

# Flicker Flashes

Published by  
The Birmingham Audubon Society

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

## Aububon Teaches Nature Baby Bird Season

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

There are many sure-fire signs of spring: the days are longer, flowers are blooming, birds are singing and the nightly chorus of insects will soon fill the air. Accompanying that birdsong is the chirp, chirp, chirp of baby birds. What to do when one finds one out of the nest? Is it injured or orphaned? Is it okay to touch it? Can you put it back in the nest? These are all questions that will be answered by Scottie & the Alabama Wildlife Center team; come prepared to learn the answers!



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. When it is time for the program we will proceed to the auditorium.

### Next month's program:

Due to circumstances beyond our control, the May 22 seminar, Exploring Wild Alabama, featuring Larry Davenport and Ken Wills, will be postponed until the fall. Thus, the

April program will be our last seminar in the series before we break for the summer. Make plans now to join us on our summer field trips!

## \$1.4 Million Approved for the Alabama Coastal Bird Stewardship Program

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has approved \$1.46 million through the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund for the Alabama Coastal Bird Stewardship Program. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, in partnership with Birmingham Audubon and Mobile Bay Audubon Society, will establish this stewardship, monitoring, and outreach program focusing on priority shorebird and coastal waterbird populations.

Birmingham Audubon, a staffed and certified chapter of National Audubon Society, currently partners with Mobile Bay Audubon and its volunteer members to survey priority species along Mobile and Baldwin County shorelines through the Audubon Coastal Bird Survey.

"Mobile and Baldwin County shorelines provide habitat critical to several bird species of conservation concern that, with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, we will now have expanded opportunity to monitor and steward to more productive populations with local

volunteers and staff," said Suzanne Langley, Executive Director, Birmingham Audubon Society. "These same shorelines attract residents and tourists to watch birds and visit surrounding communities. While our staff and volunteers protect these birds, they will also educate the public about the value of Alabama's natural treasures."

The Alabama Coastal Bird Stewardship program complements the work of similar Audubon initiatives in the Gulf including Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. The Alabama program will include monitoring priority species along routes in Mobile and Baldwin Counties in varied coastal habitats with trained volunteers and staff, as well as outreach to local communities and stewardship of nesting colonies. Among the locations of work to be completed through the Alabama Coastal Bird Stewardship program is Dauphin Island, which was recognized in 2015 as a globally significant Important Bird Area by Birdlife International and its U.S. partner, National Audubon Society.

### Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop is Coming!

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

## April Half-day Field Trip

# Tannehill Ironworks Historical State Park

Saturday, April 2, 2016 - 7 A.M.



Louisiana waterthrush - Photo by Greg Harber

Tannehill State Park and its more than 1500 acres of history and nature sit astride three counties in a valley at the western terminus of the Appalachian Mountain Range. The combination of hillsides rich in ore and swiftly flowing Roupes Creek made this the perfect location for a successful iron making operation from 1830 to 1865. Along side its natural wonder and excellent bird habitat, the park also features a working gristmill, the remains of the old furnaces and the Iron and Steel Museum. The park is a destination on the Appalachian Highland Birding Trails.

Birds that we are likely to see include various woodpecker species, pine warblers, brown-headed nuthatches, herons, kingfishers, hawk species and resident owls, such as great horned and barred owls. Spring visitors should be arriving, so we hope to see Louisiana waterthrushes along the streams.

### TRAVEL PLANS:

Meet at the Hoover McDonalds across from the Galleria at 1731 Montgomery Hwy, Hoover, AL 35244. Arrive early enough to car pool and be ready to leave at 7 a.m. Leave McDonalds, take I-459 south to exit 1 for McCalla.

Turn left onto Eastern Valley Road and follow it for approximately 7 miles. Turn left onto Tannehill Park, then right onto Confederate Parkway. The address is:

*12632 Confederate Parkway, McCalla AL 35111.*

There is a fee for park entrance: \$3.00 for adults, \$2.00 for seniors and \$1.00 for children. There is a fee for the museum as well, if you choose to visit it.

This is a half-day trip, but feel free to bring lunch, snacks and drinks as there are picnic tables. The trails are along old road beds, so hiking or walking will be easy. Please feel free to stay in the park as long as you like. Binoculars will be available to borrow for the day. Cameras are more than welcome.

Visit the web site for more information:

Tannehill Ironworks Historical State Park  
[www.tannehill.org](http://www.tannehill.org)

### Trip Leader:

Susan Barrow (H) 205 942 8667 (C) 205 253 8667

## April All-day Field Trip

# Bull's Gap - Talladega National Forest

Saturday, April 23, 2016 - 7 A.M.

Scenic Bull's Gap, located in the southern reaches of the Talladega National Forest, east of Sylacauga, hosts many colorful neotropical songbirds. Among them are summer and scarlet tanagers, black-throated green warblers, ovenbirds and worm-eating warblers. We may even find blue-headed vireos which breed in the higher elevations.

We will visit red-cockaded woodpecker colonies that are located west of Bull's Gap along Alabama Hwy 148. As time permits, we will also visit other sites within the national forest featuring habitats that favor species such as prairie warblers, yellow-breasted chats and northern bobwhite.

Please note that the terrain can be uneven on the forest service road at Bull's Gap (southern terminus of the Skyway Motorway), and we will start our walk at 1400 feet elevation and ascend to 1800 feet – in the span of about a half-mile. Those who are in a vehicle with good clearance and capable of handling rutted roads may wish to park in a small gravel parking area located part way up the ascent.

**Meeting Place and Travel Plans:** Meet at the Publix parking lot at Lee Branch near Greystone (410 Doug Baker Blvd,

Birmingham, AL 35242-2682).

We will depart from here at 7 a.m., caravan via US Hwy 280, to Sylacauga and reconvene at the McDonald's in downtown Sylacauga (701 W Fort Williams St., Sylacauga, AL 35150-2441) at 8 a.m. Please note that if you wish to have breakfast first, please arrive at the Sylacauga McDonald's in advance of the group's arrival and allow enough time to eat, as our stop here will be brief.

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, but there will be binoculars to borrow during the trip.

### Trip leader: Greg Harber:

205-251-2133, home/evenings, or 205-807-8055, day of field trip only.

GPS: 33.1988772 -86.069206



Prairie warbler -  
Thinkstock by Getty Images

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

# April Membership Program

## Membership Appreciation Program and Pot Luck Supper

Birmingham Botanical Gardens - East Room  
Thursday, April 28, 2016 - 6:30 P.M.

Please join us for the April Membership Appreciation Program on April 28, which is the fourth Thursday of the month. With this program we want to honor you as we look back at the fun we have had and our many accomplishments. Bring your favorite dish to share. Birmingham Audubon will provide drinks and sandwiches. April is also the occasion where we elect our officers, so we will mix a bit of work with lots of fun.

We are accepting digital images of Birmingham Audubon

programs and activities for potential inclusion in our un-narrated slide show to be shown during this event. Please submit your electronic images for consideration to Hans Paul (cooterp14@gmail.com).

This will be an enjoyable fun filled evening with a little laughter, outstanding images, many pleasant memories and some good food.

## Bluebird Nest Boxes Added: East Lake Park, Avondale Park and Sherman Heights

Through Birmingham Audubon's promotion of urban wildlife habitat, we have partnered with several Birmingham area groups to build and install eastern bluebird boxes in public greenspaces. Fenn Spencer and students from the East Lake United Methodist Church after-school program recently built five nest boxes and installed them at East Lake Park. The Carpenter's Hands, a non-profit associated with Avondale Samaritan Place, also built five nest boxes that were placed in Avondale Park. Finally, the Birmingham Audubon Junior Board constructed ten nest boxes

and installed them in the Sherman Heights neighborhood in partnership with the local neighborhood association.



**ATLANTA BIRD FEST**  
#ATLAUDUBON

**April 15-May 15, 2016**  
[www.atlantaudubon.org/atlanta-bird-fest](http://www.atlantaudubon.org/atlanta-bird-fest)

## Exclusive field trips, workshops, and more.

- Birds & Wine in the North Georgia Mountains with VIP Southern Tours
- Birding the private trails of Serenbe
- Early Georgia naturalist art exhibit at Atlanta History Center
- Nature Photography Workshop
- Wild & Scenic Film Festival
- Closing Celebration keynote speaker  
Deborah Cramer, author of *The Narrow Edge*

Registration opens for Atlanta Audubon members on March 1 and for non-members on March 7.



Atlanta Audubon Society protects Georgia's birds and their habitats through education, conservation, and advocacy.



## SoSo for the Record

Sightings January 25 through February 23, 2016

On January 31, Harriett Wright was surprised to see a female Baltimore oriole at one of her bird feeders in Vestavia. While this species breeds in Alabama, it is rarely seen at this time of year. As of February 28, this special bird was still being seen and enjoyed by many visitors at this location.

### Other Sightings:

1/25 **Greater White-fronted Goose**; Walker Pond, west of Florence (GJ).

1/26 **Lesser Scaup**; Fultondale (DH).

2/10 **Hooded Merganser (male and female)**; Cherokee (JI).

2/20 **Common Loon (112), Black-crowned Night Heron (10), Bonaparte's Gull (1209)**; Wheeler Lake boat trip. These are some of the highlights of the 43 species seen on that adventure (Led by DS).

2/23 **American White Pelican**; UAB area (KW).

### Contributors:

Donald Hulsey  
John Imhof  
Greg Jackson  
Damien Simbeck  
Ken Wills  
Harriett Wright



Baltimore Oriole -  
Thinkstock by Getty Images

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



Monday March 7, Ken Blackwood saw what he thought was a statue in a yard while he was running on a street near Griffin Creek in Homewood. When the "statue" moved, he looked closer and realized it was an injured great blue heron. He called and found me on my run and together we went to the side of the house where the heron stood in front of a fence with a wing hanging down unnaturally. We approached and used a blanket to wrap around the heron and pick it up. I held it in my lap sitting in our pickup truck. The great blue heron had an arm length neck that it wanted to extend once we were inside the truck, so I kept one hand on the heron's body and one hand loosely around its neck. We visited two friends who helped us find a dog taxi to carry the bird to the Alabama Wildlife Center at Oak Mountain. Our Wildlife Center provides a great service to injured and orphaned birds. (See bottom of page 5) Last check, the heron was eating well after surgery on its wing and was wearing a bandage. It had its own small room at the center.

- Michelle Blackwood

# Fifty-First Annual Spring Bird Count

Saturday, April 30, 2016

The 2015-2016 El Nino event has been one for the record books, and our weather has reflected this: an extremely warm December and a wet, stormy February. It is heartening, therefore, to be able to write about the April 30 Birmingham Audubon Spring Bird Count, when the weather will be more befitting of spring. Already, neotropical migrants are making their way north and that means it is time for the 51st annual Spring Bird Count!

This is a fun count, when we venture out to welcome our returning neotropical 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 on their way to raising young too.

This all-day count will cover parts of Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair and Blount counties, and we'll need as many participants as possible to cover the area adequately. 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. Or, 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. Those fortunate enough to find a real rarity should expect to provide appropriate written documentation. Sharon Hudgins will handle compiling duties and Susan Barrow will host our compilation at her home located at 1777 S Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham, AL 35216-1621. Call Susan if you need directions: 205-942-8667 (H) or 205-253-8667 (C). The compilation will begin at 7 p.m. and light refreshments will be provided.

Greg Harber, Bird Counts Committee

# Time to Dig!

- By Michelle Reynolds

The weather is warming up, wildflowers are blooming, and the birds are busy. It is time to start planting our habitat gardens! A habitat garden for birds should have four essential elements -- water, food, places to hide, and places for the birds to rear their young. Native flowers, grasses, trees, and shrubs will feed the masses in terms of providing nectar, fruit, insects and seeds, and the plants will check off the nesting and hiding requirements as well. All you'll need to do is buy the plants, plant them, and add water. Nesting boxes and feeders will round out the full ensemble.

Two things I like to repeat often when it comes to gardening with native plants - "take a cue from nature because nature does it best" and "work with nature instead of against it." To let nature be your guide, go to the nearest wild space, observe, and consult your own thoughts about the place. Take a walk in the woods, through a meadow, or take a stroll around a lake, pond, or creek. What stands out as being attractive to you? Make a list of the plant combinations, the conditions in which they grow, and note the topography they thrive in. Consider the connection you feel to the natural surroundings. Is there a spot in your landscape where you can match the conditions and mimic the plantings?

To duplicate or mimic what you observe in nature, you have to think of your yard as an extension of the neighboring natural space. Research the species and the conditions these plants typically grow in, and then choose plants that are closely related for use in your landscape. Choosing species that are naturally adapted to these environments will make for happier gardening. Managing



Photo above: River oats, rushes, black-eyed Susan, and giant coneflowers were planted with tree-formed wax myrtles along the streambeds at Railroad Park. Railroad Park, the Hugh Kaul Wildflower Garden at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Birmingham Audubon Urban Bird Habitat Initiative projects, and the Southern Environmental Center's EcoScapes all serve as demonstration plots to help guide homeowners in planting with native plants. - Photo by Bob Farley

our properties in a more sustainable way means we will use less water and fewer chemicals. And spending less time with maintenance means we will get to spend more time viewing the visiting wildlife and actually enjoying the benefits of the garden.

Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve are both hosting plant sales in the month of April. These are most valuable resources for native plants as well as for advice on how best to use them in your gardens. The Botanical Gardens' Native Plant Group will have experts on hand to answer questions and aid in sales during the Spring Plant Sale, held at Brookwood Village, April 15-17. The Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, Spring Native Plant Sale, in partnership with Turkey Creek Nature Preserve, will be at Ruffner Mountain.

Photo below: The combination of phlox, columbine, mayapple, and Canadian ginger is lovely in a shady woodland garden. When everything is planted and established, there is nothing to do but kick back in the hammock, relax and watch the wildlife in your yard. - Photo by Bob Farley



Michelle Reynolds is a native plant enthusiast on a mission to teach people how to put nature back into the urban landscape. She lectures, writes, and consults on gardens in and around Birmingham, Alabama. She is president of Birmingham Audubon's Board of Directors.

## Alabama Wildlife Center at Oak Mountain - Help Line

Trained Wildlife Help Line specialists provide free advice and information on how to deal with all kinds of wildlife problems and emergencies. You must leave a message to be assisted by a trained wildlife specialist since specialists are busy caring for animals and monitor this line

on an hourly basis from 8am to 8pm every day of the year. If the animal does not have obvious injuries, please wait for a return call BEFORE bringing birds to them. Thank you!

**Call 205-663-7930, ext. 2 - 8am-8pm, 7 days a week**



**39TH YEAR**

# 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](http://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

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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 \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Birmingham Audubon's policy is to not share or sell our mailing list. Your privacy is of the utmost importance to us.**

**Birmingham Audubon Society**  
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[www.birminghamaudubon.org](http://www.birminghamaudubon.org)

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A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

**Office Address and Mailing Address:**

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

Please check your mailing label for your membership expiration date.

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## Consider gifting a membership to Birmingham Audubon

[www.birminghamaudubon.org](http://www.birminghamaudubon.org)  
or 205-719-3678

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### May 2016

- 5-8 Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop  
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Check website and next month's Flicker Flashes  
for an up to date list of field trips

