 by Conservation Alabama to lead a grassroots campaign focused on female, African-American and Hispanic voters to get out the vote in an effort to renew Forever Wild.

VICE PRESIDENT, EDUCATION:

Jean Folsom was born and raised in Birmingham where her parents, long-time Birmingham Audubon members, introduced her to the organization and a love of birds. She and

her husband have two sons, and four grandchildren who live in Kansas City and Boulder, Colorado. Jean is a retired high school honors biology teacher and continues to tutor students in biology and chemistry. She enjoys traveling, birding, canoeing, and hiking and working with the Native Plants group at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAMS:

Dr. Kristin Bakkegard has been an assistant professor in the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences at Samford University since 2008 where she teaches zoology, general biology, and environmental science. Her research interests involve general zoology and salamander ecology and behavior, specifically the Red Hills Salamander, Alabama's state amphibian. Her Ph.D. is from Utah State University where she worked on the population genetics of two salamanders in the Mount St. Helens area. She also has a degree in Zoology from Auburn University (M.S.), in Chemistry from Boston University (M.A.) and in Chemistry from the United States Naval Academy (B.S.). She was raised in Huntsville, Alabama. She spent almost 10 years on active duty in the Navy as a surface warfare officer and was also assigned to three ships as an engineering and operations officer. She also served as a Navy ROTC instructor at Boston University. At present, she is a Navy reservist with 24 years of service.

TREASURER:

Lori Oswald has been a member of Birmingham Audubon Society since 1998 and, with this year, completes her time as Assistant Treasurer and Membership Committee Chair. Lori is an active member in several conservation organizations. Lori, a CPA, manages the Accounting Shared Services Group for Protective Life Corporation.

RECORDING SECRETARY:

Susan Patton bought her first field guide in 1989 and began learning about the many birds in her own yard until discovering Birmingham Audubon in 2006. In addition to birding, she enjoys knitting, quilting, and genealogy. Susan, once a design drafter, and her husband have owned a small business since 1985. The Pattons live in McCalla with their six cats and two dogs.

EDITOR, FLICKER FLASHES:

Ty Keith, a life-long resident of the Birmingham metropolitan area, has served Birmingham Audubon as a field trip leader, count party leader and Education Department volunteer during the past decade. Ty graduated from the University of Alabama at Birmingham with degrees in Mass Communication and History. He is married to Kenny Williamson Keith also of Birmingham.

Membership Application

Birmingham Audubon Society*

- New Members and Renewals \$20.00
- Seniors (62 or better) \$15.00
- Full-time Students \$15.00

Please make check payable to: Birmingham Audubon Society

Send application and check to:

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I want to opt-out receiving a printed copy of Flicker Flashes

My check for \$ _____ is enclosed.

Phone: (205) 714-8227

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Cut Along Dotted Line

***2 EASY WAYS**

To Become a Member of Birmingham Audubon Society:

1. Join Birmingham Audubon Society without National Audubon Society affiliation. This chapter only membership provides you access to all chapter activities and benefits including the chapter newsletter, Flicker Flashes. All dues stay in Birmingham to support local activities. You will Not receive the National Audubon magazine.

And/Or

2. Join National Audubon Society directly through the National Audubon website www.audubon.org. Birmingham Audubon Society serves as a local chapter of the National Audubon Society. Joining National Audubon Society also provides you a membership to Birmingham Audubon Society and access to all chapter activities and benefits. You will receive the National Audubon magazine. Your dues support the work of National Audubon Society and a small percentage of your dues are returned to the Birmingham Audubon Society for local efforts.

Birmingham Audubon gratefully acknowledges the following gifts and memorial donations:

Bobbie Jean Bailey made a gift to the Annual Fund in memory of her husband, Russell Bailey.

Stan Roth made a gift to the Annual Fund honoring Greg Harber.

Thank you to each of our Annual Fund donors for your generosity and support of our programs.

Birmingham Audubon Society
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

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Birmingham, AL

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Flicker Flashes is published eight times a year by the Birmingham Audubon Society.

Editor: Ty Keith (205) 602-8037

Graphic Design: Jenny Dixon

Upcoming Events & Happenings

APRIL 2013

- 1** Flicker Flashes articles due, May Issue
- 6** Half Day Field Trip, South Shelby County Wetlands, 7 a.m.
- 13** Field Trip, Sipsey River Canoe Trip, Reservations required by April 3, 7 a.m.
- 9-21** Alabama Ornithological Society Spring Meeting, Dauphin Island
- 25** Board Meeting, Birmingham Botanical Gardens (BBG), 5:45 p.m.
General Meeting, BBG East Room, 7 p.m., "Flightless Birds and Unique Plants of New Zealand"
- 27-** 48th Annual Birmingham Audubon Spring Count
- 28** Audubon Teaches Nature, The Orianna Society "Indigo Snakes in Alabama, Conserving a Species and its Habitat." Oak Mountain Interpretive Center, 2 p.m.

MAY 2013

- 4** Half Day Field Trip, Cahaba National Wildlife Refuge
- 9-12** Audubon Mountain Workshop, Mentone
- 19** Audubon Teaches Nature, "Soil Critters~It's a Tiny World under the Microscope!" Oak Mountain Interpretive Center, 2 p.m.