

Flicker Flashes

Published by
The Birmingham Audubon Society

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

Audubon Teaches Nature **The Wetumpka Astrobleme** An Ancient Tale

Presented by **David Frings, Guest Speaker**

Sunday, January 18, 2015 - 2 P.M. - Oak Mountain Interpretive Center

It's probably no secret to many of you that saw "Stars Fell on Alabama" or that 60 years ago a meteorite crashed through the ceiling of Ann Hodges house in Sylacauga and bruised her left hip. And did you also know that Alabama has another astronomical claim to fame?

83 million years ago, a cosmic object struck what is now Elmore County, Alabama. Then the area was covered by the shallow reaches of the northern Gulf of Mexico and the impact of the asteroid or comet created a crescent-shaped crater we know as the Wetumpka Astrobleme. The energy released by the impact was 175,000 times greater than the nuclear explosion in Hiroshima in



Asteroid - Thinkstock by Getty Images

1945. Birmingham Audubon's February field trip will include a visit to the astrobleme, so please be sure to attend this special program designed to enhance your visit.

Be sure to come early and enjoy some refreshments and conversation in the Observation Room at the Alabama Wildlife Center, then, when it is time for the program, we will proceed to the auditorium for the presentation.

Also, bring your binoculars and field guides for a bird walk after the program. We will visit a site within the park to look for wintering species such as brown creeper, cedar waxwing, winter wren, hermit thrush and both kinglet species.

Next "Audubon Teaches Nature" Topic in the Series:

Identifying Birds of Prey: Tips, Tools and a Bird or Two! - Sunday, February 22, 2015 - 2 p.m.
Becky Collier, Greg Harber & Scottie Jackson - Alabama Wildlife Center

Happy New Year!

New Field Trips for 2015:

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge - Behind locked gates
Cahaba Treatment Plant - Access by special permission
Guntersville - Full day trip
Bird Watching Classes - With Greg Harber
(Read about these and more inside this newsletter)



All Day Field Trip to Guntersville

Saturday, January 10, 2015 - 7 A.M.

Please make plans to travel with Birmingham Audubon on Jan. 10, 2015 to Lake Guntersville, an impounded portion of the Tennessee River that provides winter habitat for thousands of waterfowl. We will be visiting several excellent viewing spots among the land spits, dock pilings and other features along the river. It is hoped that we may spot species such as redhead, greater scaup, common loons and pied-billed grebe during the morning hours.

That afternoon, we will visit the north side of Guntersville Dam to watch an easily viewed and active bald eagles' nest. The dam is a particularly good site to see large numbers of gulls and great blue herons as they both fish below the dam.

Please meet at Birmingham Botanical Gardens, 2612 Lane Park Rd, Birmingham, AL 35223 that morning. We plan to depart for Guntersville at 7 a.m.

We will travel via Red Mountain Expressway to Interstate 20/59E to exit number 128, Tallapoosa Street and Alabama Highway 79. Highway 79 leads straight to Guntersville. We will regroup at the Burger King, 1929 Gunter Avenue, Guntersville, AL 35976.



Common loon family with chick - Thinkstock by Getty Images

If anyone wishes to meet us there, we hope to arrive there at approximately 9 a.m.

Please bring a picnic lunch or you may choose to visit a fast food restaurant in the area. Dress accordingly and note that winds coming off the lake can be cold. It is also generally cooler in Guntersville than it is in Birmingham. Spotting scopes are welcome. If you need to borrow binoculars, Birmingham Audubon will have some for use during the trip.

TRIP LEADER: Susan Barrow (H) 943-8667 (C) 253-8667 .

January 2015 Half-Day Field Trip Cahaba Treatment Plant

Saturday, January 17, 2015 - 7 A.M.

Located on the banks of the Cahaba River, the Cahaba Treatment Plant contains several ponds, wooded areas, access to the river and an amazing number of birds including both residents and wintering migrants, such as waterfowl, sparrows and other woodland species.

MEETING PLACE: Hoover McDonald's (across from the Galleria). Please park in the lot across from the McDonald's.

ADDRESS: 1731 Montgomery Highway South, Hoover, AL
DEPARTURE TIME: 7 a.m.

TRAVEL PLANS: Depart from the McDonald's, turn left onto U.S. 31, turn left at the intersection with Lorna Road, remain on Lorna Road until you reach Rocky Ridge Ranch Road on your right, turn right onto Rocky Ridge Ranch Road, keep straight onto Veona Daniel Road, which dead-ends at the plant.

Access to the plant is by permission and will necessitate completion of sign-in sheets. We are coordinating with the plant's staff to ensure a quick entry. Please

consolidate rides as much as possible. At the end of the morning, those who wish may gather for a bite to eat and share experiences.

DESTINATION: Cahaba Wastewater Treatment Plant

ADDRESS: 3900 Veona Daniel Road, Hoover, AL 35244

PHONE NUMBER: 205-987-0648

GPS: 33.22' 19N 86.47' 8W

WEBSITE: jeffcointouch.com

TRIP LEADER:

Maureen Shaffer
205-822-8728 Home
205-222-2662 Cell



Wood duck -
Thinkstock by Getty Images

January Membership Program

Bald is Beautiful:

Conservation Efforts to Save South Africa's Vultures

Presented by Jessie Griswold of the Birmingham Zoo
Birmingham Botanical Gardens, East Room
Thursday, January 15, 2015 - 7 P.M.

"A disgusting bird, with its bald scarlet head formed to wallow in its putridity." Harsh words from evolutionary theorist and naturalist Charles Darwin when he viewed turkey vultures. While he changed his mind on the importance of vultures, the general public still views vultures as vile, disgusting birds. They may not be the embodiment of beauty and inspiration, but they are vitally important to our ecosystem because they rid the environment of bacteria, diseases and rotting meat. Unfortunately, their numbers are dwindling at an alarming rate.

In South Africa, Vulture Conservation Programme, or VulPro, is intensively working to save Africa's vultures, particularly the Cape vulture. With increasing urbanization comes an increasing demand for electricity and vulture electrocutions are on the rise. Large numbers of vultures are killed with poison, shotguns, or traps to supply the traditional medicinal trade. Vultures also face food shortages due to overhunting of large ungulates and



Cape vulture - Jessie Griswold

changes in farming practices for domestic stock. Through rehabilitation, research, education, colony monitoring, and captive breeding, VulPro is endeavoring to bring the Cape vulture back from extinction.

Our January speaker, Jessie Griswold, will be talking about her experience in South Africa as a volunteer for VulPro.

Griswold is an Animal Health Center Keeper at the Birmingham Zoo where she has been for 4 years. She has a B.S. in Forestry with a Wildlife Concentration and currently is enrolled in the Veterinary Technology Program at San Juan College. Her previous experience includes serving as Raptor Rehabilitation Coordinator at the Alabama Wildlife

Center for 6 years, and is currently volunteering for Wild Mammal Care of Alabama and sits on the Conservation Committee of the Birmingham Audubon Society.

Fellowship and snack time begins at 6:30 p.m.
Please come early for refreshments and conversation.

"Butterflies of Alabama: Glimpses into Their Lives"

Book to be Given to Schools

Paulette Ogard and Sara Bright

We are pleased to announce that in September, a copy of "Butterflies of Alabama: Glimpses into Their Lives," along with a specially designed teacher's guide, was given to each of the 1,090 public elementary schools in Alabama. Since our primary goal in co-authoring the book was to advance the cause of conservation through education, we always had dreamed of putting it in the hands of classroom teachers. Thanks to the generosity of donors that included Birmingham Audubon, that dream became a reality in 2014.

The project's success was a result of several collaborations. The University of Alabama Press made the books available for a much-reduced price. Audrey Ann Wilson, an award-winning educator, created the teacher's guide based on state and national courses of study. Wild South acted as the project's fiscal sponsor. The Alabama Department of Education, through its Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative arm, distributed the books. Dozens of individuals helped fund the project.

Birmingham Audubon established the Urban Bird Habitat Initiative to prioritize hands-on habitat projects in publicly accessible spaces. This book and its accompanying teacher's guide, focus on butterfly life histories and also emphasize the importance of native plants in creating wildlife-sustaining habitats. More than 700,000 children attend Alabama's public schools. We believe the information contained in these books has the potential to increase their knowledge and appreciation of the natural world during their formative ages. Perhaps there is even a budding lepidopterist or ornithologist in the group!





SoSo for the Record

Sightings September 21 through November 17, 2014

A successful Wheeler Pelagic trip, on Sept. 21, was led by Damien Simbeck. Five species of gulls were recorded on the trip: Laughing, Franklin's, Ring-billed, Herring, and Lesser-black-backed.

Ruby-crowned kinglet, yellow-rumped warbler, white-throated sparrow, purple finch, and pine siskin are all beginning to arrive for their winter visits.

Other Sightings:

- 9/30 **Blue-winged Teal;** (12); Fultondale (DH).
- 10/1 **Warbling Vireo; Nashville and Blackpoll Warblers;** Ruffner Mountain. **Vesper and Lincoln's Sparrows;** Zion Prairie (SD,WH).
- 10/3 **Osprey;** Lake Purdy (DH).
- 10/6 **Blue-winged Teal;** (14); Wilson's Snipe; Limestone Park (PF).
- 10/19 **Nelson's Sparrow;** (2); Unusual inland, Montgomery County (LG). **Caspian Tern;** (293 !) Dauphin Island, outnumbered other migrants (AH).
- 11/8 **Redheads** in good numbers; **Pacific Loon; Franklin's** (adult) and **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** (juvenile); Guntersville (GJ).
- 11/15 **Ducks: Green-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup, and Ruddy; Wild Turkey; Horned Grebe; Bald Eagle; Winter Wren; American Pipit; White-crowned Sparrow; and Pine Siskin;** Good birding at Lake Purdy (SD).
- 11/16 **Snow Goose;** Fultondale (DH).
- 11/17 **Hooded Merganser;** (12); Tarrant (DH).

Contributors:

Scot Duncan
Paul Franklin
Larry Gardella
Andrew Haffenden
Will Huswit
Donald Hulse
Greg Jackson
Damien Simbeck



Pine Siskin - Thinkstock by Getty Images

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

Special Offer Bird Watching Classes

Instructor: Greg Harber

Birmingham Audubon is pleased to announce a series of bird watching classes offered for both members and non-members. The three classes, which will cover specific groups of birds, are co-sponsored by the Education and Membership committees and will meet on six Monday nights from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Homewood Public Library. The first class will be held in early January, with the last two classes being offered in February. Cost is \$20 per class for members and \$30 for non-members. Please make checks payable to Birmingham Audubon and deliver to the instructor on the first night of class. You may register online as indicated below.

Designed to be a continuation of last year's introductory class, these classes will delve further into identification tips and techniques and also address various aspects of the species' ecology. The classes and their schedule are as follows:

**Waterfowl,
January 5 & 12, 2015**

**Birds of Prey,
February 2 & 9, 2015**

**Winter Songbirds,
February 16 & 23, 2015**

Class size is limited so it is imperative that persons interested in enrolling in a class act quickly. Registration will be online via the Birmingham Audubon website. For further information please contact the instructor, Greg Harber, at 251-2133 (evenings) or gharber@mindspring.com.

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

January Beginner Bird Walk

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge

Monday, January 19, 2015

OUR NEXT BEGINNER BIRD WALK will take place on January 19, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, when we will travel to Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Decatur. This trip will include many waterfowl that migrate here for the winter with some of the highlights being snow geese, ruddy ducks, northern pintails and sand hill cranes. The bonus of the day might be the possibility of sighting a small group of endangered whooping cranes!

This is an all-day trip as we will not only visit the observation building, but we will go behind locked gates to check out the smaller hidden ponds for many of the ducks. **Participants are encouraged to RSVP ahead of time by calling our Teaching Naturalist Helena Uber-Wamble at 205-714-8228.** Please leave your name, phone number and email address for further details about this wonderful trip. Hope to see you all there!

OUR MOST RECENT BEGINNER BIRD WALK was on Veteran's Day, which was a beautiful day to enjoy bird watching with the forty eight participants who joined Birmingham Audubon at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Audubon experts lead four groups in how to use binoculars and to search for local birds. Twenty five adults brought in twenty-three children to learn the skill of bird watching. While practicing with the binoculars in the front plaza, four Canada geese kept flying by as if to energize the groups before we went out on the trails. It was a great start to a great day!



Twenty-three of the participants were students from Hoover, Moody, Creek View, Paine Primary and Highlands schools. Individuals from Birmingham and the surrounding areas all joined in on the day's events.

Besides the Canada geese that flew over at the start of the walk, three red-tailed hawks, a turkey vulture and white-throated sparrows were among the highlights. Downy and red-bellied woodpeckers were spotted along with a yellow-bellied sapsucker. Ruby-crowned kinglets and both the white-breasted and brown-headed nuthatches were active too.

Participants were also encouraged to join eBird and record their sightings of the day to start their life lists.

Upcoming Beginner Bird Walks:

Limestone Park Alabaster, Alabama
March 29, 2015

Until Then – Happy Birding!
Helena



Above - Sandhill cranes
Left - Northern pintail

Photos -
Thinkstock by Getty Images

BIRDS AND BREWS

Sunday, January 25, 2015 - 2 p.m.

Eastlake Park - 1st Ave North and 84th Steet North, Birmingham, AL

Join Birmingham Audubon for a leisurely stroll around East Lake Park and its variety of habitats while we look for resident and migratory birds. Learn which birds can logically be found in which habitat. This event will provide information regarding Birmingham Audubon's East Lake Park Project and the efforts we are making to protect the heron rookery on the island. This venture served as the catalyst for our extensive and ongoing Urban Bird Habitat projects. After our walk, we will visit the Avondale Brewery or Post Office Pies for refreshments and a snack.

We will meet at the Shepherd Senior Center parking lot which is beside the East Lake Park public swimming pool on 84th Street North. The parking lot is about one block north of First Avenue North. Please join us at 2 p.m. for a fun and educational afternoon. We will have binoculars to loan to those who need them.

FOR MORE INFO: email Hans Paul: cooterp14@gmail.com



SAVE THE DATE!

The 38th Birmingham Audubon
Mountain Workshop
will be held May 7 to 10, 2015.

Look for detailed registration
information in the February
Flicker Flashes.

This year we will introduce online registration
and course selection. First come and first serve,
for registration and course selection.
Watch for more information next month!



Photos by Bob Farley and Michelle Blackwood

Join and Support Birmingham Audubon

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

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

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

There are many ways you can support Birmingham Audubon

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

Membership

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

Make a Donation

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

Your memberships and donations support:

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

Birmingham Audubon Society Membership Application

Join Renew Annual Membership: \$ 20.00

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

Total: \$ _____

Please make check payable to:
Birmingham Audubon Society

Please charge my credit card
 Visa MasterCard

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

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

Please keep my donation anonymous
 Yes No

I want to receive communications electronically
 Yes No

I want to be contacted to learn about volunteer activities
 Yes No

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

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Birmingham Audubon Society
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

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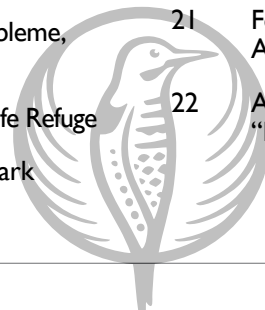
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or 205-714-8227

January 2015

- 3 Gulf Shores Christmas Bird Count
- 10 Field Trip - Guntersville (Full Day)
- 15 Monthly Program "Bald is Beautiful: Conservation Efforts to Save South Africa's Vultures"
7 pm, Birmingham Botanical Gardens
- 17 Field Trip - Cahaba Treatment Plant (Half-day)
- 18 Audubon Teaches Nature - "Wetumpka Astrobleme, An Ancient Tale"
- 19 Beginner's Bird Walk - Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge
- 23-25 AOS Winter Meeting - Joe Wheeler State Park
- 25 Birds and Brews- East Lake Park

February 2015

- 7 Beeswax Creek/Lake Purdy Field Trip (Half-day)
- 13-16 Great American Back Yard Bird Count
- 14 Great American Back Yard Bird Count Event, Birmingham Zoo
- 19 Monthly Program
7 pm, Birmingham Botanical Gardens
- 21 Fort Toulouse/Wetumpka Astrobleme Field Trip (Full day)
- 22 Audubon Teaches Nature, "Identifying Birds of Prey"



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