THE LATEST

New leadership takes flight
Birmingham Audubon welcomes new leadership and staff in 2018

We’ve had some exciting changes since our last Flicker Flashes. As you may have seen in our May digital update, Dr. Ansel Payne, formerly our Outreach Director, has accepted the position of Executive Director, following Suzanne Langley’s departure in January.

“Ansel’s dedication to birds and the habitats that support them are more than matched by his dedication to our growing membership—it was the unanimous opinion of our board that he was the right person for the position,” said Joe Watts, President of Birmingham Audubon. “Under Ansel’s stewardship, we look forward to our organization’s continued leadership in the fields of science, outreach, and conservation.”

A native of West Virginia, Ansel formerly served as Birmingham Audubon’s Teaching Naturalist and later as its first Outreach Director. He holds degrees from Harvard and Tufts, as well as a PhD in Comparative Biology from the American Museum of Natural History, where his work on the evolutionary history of digger wasps led to field expeditions in Central America and the Middle East, as well as to extended trips in the American West. In addition to his efforts on behalf of birds and their habitats, Ansel has also written for a diverse set of publications, including The Appendix, TIME, and Nautilus, and currently serves as a member of National Audubon’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group. He lives in Birmingham’s Avondale neighborhood with his wife, Dr. Mairin Odle.

In addition to the new Executive Director, Birmingham Audubon also welcomed a new member of our senior leadership team, Sarah Randolph, who began as our Outreach & Communications Director in August. A Birmingham native, Sarah has a diverse background in the nonprofit and private sectors, including over eight years of experience in communications, marketing, development, public relations, and event planning. Sarah earned her BA from UAB in Communication Management with a minor in Marketing. In addition to being an artist, she is a dedicated environmentalist who has spent much of the last decade volunteering with local nonprofits and is passionate about making Birmingham a better place. Sarah calls Birmingham’s Highland neighborhood home.

“Sarah is a great new asset for Birmingham Audubon,” said Ansel. “As both a nature lover and an eloquent communicator, she’s poised to help us connect with our members in new ways, and to help us reach new communities across the state.” Say hi to Sarah when you see her out on one of our field trips or nature walks!

You can learn more about our organization’s continuing evolution in the pages ahead.

Flicker Flashes is moving to four larger issues a year, one for each season. Learn more on page 7.
MORE STAFF NEWS

A new adventure for Dr. Coleman
...and a new opening on our growing staff

Andy Coleman, PhD, played an integral role in our organization over the last three years as our first Program & Science Director. While we are sad to see him go, we wish him all the best in his new endeavor teaching Environmental Science and Human Anatomy to students at Hueytown High School. A big “thank you” to Andy for all of his contributions—we wish him luck in the classroom this year!

Now we’re looking for his replacement. Know an energetic ornithologist eager to play a major role in statewide bird-conservation efforts? Birmingham Audubon is now accepting applications for the newly vacant Science & Conservation Director position in our Birmingham office.

The position oversees the organization’s research, conservation, and habitat-restoration activities. As a key member of our senior leadership team, the Science & Conservation Director works closely with the Executive Director to 1) support and expand pre-existing priority science and conservation programs; 2) develop and implement new efforts aimed at benefiting bird populations throughout Alabama; and 3) provide scientific oversight for our work on the Alabama Gulf Coast. As such, the position presents an excellent opportunity to shape the future of one of Alabama’s fastest growing conservation organizations.

For the complete job description, and for instructions on how to apply, visit birminghamaudubon.org/jobs. Application deadline: 15 October 2018

GIVING

Honor those “rare birds” in your life
A special “thank you” to all who gave honoraria and memorial contributions this season

When you give an honorarium or memorial gift to Birmingham Audubon, you’re not only recognizing someone who has made a difference in your life; you’re also supporting our important conservation and educational efforts throughout the state.

SIDNEY MAURICE BIRD, JR., Memorials by Patricia Bird and Elberta Reid
MARTHA DAGG, Memorial by Elberta Reid
GREG HARBER, Honored by Gail Snyder
ELOUISE RAFFERTY, Honored by James Rafferty
JANE ROWE, Honored by Stephen Rowe
JOE TOMMIE, Memorial by Elberta Reid

Your support is essential to our continued success protecting the birds you love and defending vital legislation like Forever Wild and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. For more information, contact our Partnership & Policy Director, Chris Oberholster, at 205-719-3678. Go to birminghamaudubon.org/give to make your tax-deductible donation today.
CONSERVATION

Birmingham Audubon turns story of tragedy into one of hope
How our Coastal Programs team’s quick response helped save Least Tern colony

by Sarah Randolph, Outreach & Communications Director

In late 2017, Birmingham Audubon established our first Coastal Programs office, providing critical protection and monitoring for Alabama’s sensitive beach-nesting birds. Through the diligent efforts of science staff and volunteers, the Alabama Coastal Bird Stewardship Program and the Audubon Coastal Bird Survey are currently focused on the continued breeding success of eleven priority species of concern.

Among those species are Least Terns, a small beach-nester whose eggs sit in shallow scrapes in the sand. Katie Barnes, Birmingham Audubon’s Senior Coastal Biologist, has referred to them as the “world’s best parents” because, despite their small size, they fiercely defend their young. The smallest of American terns, their eggs are close to the size of grapes.

Data collected by the team over the last year indicate that the species has not been doing as well as previously believed due to predation, habitat loss, and habitat fragmentation, among numerous other disturbances. A discovery made in July, however, gave the biologists hope for this threatened population. Birmingham Audubon’s Coastal Biological Technician, Emma Rhodes, and Seasonal Steward, Andrew Haffenden, key members of the Coastal Programs team, found a colony of around six-hundred Least Tern nests on Sand Island, a small spit of land off the Dauphin Island coast.

The discovery was bittersweet, however, as the team soon came across an erected volleyball net and abandoned plastic tent poles. To add insult to injury, Rhodes and Haffenden found close to thirty Least Tern eggs placed in a circle in the sand, taken from their nests to make room for a volleyball game—clearly the work of humans. The biologists found at least a hundred nests in this site that were abandoned, the parents likely scared off by the beachgoers. Sadly, just a few hours of exposure to the heat is enough to kill the chicks growing inside the eggs, according to Roger Clay, a wildlife biologist with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Barnes quickly notified the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, since Least Terns are federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. An investigation is now underway with the Department of Justice, and Barnes has had the island added to the state conservation agency’s patrol route. Additionally, she and her team posted signs and fencing around the colony the next day to prevent further human disturbance. According to Barnes, there have been no signs of human activity on the island after the fencing and signs were installed.

“While the Sand Island colony took a hard hit, the birds still managed to fledge eighty-three chicks, all thanks to our coastal team’s quick response,” said Ansel Payne, Executive Director of Birmingham Audubon. “We hope this can be an educational opportunity about how important it is for beachgoers to share the shore and respect the wildlife.”

Separated from the mainland and away from natural predators, Sand Island appears to be the terns’ best hope for survival in Alabama. According to Barnes, if this little strip of sand is still there next summer—a big if in the hurricane-prone Gulf of Mexico—the Coastal Programs team plans on pre-fencing the whole area to head off another beach-day tragedy.

Learn more about the threats to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and how to take action at audubon.org/news/migratory-bird-treaty-act.
SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

03 September  
Monday  
**Russ Bailey Memorial Walk** at Ruffner Mountain, 7 a.m. to noon. Join us for our annual half-day event celebrating the life and legacy of Birmingham birder Russ Bailey. Meetup is at 7 a.m. at the main Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve parking lot—details on our website: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-09-03

07 September  
Friday  
**Swift Night Out #2.** Join us as we continue our search for migratory “swiftnados” in the evening skies downtown. Dinner is at the Fish Market (612 22nd St. S.) at 5:30 p.m.; the swifts put on their show just before sundown. Details: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-09-07

13 September  
Thursday  
**Birds & Burgers** Junior Board Fundraiser at Farm Burger (707 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd.), 4 p.m. to close. Join us for dinner and help raise money for Chimney Swift towers. Details: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-09-13

19 September  
Wednesday  
**Introduction to Birds & Birding (Day 1).** Master birder **Greg Harber** teaches you everything you’ll need to know about your new favorite hobby. Wednesdays, 6:30–8:30 p.m., at our Birmingham offices (3720 4th Ave S). $75/members, $100/non-members (one-time registration fee covers all seven meetings). For more details, and to register online, visit: birminghamaudubon.org/classes/IntroBirds

20 September  
Thursday  
**Board of Directors meets,** 5:30 p.m. at Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

**Monthly Nature Program,** “Aggression affects distribution and hybrid zone expansion in montane Plethodon salamanders,” with special guest **Jeffrey Drummond,** Stewardship Director at Freshwater Land Trust. Reception starts at 6:30 p.m., talk runs from 7–8:30 p.m., in the East Room at Birmingham Botanical Gardens. birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-09-20

21 September  
Friday  
**Gosse Nature Walk #15: Moss Rock Preserve,** noon to 2 p.m. Special guest **Ken Wills,** co-author of Exploring Wild Alabama: A Guide to the State’s Publicly Accessible Natural Areas, joins us to provide an expert’s take on this special urban preserve. Meetup is at noon at the Boulder Field parking lot—full directions and registration details on our website: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-09-21

22 September  
Saturday  
**Birding trip: Walker County Fishing Lake & Brookside.** Come along with Birmingham Audubon as we debut a new field trip to the lush woodlands around Walker County Public Lake. We’ll begin with a morning of casual birding around the trails surrounding the man-made lake in Jasper, led by **Matt Hunter** and **Anne Miller.** After lunch, we’ll visit Brookside for a birding walk around the Five Mile Creek Greenway. Meetup is at 7 a.m. at the Fultondale Chik-Fil-A—full directions and details on our website: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-09-22

29 September  
Saturday  
**54th Annual Fall Bird Count.** Come count with us at the biggest community-science event of the season. Together, we’ll spend the day in small groups surveying bird populations at a wide variety of sites located in Jefferson, Shelby, and St. Clair counties. All participants must RSVP for protocols and instructions at least a day or two prior to the event. Details: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-09-29

**Questions about accessibility? Contact us for more information about how we can meet your needs. Call 205-719-3678 or email info@birminghamaudubon.org.**
Our October Nature Program features Dr. Phil Barden, whose work focuses on a better understanding of social-insects evolution. Photo: Phil Barden

Our October Nature Program features Dr. Phil Barden, whose work focuses on a better understanding of social-insects evolution. Photo: Phil Barden

Gosse Nature Walk #16: W.E. Putnam Middle School (1757 Montclair Road), noon to 1 p.m. Special guest Jones Valley Teaching Farm’s Kelly Baker will walk us through the school’s hundred-year-old woodlands and talk about our joint efforts to restore this important urban habitat. Details on our website: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-10-05

Birding trip: Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Join us for a half day field trip as Greg Harber leads us on a bird walk through the beautiful landscapes of the gardens. Meetup is at 7 a.m. at the BBG main gate (Blount Plaza). *Wheelchair accessible. Details: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-10-06

Swift Night Out #3. You won’t want to miss this special event as we dedicate McWane Science Center’s new Chimney Swift tower, sponsored by Birmingham Audubon. Meetup is at 5:30 at the upper level of their parking deck. Dinner afterwards at the Pizitz Food Hall.

Details: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-10-06-2

Tom Imhof Memorial Beginner Birdwalk: Railroad Park. 8–10 a.m. Learn basics of birding with our Outreach & Communications Director Sarah Randolph. *Wheelchair accessible.

Details: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-10-08

Alabama’s Birds of Prey (Day I). Paul Franklin helps birders navigate the sometimes confusing world of raptor identification. Six meetings at our Birmingham offices, Monday nights, 6:30–8:30 p.m. $60/members; $85/non-members (one-time registration fee covers all six classes). Register online at: birminghamaudubon.org/classes

Board of Directors meets, 5:30 p.m. at Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

Monthly Nature Program. “One hundred million years on forty sextillion legs: The incredible history of ants,” with special guest Dr. Phil Barden, Assistant Professor, New Jersey Institute of Technology. Reception starts at 6:30 p.m., talk runs from 7–8:30 p.m., in the East Room at Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-10-18

Volunteer Work Day at W.E. Putnam Middle School.

Details on page 7.

Birding trip: Living River & Bibb County Glades. Join Birmingham Audubon as we introduce a new field trip along the Cahaba River and visit a preserve deemed “a botanical wonder.” Led by Matt Hunter and Linda Neighbors. Meetup is at 7 a.m. at the Hoover McDonald’s—full directions and details on our website: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-10-20-2

Exploring Natural Alabama: Glow in the Dark Critters. 2–4 p.m., at Oak Mountain Interpretive Center (located off of Terrace Drive, on top of the mountain, next to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Pelham). Join guest speaker David Frings as he delves into the dark world of bioluminescent critters.

Details: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-10-21

Chimney Swifts entering a Birmingham chimney in their nightly “swiftnado.” Join us for our next two Swift Nights Out, September 7th and October 6th! You can help us raise money for more swift habitat. Go to birminghamaudubon.org/swifts for more information.
NOVEMBER CALENDAR

02 November  
**Gosse Nature Walk #17: Flora Johnston Nature Park.** noon to 1 p.m. Join us for a moderate lunchtime hike on one of Birmingham’s lesser known nature trails. Meetup is at noon in a small parking area located at 244 Elder Street.  
Details: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-11-02

03 November  
**Birding trip: Turkey Creek Nature Preserve.** Plan to join us for a half-day field trip at this Forever Wild gem, home to some of Alabama’s most outstanding natural beauty. Trip leaders are Greg Harber and Susan Barrow. Meetup is at 7 a.m. at the Pinson Food Giant (6662 AL Hwy. 75)—full directions and details on our website:  
birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-11-03

09 November  
**Tom Imhof Memorial Beginner Bird Walk: Birmingham Botanical Gardens.** 8–11 a.m. Another great opportunity to learn the basics of birding with Birmingham Audubon Outreach & Communications Director Sarah Randolph. *Wheelchair accessible.*  
Details: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-11-09

15 November  
**Board of Directors meets, 5:30 p.m. at Birmingham Botanical Gardens.**

17 November  
**Birding trip: Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge.** Come see this haven for winter waterfowl species, a priority spot for many southern birders’ bucket lists. Trip leaders are Greg Harber and Dwight Cooley. Meetup is at 7 a.m. at the Fultondale Chik-Fil-A (215 Howell St.)—full directions and details on our website:  
birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-11-17

18 November  
**Exploring Natural Alabama: The Joy of Birding: Becoming a Better Birder.** 2–4 p.m., at Alabama Wildlife Center (100 Terrace Drive, Pelham). Join guest speaker Greg Harber for a talk on how to build your birding skills. Details on our website:  
birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-11-18

19 November  
**Audubon Photography Awards Traveling Exhibition (Day 1).** Check out this eye-catching exhibit from the winners of the 2018 National Audubon Photography Awards. On display at the Birmingham Audubon office until December 1st. Call ahead to schedule a viewing at 205-719-3678. Stay tuned to our website for more information.

22 November  
**Birmingham Audubon offices are closed for the Thanksgiving holiday.**

23 November  
**Birmingham Audubon offices are closed.**

27 November  
**Spirits of the Air: Birds and American Indians in the South**
Details on next page.

30 November  
**Gosse Nature Walk #18: Ruffner Mountain, noon to 2 p.m.** Get your Friday lunchtime nature fix at this great urban preserve. Special guest Jamie Nobles joins us to provide an expert’s take on this special Forever Wild treasure. Meetup is at noon at the main Ruffner parking lot, at the far end of 81st Street South.  
Details: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-11-30

Help Birmingham Audubon continue to defend Forever Wild. Your support is imperative to our efforts protecting some of our last wild places.
SPECIAL EVENT

Spirits of the Air: Birds and American Indians in the South
You won’t want to miss this free event connecting cultural history, art, and birds

Birmingham Audubon is proud to present renowned anthropologist Shepard Krech III, Professor Emeritus at Brown University and the author of The Ecological Indian: Myth and History, for a special public talk on the University of Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa, Tuesday, November 27th, from 6–8 p.m., in Room 205 of the Amelia Gayle Gorgas Library.

Join us as Dr. Krech explores the intersections of Native American culture and southeastern bird life in a talk based on his book, Spirits of the Air: Birds and American Indians in the South.

This free talk is made possible through a partnership between Birmingham Audubon, the University of Alabama Department of American Studies, and Moundville Archaeological Park, and through a generous grant from the Daniel Foundation of Alabama. Details: birminghamaudubon.org/event/2018-11-27

Find this year’s full calendar on our website: birminghamaudubon.org/events

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Birmingham Audubon needs you!
We rely on members like you to help us help birds

Conservation We are planning a work day for habitat restoration at W.E. Putnam Middle School Saturday, October 20th, starting at 9:00 a.m. We will need all hands on deck to help pull privet and other invasive species, plant native species, and show how much we support our community! To RSVP, contact the Outreach & Communications Director at sarahrandolph@birminghamaudubon.org.

Education Foster the next generation of Magic City birders—become an education volunteer, and help lead bird walks with elementary-aged children from throughout our region.

Contact the Outreach & Communications Director: sarahrandolph@birminghamaudubon.org

A greener future for Flicker Flashes

Flicker Flashes is moving to four larger issues per year, which will allow us to reach our membership base more economically and efficiently. As we expand our conservation efforts, using less paper will move us toward a greener future. We have offered and will continue to offer a digital version of this publication on our website at birminghamaudubon.org/flicker-flashes.

Please let us know by November 15th if you want to continue receiving a paper copy each quarter by mail. Contact the Outreach & Communications Director: 205-719-3678 or sarahrandolph@birminghamaudubon.org. Otherwise, beginning with our winter issue in December, you can find Flicker Flashes on our website. Thank you for helping us reduce our carbon footprint!
Birmingham Audubon
A staffed chapter of the National Audubon Society

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## Flicker Flashes

Birmingham Audubon publishes Flicker Flashes four times a year.
Editor: Sarah Randolph
Contact: sarahrandolph@birminghamaudubon.org

“Swifts funnel down at twilight / Into cold flues, chattering like children.
They speak their language and we listen / In our own, comparing them /
To children, travellers, speed, and life itself, / Imparting a charmed knowledge onto us.”

—Mark Jarman
An excerpt from “Chimney Swifts”

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### PEOPLE

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Chris Sykes, Operations Manager
Katie Barnes, Coastal Senior Biologist
Nicole Love, Coastal Programs Coordinator
Emma Rhodes, Coastal Biological Technician

### MISSION

To promote conservation and a greater knowledge of birds, their habitats, and the natural world.

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