

# Flicker Flashes

Published by  
Birmingham Audubon

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

## Audubon Teaches Nature Alabama State Parks: Your Gateway to Outdoor Recreation

Sunday, May 31 2017 - 2 p.m.

Emily Vanderford - Guest Speaker

Oak Mountain Interpretive Center

Summer is right around the corner, and so we thought it would be appropriate to close our 2016-2017 ATN season with a program about the best outdoor playgrounds nature has to offer: Alabama's state parks! Our guest speaker, Emily Vanderford, is the perfect one to introduce us to what awaits on our next visit!

Alabama is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty, and there is no better place to appreciate this than at any one of Alabama's 22 state parks. Whether your interests lie in birding, biking or horseback riding our state parks offer the perfect place to pursue your outdoor activities. Also, two

state parks are home to caverns where one can walk among spectacular formations and are great places to beat the summer heat! With summer soon upon us, you'll want to attend this program to learn the best places in Alabama for your summer fun!

Remember to come early to enjoy refreshments in the Observation Room (and the birds at the feeders) at the Alabama Wildlife Center, and then, when it's time for the program, we'll proceed to the Oak Mountain Interpretive Center auditorium for the program.

*Photo below: Desoto State Park - By Michelle Blackwood*



### 2017 Field Trips: Looking Ahead

Your field trips committee strives to select field trips that feature the full spectrum of Alabama's bird life. We have scheduled a wide variety of birding sites at destinations, and at times when birding will be ideally suited to finding the species of interest. Following is the schedule for the remaining 2017 field trips through summer:

May 6: Monte Sano State Park

June 24: Forever Wild State Cattle Ranch,  
Hale County

July 29: Prattville, Autaugaville, Lowndesboro

August 5: Greensboro-area catfish farms

August 12: Gainesville, Aliceville, Livingston

*(Photo on Left) Upper Goldmine Creek Falls,  
Bankhead National Forest  
- Photo by Birmingham Audubon*

# May Full-day Field Trip Monte Sano State Park

Huntsville, Alabama

Saturday, May 6, 2017 - 7 a.m.

Early May can be a great time for finding migrant song-birds, and Monte Sano State Park's 2,140 acres of woodland habitat is a prime location for birding. It's also one of the state's most scenic areas, offering spectacular vistas of the North Alabama Mountains. We will spend the morning birding the various locations within the park, encompassing a couple of different habitat types so as to maximize our opportunities to find as many species as possible.

Following a picnic lunch in the park we will visit the home of Herb and Terry Lewis for a tour of their backyard habitat featuring a variety of native plants and water gardens. Those of you who know Herb know that he is an excellent photographer and a native plant aficionado, and he has combined these two hobbies with great results!

**Travel Plans:** Our meeting place is the parking lot behind the Wells Fargo Bank at the Fieldstown Road Shopping Center in Gardendale, just off I-65N at exit #271 (665 Fieldstown Road, Gardendale, AL, 35071). Turn right on to Fieldstown Road, another right onto Odum Road, and an immediate left into the

shopping center. We will leave at 7:00 a.m. (please arrive early for pre-trip instructions) and caravan up I-65N and I-565 to Huntsville, and then US 431 to Monte Sano Blvd and the park entrance.

Please be advised that park admission is \$5.00 for ages 12+ and admission for seniors 62+ is \$2.00 per person.

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 dressing in layers is advised. Have a full tank of gas. Bring your binoculars and spotting scopes. For those who wish, supper may be shared at a local restaurant at day's end.

**Trip leader:** Greg Harber, 205-251-2133, home/evenings, or 205-807-8055, day of field trip only.



Huntsville, Monte Sano State Park  
Photo by Michelle Blackwood

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## June Full-day Field Trip

# M. Barnett Lawley, Forever Wild Field Trial Area

Saturday, June 24, 2017, 7 a.m.

Hale County, Alabama

BAS kicks off its summer field trips with a June trip to the M. Barnett Lawley Forever Wild Field Trial Area, formerly called the State Cattle Ranch, located in Hale County south of Greensboro.

Situated between drainages of Big German Creek, the tracts that comprise M. Barnett Lawley Forever Wild Field Trial Area are named in honor of the former Department of Conservation and Natural Resources commissioner. These acquisitions in Hale County encompass 3,342 acres of Black Belt prairie habitat that includes a mix of prairie grassland and pine-hardwood forest.

This area provides potential for habitat restoration, as well as numerous recreational opportunities. The property, named for Barnett Lawley, former commissioner for the Alabama Department of Conservation, has become a premier location for sporting dog competitions, hence the reason for the "Field Trial Area" portion of its name.

It has been a few years since we have visited this site, so we're excited to be returning as the birding here can be quite good, and the views of the expansive skies and rolling pastures is hard to beat!

**Travel Plans:** Our departure point is the same for all of our summer field trips: the McDonalds on US 31 in Hoover, located at 1731 Montgomery Highway (US 31) across from the Galleria. Plan to depart at 7:00 a.m. and caravan to our destination from there. This will be an all-day field trip, so plan accordingly to dress for the weather. We will have lunch at a local restaurant (Faunsdale Bar and Grill, anyone?) and continue birding the area – looking for breeding birds special to that area.

**Trip Leader:** Greg Harber, 205-251-2133 (H) or 205-807-8055 (C, day of field trip only)

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

*Additional trip information may be found at our website, [birminghamaudubon.org](http://birminghamaudubon.org) and on our Facebook page.*

# Summer Field Trips - All-day trips

## Kites, Wood Storks and More!

Saturday, July 29, 2017 - Autaugaville and Prattville

Saturday, August 5, 2017 - Lakeland Farms and Greensboro area

Saturday, August 12, 2017 - Gainesville-Aliceville-Livingston area

This year Birmingham Audubon is offering three summer field trips (yes, three – if you can stand the summer heat!) to search for kites, storks and scissor-tailed flycatchers, 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. Their acrobatic maneuvers while catching insects in flight is truly spectacular. And speaking of eating, another bonus on these outings is the food: Chef Lee's in Autaugaville, the Pie Lab in Greensboro and Tres Hermanos Mexican in Livingston, AL.

Hopefully, we will also see wood storks on these outings; their numbers fluctuate from year to year but hopefully we'll have at least some to view – particularly on the Lakeland Farms-Greensboro trip. Wood storks have to be one of the homeliest creatures the good lord ever made, but in the air their striking black and white forms are beautiful sights indeed. You won't want to miss these field trips so mark your calendars now and be brave against the summer heat!

### Details for all three trips:

**Saturday, July 29th trip:** We will head to the Prattville/Autaugaville area as we have in previous years, based our success in finding kites on previous trips. These are wide ranging species so I'll feel confident we'll observe them on our trip at some point. Plus, the areas east of Autaugaville have yielded sporadic sightings of Painted Buntings and Lark Sparrows in the past so we'll focus our birding efforts here in the morning.

Our departure point is a familiar one: the McDonalds on US 31 in Hoover, located at 1731 Montgomery Highway (US 31) across from the Galleria. Plan to depart at 7:00 a.m. and caravan to our destination from there. We will have lunch at Chef Lee's in Autaugaville to take a break from the heat we will likely experience.

After lunch, for those who wish to continue their summer adventure, we'll drive to the south side of the Alabama River where we will check a few sites where we've observed kites in the past. The picturesque "ghost town" at Robinson's Switch Road will be worth a short visit as well, so bring your cameras!

If the necessary arrangements can be made, we'll visit an alligator farm/heron rookery in Pine Level, south of Montgomery off US Hwy 231, at the end of the day. We'll have

dinner at Red's Little School House Restaurant in Grady at 5:30 and then depart for the rookery from there. If you participate in this optional side trip expect a very long day in the field as we will be at the rookery until sunset. The return trip to Birmingham is about a two-hour drive.

**Saturday, August 5th trip:** The Galleria McDonalds, located at 1731 Montgomery Highway (US 31) across from the Galleria, will serve as our departure point for this trip, too. Plan to leave at 7:00 a.m. again. We will caravan west on I-59/20 to exit #97 and head south on AL Hwy 5 to Centerville/Brent where we'll make a rest stop before continuing to Red Bamberg Road and the many catfish ponds south of Greensboro. We will have lunch at the Pie Lab in Greensboro. A stop at Marion Fish Hatchery and/or Perry Lakes Park to watch herons and egrets returning to their roost at day's end is a likely bet, too.

**Saturday, August 12th trip:** The Galleria McDonalds, located at 1731 Montgomery Highway (US 31) across from the Galleria, will serve as our departure point for this trip, also. We will car pool and caravan down I-20/59 to the rest area at mile marker 39, arriving there about 8:30 a.m. Following our break we will proceed to the east side of the Gainesville Lock Facility, on AL Hwy 39 east of town. We will bird this site and then proceed into town for a quick visit with Ophelia at her store (it's been too long since we have been there to say hello!) before heading up the west side of the Tombigbee River via CR 85.

Lunch will be in Livingston, AL at Tres Hermanos Mexican restaurant – a local favorite hangout. They are open for lunch until 2:30, so we will have to be on time this year, y'all! Afterwards, we're a short drive away from Lake Livingston on the University of West Alabama campus, and a stop at the chalk cliffs in Epes is a must. The day will be a long one, and likely hot, too, but I think you'll agree the birding and the scenery will be worth your while as you brave the summer weather.

Remember, all three of these trips will be daylong affairs so plan accordingly and bring plenty of drinks and snacks in addition to a full tank of gas, insect repellent, rain gear, and appropriate summer attire and sunblock.

### Trip Leader for both of these trips:

Greg Harber, 205-251-2133 (H) or 20-807-8055 (C)

# Conservation Roundup for May 2017

Significant additional coastal habitat protection is underway in the Grand Bay area of south Mobile County, fueled by funding from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill settlement. The funding came as a grant awarded by the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation from the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund.

The Nature Conservancy in Alabama (TNC) recently finalized the acquisition of over 2,000 acres of mostly brackish marsh and swamp forest habitat with extensive frontage along the waters of Mississippi Sound near Grand Bay, AL. This is particularly exciting news for me personally and professionally. My first assignment when I was hired by TNC more than 25 years ago (thanks to Birmingham Audubon Board member Kathy Free-land, then the State Director for TNC-Alabama), was to work in the Grand Bay area. I conducted biological surveys, mapped



*Grand Bay, AL - Live oak hammock in marsh and distant pine flatwoods  
Photo by Chris Oberholster*

habitats and rare species locations, and developed an initial prioritization of parcels of land most important to target for permanent protection. This particular tract was one of the top priorities identified, and there has been ongoing contact with the landowner ever since then regarding the possibility of acquiring it one day – finally that combination of planning, patience and persistence has paid off!

At the last Forever Wild Board meeting in February, the Board voted

to accept these lands, so TNC plans to transfer the land to the Forever Wild Program to be managed as part of their existing conservation lands along Mississippi Sound between Bayou La Batre and Grand Bay.

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## Name that Bird – Summer Swamps Edition



*Swamp thing - Birmingham Audubon*

Members of this month's species have only just recently arrived in Alabama, but will soon be building nests in tree cavities throughout our state's swampiest locales. Birders can look for that unmistakable color pattern: blue-green wings and tail leading into an olive back, then giving way into a brilliant, unbroken yellow on the head and breast—all of which makes the black bill and dark, beady eyes that much more striking. Need more? This neotropical migrant is one of two Alabama birds named after high officials in the Catholic church. Still can't figure it out? Google "Alger Hiss birding" and find out how this tiny species became associated with Cold War intrigue. . . Think you've got it? We'll have the answer for you in the fall!

Last month's "Name That Bird" was. . . the Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*).

# Donate to the Birmingham Audubon Archives

The Birmingham Audubon Archives Department is interested in receiving any items that may have been saved and stored away by members past or present. We're particularly interested in: copies of meeting minutes; financial reports; issues of Flicker Flashes, particularly May 1992, March 1993, January 2006, April and October through December 2010, and the entire run from 2011; photos; clippings; brochures; and correspondence relating to Birmingham Audubon.

If you have any of these items—or any ideas about where we might find them—please stop by the office or get in contact by email ([info@birminghamaudubon.org](mailto:info@birminghamaudubon.org)) or phone 205-719-3678.


Photo Below: "Flicker Flashes" from 1976 - Birmingham Archives"

*Flicker Flashes*

PUBLISHED BY

THE BIRMINGHAM AUDUBON SOCIETY

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



February, 1976  
Volume XXVIII, No. 6

Elberta Reid, Editor

**CARLYLE BLAKENEY TO PRESENT  
DOUBLE FEATURE AT FEBRUARY MEETING  
Buy a Foot of Boardwalk Through a Swamp!**

Join us to welcome Carlyle Blakeney, our National Audubon Southeastern Representative, who will be guest lecturer at the regular meeting Thursday, February 19, 7:45 PM at the Birmingham Museum of Art. Carlyle will present a double feature, both sections of which will be of great interest to BAS members. His first subject will be one that has occupied much of his time recently--3,400-acre Four Holes Swamp in South Carolina, the spectacular virgin tupelo-cypress sanctuary purchased in 1974 by National Audubon and the Nature Conservancy.

WANT TO BUY A PIECE OF A BOARDWALK THROUGH A BLACK WATER SWAMP? BAS DOES, AND IS ASKING EACH OF ITS MEMBERS TO PAR--continued on page 3--

**"FOOTLOOSE IN NEWFOUNDLAND" WITH TOM STERLING**  
March 5, Birmingham-Southern

Tom Sterling will take us on tour through this easternmost Canadian province -- the wild grandeur of its provincial parks, with bull moose and caribou, its maritime wildlife from finback whales to oceanic birds. Time and Place: Friday, March 5, 7:45 PM, Munger Hall, Birmingham-Southern College. The Audubon Wildlife Films are one of Birmingham's unique nature education opportunities. Please support and sustain them with your attendance, and by "talking them up" to your friends, associates, and organizations.

--William L. McGowan  
Wildlife Film Director--



*Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop celebrates its fortieth anniversary this May, 2017.  
Photo of past Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop courtesy Michelle Blackwood*

# **The Fortieth Annual Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop**

**Thursday, May 11 to Sunday, May 14, 2017**

**At Alpine Camp, Mentone, Alabama**

Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop, one of the South's oldest and largest events dedicated to the study of natural history, is turning forty this year! We hope you'll consider joining us in May as we celebrate this historic milestone with another great year of classes exploring the ecology, wildlife, and culture of beautiful northeastern Alabama. Together with our faculty, you'll enjoy a broad overview of the region's natural and cultural history, with classes on forest ecology, stream biology, beginning and advanced bird identification, animal tracking, insect identification, paleontology, Native American culture, early Alabama architecture, caving, and much more. The University of Mississippi's Dr. Scott Rush will give this year's keynote address, discussing his ongoing analysis of the late Bob Sargent's long-term bird-banding data, and the University of Alabama's Dr. John Abbott and Kendra Abbott will offer an intensive pre-workshop nature photography course. All classes and talks are held either on the campus of Mentone's historic Alpine Camp or in one of several natural areas located around Mentone and nearby

Fort Payne. Students and faculty stay in the rustic cabins or lodges at Alpine Camp or at nearby DeSoto State Park, both surrounded by the beautiful Appalachian landscape. While you're at it, consider making Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop a family tradition with our Young Naturalist Program, an outdoor-education curriculum for children ages five to twelve. All Young Naturalist activities are taught and supervised by our adult academic faculty, with assistance from an invited Guest Director and Birmingham Audubon Outreach Director Dr. Ansel Payne. Generations of Young Naturalists have now enjoyed this program's hands-on activities and extensive science- and nature-based opportunities. For more information on this program, including pricing and registration, visit [birminghamaudubon.org/bamw](http://birminghamaudubon.org/bamw). We hope to see you "up on the mountain" this spring!

Have memories of previous Mountain Workshops? We'd love to see hear/read/see them. Email your old photos or stories to: [andycoleman@birminghamaudubon.org](mailto:andycoleman@birminghamaudubon.org)

# 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 nature and science topics**
- **Free field trips led by expert birders to great birding cultural locations**
- **Annual banquet with nationally recognized speaker**
- **Discounted registration for Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop**
- **Members-only birding classes**
- **Graduate student research grants**
- **Adult and student education opportunities and initiatives**
- **Alabama Birding Trails**
- **Local, state and national conservation initiatives**
- **Members-only Lending Library**

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## **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 \_\_\_\_\_

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**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](http://www.audubon.org)

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# Flicker Flashes

Published by The Birmingham Audubon Society For conservation and greater knowledge of birds, their habitat, and natural world

*Flicker Flashes* produced by members of Birmingham Audubon Society, is published September, October, November/December, January, February, March, April, May/June.  
Copy is due the first of the month preceding the issue.  
Editor: Ty Keith 205-602-8037  
Graphic Design: Michelle Blackwood

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## May 2017

May 6 Monte Sano State Park  
(See pg. 2)

May 11-14  
Birmingham Audubon  
Fifty-Second Annual  
Spring Bird Count  
(See pg. 6)

May 31 Audubon Teaches Nature -  
Alabama State Parks:  
Your Gateway to Outdoor Recreation  
(See pg. 1)

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