

Flicker Flashes

*Published by
The Birmingham Audubon Society*



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

Tom Imhof Family Bird Walk Saturday, April 5, 2008 at 7:30 a.m. Birmingham Zoo

Our half-day field trip, in memory of long-time BAS member Tom Imhof, will be a stroll along the perimeter road adjacent to the zoo parking area. Our stroll will take us through the woods on our way to the lodge. We are likely to see a variety of spring migrants and resident birds along the route. The resident birds are sure to be in full song and with any luck some of the migrants will too! And, since we will be at the Birmingham Zoo, this is the perfect time to bring your children and grandchildren! This outing is an excellent choice for beginners and those who like short trips since we will limit our walking to the woods surrounding the zoo. We will not be entering the Zoo proper as part of the field trip.

Meet: 7:30 A.M. at the Birmingham Zoo Auditorium. Patty Pendleton, Zoo staff, will provide coffee, juice and donuts.

Trip Leaders: Harriett Wright, 967-0955 and Elberta Reid, 879-1935.



Audubon Teaches Nature The Underwater World of Oak Mountain State Park Presented by Dr. Bob Stiles and David Frings, Guest Speakers Sunday, April 6, 2008 at 2:00 P.M.

Alabama's aquatic diversity is among the greatest in the United States. Hundreds of species of fish, mollusks and snails are found in our creeks, streams and rivers. Dr. Bob Stiles and David Frings, director of the Interpretive Center, will share with us the results of recent creek and stream surveys at Oak Mountain State Park. We hope to have some of the fish in the Interpretive Center aquariums for easy viewing after the program.

Following the program, and weather permitting, there will be a nature walk in the park to observe early blooming wildflowers and migrant songbirds. Bring your binoculars and wear comfortable walking shoes.

Park admission is \$3.00 per person but the program itself is free; please come join us for an afternoon at the park.

Remember, the Alabama Wildlife Center will serve cookies and punch in the Observation Room before the seminar. The program itself will be held in the new Oak Mountain State Park Interpretive Center adjacent to The Wildlife Center. Door prizes will be awarded too, but you must register and be present in order to win.



REDEAR SUNFISH - DUANE RAVER © USFWS

Come early for fellowship and refreshments in the Observation Room at The Center!

SoSo for the Record

Sightings - December 22, 2007 through February 23, 2008

The **Northern Saw-whet Owl** phenomenon continues at Clay. The Sargents have now banded eight of these "cute little beasts". Several hearty souls (birders, that is) have made middle of the night journeys and were rewarded for their effort. Fellow bander Gary Lockerman of Pennsylvania has aided the Sargents with a fancy amplifier that enhances the sound quality of the toot-toot calls. Two previously banded owls were recaptured on 25 February. According to Scot Weidensaul, Bob and Martha's "expert guru," these birds are "net savvy," and are not often recaptured a second time. Stay tuned folks, it's not over yet.

Other sightings were:

- 12/22 **Bald Eagle**; Payne Lake, "Possibly one of nesting pair at Marion Fish Hatchery" (JR).
- 1/4 **Thayer's Gull (1st year) !!**; Guntersville (BH, DR).
- 1/7 **Rusty Blackbird (152)**; Botanical Gardens (KA). **(75)**; Roebuck Springs (SD).
- 1/8 **Hooded Merganser (m&f)**; Winn Lake subdivision (JK,SA).
- 1/11 **Calliope Hummingbird (f)**; Greystone (BS,LM,JM).
- 1/13 **American Robin (nesting early in a vulnerable situation, feeding nestlings. Exposed nest, tree completely bare of any leaves.)** "I don't know how unusual it is to find nesting attempts by robins in February, but it was a first for me. Clearly this robin would have started nesting and incubating many days before Feb 13th. On Feb 14th we had a strong freeze, 21 degrees F that night. When I checked the nest the next week there was no activity. I assume the nest failed. I suspect it will be a challenge for our breeding species if our winters become milder, but are punctuated with occasional sub-freezing temperatures as we saw recently and, certainly, as we saw in March 2007." On the campus of Birmingham-Southern College (SD).
- 1/16 **Glaucous Gull (imm)**; Guntersville (SD et al).
- 1/22 **Cackling Goose (8)**; Wheeler Refuge (FF,PC).
- 1/24 **Albino Carolina Chickadee (2 years) ; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Yellow-rumped Warbler (2); Purple Finch (f, first in three years)**; "A great day for Cornell bird count!" Bluff Park (SB).
- 1/26 **Great Horned Owl**; "Guess whoooo is nesting in our back yard?" Riverchase (GJ,DJ).
- 1/31 **Snow Goose (new yard bird)**; Clay (BS,MS).
- 2/14 **Purple Martin**; Oak Mountain State Park (HW).
- 2/21 **Purple Finch ("a major influx that I believe have just arrived from the north. As many as fifty at our feeders on many days")**; Clay (BS,MS). **In Clay County 525 Purple Finches have been banded during this winter season** (MW,DW).
- 2/23 **White-winged Scoter (2); Purple Martin (a doz+)**; Guntersville (SMcC).

Contributors:

Ken Archambault	Sandra Allison	Sheila Bancroft	Philip Castell	Scot Duncan
Fred Fekel	Bert Harris	Greg & Debi Jackson	Jim Killingsworth	Gray Lockerman
Linda & Jim Musgrove	Steve McConnell	Dick Reynolds	John Robinson	Scott Weidensaul
Mary and Don Wilson	Harriett Wright			

Please submit sightings for May/June FF at least five days before the April 1 deadline to Ann Miller, 520 Yorkshire Drive, Birmingham, Al. 35209.

April Monthly Meeting
“Member’s Favorite Photographs”
Thursday, April 24, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.
Birmingham Zoo Auditorium

We’re calling on our members to provide the program for the April meeting. The reason for this is simple: it is time for our annual member’s favorite photographs program!

Dig into your collection of slides and digital images. Everyone is invited, BAS members and guests, to share with us their favorite photos of birds, flowers, scenic sights, animals and other images of nature at her finest. Your photos can be from vacations or trips you have taken, either here in Alabama or abroad, or from your own backyard even. This is a great opportunity to share with everyone your experiences with nature, and what insights you may have gained in the process. Let your imagination move you and turn it into a multimedia presentation!

We ask you to limit your presentation to 5 minutes so that we may give everyone a chance to show

his or her slides/images. A slide projector and extra slide trays will be provided. A laptop computer and projector will also be available; please bring your digital image files on a portable storage device, e.g. a thumb drive. Please contact our Master of Ceremonies Hans Paul (871-0666; cooerp@mindspring.com) in advance and let him know if you plan to bring digital images or slides, how many and any special equipment requests you may have. Please come a little early to allow time to arrange the order of the presentations.

Please note that the meeting date is the FOURTH Thursday in April. This date was selected to avoid conflicts with the AOS meeting in Dauphin Island on April 18 – 20.

Come Early for Refreshments and Conversation

BAS Field Trip
Noxubee NWR
May 9-10, 2008

On May 10 Birmingham Audubon will travel to Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge www.fws.gov/noxubee/ just west of Brooksville, Mississippi, to experience its various offerings. Once there, we will be escorted by Margaret Copeland, resident Red-cockaded Woodpecker expert. Our target birds will be the RCW and the Bachman’s Sparrow.

We will also visit the Bluff Lake Boardwalk, which winds through a cypress island on the edge of Bluff Lake, and ends with a great view of the lake and a large rookery for Cattle Egret, Snowy Egret, and Little Blue Heron among others. There are benches along the way to rest and enjoy the sounds of the area or just to stop and watch the birds.

Another option will be the Morgan Hill Trail. Connecting the parking area to the Morgan Hill Overlook, the trail takes one through a prairie restoration area. Or perhaps we will go to the Goose Overlook. This thirty-foot high observation platform is accessed by a 150-foot walk and overlooks the Dickerson Arm of Bluff Lake, a favorite birding and wildlife viewing area. Across from the Goose Overlook is the Woodpecker Trail.

You might want to consider going over the day

before and staying at the Plymouth Bluff Center www.plymouthbluff.com/, an environmental education complex administered by Mississippi University for Women and located on the Tombigbee River. Accommodations there are quite reasonable. There are several possibilities for early morning birding along the River and at the Stennis Lock and Dam located only 7 minutes away.

We are in the process of finalizing our plans for this full day or overnight trip. We plan to meet on Saturday, May 10th at the Galleria McDonald’s on US 31 in Hoover. Departure will be at 6:30am. If you would like to get breakfast, please arrive no later than 6:00am. Travel time to Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge is approximately 2¾ hours. We will travel directly to their new Visitors’ Center for a rest stop. In addition to a sack lunch and full tank of gas, bring your morning and afternoon snacks, plenty of water, bug spray, and binoculars.

Because our plans are still fluid you will need to contact our trip leader Jessica Germany if you are planning to accompany us on this trip. She can answer your questions and provide information about accommodations. Call her at 595-0814 or e-mail at jhgermany@bellsouth.net.



Conservation Corner

Notes from the Conservation Committee

This year the Conservation Committee has focused many efforts on the conservation of water and the direct impact to loss of habitat. Recently we have learned about a new and very real potential danger to the Birmingham water supply.

Drummond Coal is currently seeking a permit to strip 1,773 acres for coal directly across from the Birmingham Water Works intake point on the Mulberry Fork of the Black Warrior River. This intake point is and will continue to be a primary source of drinking water for the citizens of Birmingham. The process of

strip mining includes clear cutting, blasting (including aquifers), back filling, acid mine drainage, sedimentation and dredge lining. This will impact our water, and certainly cause the loss of habitat.

The Conservation Committee strongly opposes this operation. For our February Writing Table, we sent cards to three Birmingham Water Works Board members expressing our concern. The Birmingham Audubon Society Board voted that the Conservation Committee continue working to hold our BWWB accountable for protecting our water and assets.

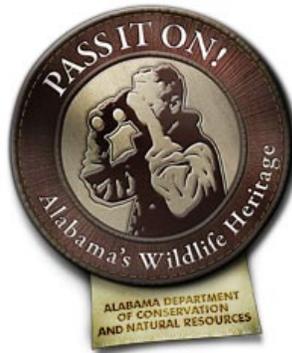
Help Save Alabama's Wildlife, Lands and Waterways

The purchase of duck stamps has long provided birders the chance to help support our national wildlife refuges and the wildlife found there, but the chance to help protect bird habitat at the state level has been limited.

There's now a tangible way to directly help protect Alabama's wild, scenic state land and waterways for viewing and limited sporting. A new program called the Wildlife Heritage License lets you help save the state's wild areas. You can sign up online at the official state website for Conservation and Natural Resources, <http://www.alabamainteractive.org/dcnr/license/index.cgi>, for either \$10 a year or \$200 a lifetime.

The funds help our existing state and wildlife programs to continue, such as bald eagle monitoring

and surveying, and support for regional and migratory birds through Partners-in-Flight and Birding Joint Ventures. In addition, the funds help operate and care for 768,000 acres within the Alabama Wildlife Management Area System where the state's animals live, from the salamanders and mussels to waterfowl and foxes.



And, for people who participate in outdoor sporting, the license also pays to hunt small game except waterfowl in Alabama's 35 Wildlife Management Areas, Waterfowl Refuges and Community Hunting Areas. It also allows sportspeople to fish at the 20 state-owned public fishing lakes (daily permit required) or to fish with a hook and line from the bank in public waters in all 67 counties (freshwater only). In addition, it lets sportspeople use Alabama's 10 Public Shooting Ranges.



Reminder: The *Flicker Flashes* is available in pdf format on the Birmingham Audubon Society's web site at <http://www.birminghamaudubon.org/>. Although we make every effort to ensure your newsletter arrives in a timely manner, bulk rate mail delivery can be unpredictable and is beyond our control. Consulting the web site regularly ensures that you have up-to-date information on all of our meetings, field trips and special events.



RAPTOR INVASION !



Activities for Fledgling Naturalists

Raptors have invaded Birmingham! Not velociraptors, but birds of prey. So, what are birds of prey? They are carnivorous, meat-eaters, who use their feet with sharp, curved talons, or toenails, to catch prey. Their sharp, hooked beaks tear the meat. They have a keen sense of sight, able to spot prey as they fly. Some raptors will eat live prey and some eat carrion. All raptors will regurgitate, or vomit, the indigestible parts of their prey. This pellet usually consists of hair, exoskeleton, and feathers. Owl pellets also have bones, which they cannot digest. Female raptors are usually larger than the males in size. They all have strong wings for flying and soaring. On sunny days, you will see raptors flying in circles. This is called "kettling." They are catching the thermals, columns of rising air currents. Their flight styles are determined by their wing shape. Some raptors have long, broad

wings, which help them soar. Others have short, broad wings that gives them quickness and maneuverability. While still others have wings that allow them to dive at high rates of speed or hover in the area. Hummingbirds are not the only ones that can hover!

There are two groups (orders) of raptors - hawks, eagles, vultures, falcons and osprey (*Falconiformes*) and owls (*Strigiformes*). Falconiformes is the scientific order and there are four families- Vultures (*Cathartidae*) Hawks and Eagles (*Accipitridae*), osprey (*Pandionidae*), and Falcons (*Falconidae*). The owl order, *Strigiformes*, has two families- Barn owls (*Tytonidae*) and all other Owls (*Strigidae*). So let's meet the members of these families who live around Birmingham.

BIRD	FOOD	HABITAT	WINGS	SIZE	FACT
Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	Fish, carrion	Large bodies of water Seen daily at Lake Purdy	79-90" long broad wings	35-37"	National Bird, will steal prey from other birds, soars with wings straight out.
Red-tailed Hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	Rodents and other small mammals	Variety of habitats-often woods near open fields	56" Rounded wings	22"	Rounded, broad tail is a russet red. Hunts from light posts along highways
Red-shouldered Hawk (<i>Buteo lineatus</i>)	Birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, insects	mature mixed land swamps.	40" Broad wings	16-24"	Long tail is dark brown with white bands
Broad-winged Hawk (<i>Buteo platypterus</i>)	Insects, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds	Dense mixed woodlands	33" Short, broad, pointed wings	13"	Stores food to be eaten later
Cooper's Hawk (<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>)	Smallbirds and mammals; can take young game birds	Open mixed woodlands, riparian areas	24-35' short, rounded wings	15-20" long, rounded, banded tail	Built for quick flight through trees and branches
Sharp-shinned Hawk (<i>Accipiter striatus</i>)	Small birds	Mixed woodlands	17-22" short, rounded wings	9-13' long, barred, square tipped tail	Regular visitor at bird feeders hunting the songbirds
American Kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius</i>)	Rodents, insects, reptiles	Open country, farmlands, urban areas	20-24" long, pointed wing	9-12" rufous back and tail	9-12" Can hover when it hunts- moustache marks on face

Continued from previous page

BIRD	FOOD	HABITAT	WINGS	SIZE	FACT
Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrines</i>)	Small mammals and birds	Open wetland areas, tall buildings in cities	9-43" long, pointed wing	14-19"	Fastest flying bird, catches pigeons in Birmingham
Osprey (<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>)	Fish	Near bodies of water Seen at East Lake Park and Lake Purdy	59-71" Long wings, wingtips angled slightly back	21-23" White head with dark eye-stripe	Flies with fish in talons parallel to body
Turkey Vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>)	Carrion	Open country, woodlands, farmlands, forested areas	67-70" long wings and tail	25-32"	Wings form a "V" when soaring. Red head mostly unfeathered.
Screech Owl (<i>Megascops asio</i>)	Small mammals, reptiles, and birds	Open mixed woodlands, parklands, wooded neighborhoods	19-24" broad wings have feathered edges for silent flight	6-10"	Nocturnal, small owl with feathered ear tufts and LOUD voice
Barred Owl (<i>Strix varia</i>)	deep moist forests, wooded swamps, and woodlands near waterways.	Mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, aquatic crustaceans	39-43" broad wings have feathered edges for silent flight	17-20"	Can be seen hunting during the daytime
Great Horned Owl (<i>Bubo virginianus</i>)	Dense forests to city parks	Mammals, birds, reptiles – will take prey 2-3 times heavier than itself	36-60" broad wings have feathered edges for silent flight	18-25"	Favorite food is skunk. Owls have no sense of smell.

RAPTOR GROUP NAMES

We refer to birds as a flock but each group of birds have their own special group name. For example, a group of crows is a murder of crows. Can you match these raptors to their special name?

HINT: Each raptor has two group names.

Bird	Your Answers	Group Name
Bald Eagle		Parliament
Red-shouldered Hawk		Aerie
Red-tailed Hawk		Cast
American Kestrel		Kettle
Peregrine Falcon		Venue
Barred Owl		Wisdom
Screech Owl		Convocation
Turkey Vulture		

Answer Key:

Bald Eagle- Aerie, Convocation

American Kestrel – Cast, Kettle

Screech Owl - Parliament, Wisdom

Red-shouldered Hawk – Cast, Kettle

Peregrine Falcon - Cast, Kettle

Turkey Vulture – Venue, Kettle

Red-tailed Hawk - Cast, Kettle

Barred Owl – Parliament, Wisdom

Forty-third Annual Spring Bird Count Saturday, April 26, 2008

All BAS members and friends are encouraged to join us for the 43rd 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.



birds at your feeders and call in your report. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks will surely reward those who take the time to watch at home!

At the end of the day we will gather to compile our results, swap stories and share our adventures of the day. Real rarities will need a good story for sure! Maureen Shaffer will host the compilation at her home at 2313 Chestnut Road, located just off Shades Crest Road about half-way between US 31 and US 280. Be sure to grab a bite to eat before we get started around 7:00 PM. If

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 adequately cover the area. 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

you need detailed directions call Maureen at 822-8728.

Greg Harber
For Bird Counts committee

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Clip along dotted line

~ Membership Application ~

Birmingham Audubon Society/ National Audubon Society

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: () _____

Introductory membership ~ \$20.00

Includes quarterly subscription to **Audubon** magazine and 8 issues of *Flicker Flashes*, the chapter newsletter.

Senior (62 & older) and student (full-time) memberships available for \$15.00.

(Preferred method of payment for all new members is through the chapter, using this form).

Regular membership/Renewals ~ \$20.00

The National Audubon Society handles membership renewals through their Membership Data Center. Contact them at 1-800-274-4201 or write them at:

P.O. Box 52529,
Boulder, CO 80322-2529.
Submit renewals directly to NAS.

My check for \$ _____ is enclosed.

Please make check payable to: National Audubon Society

Mail this form and check to: Birmingham Audubon Society
P.O. Box 314
Birmingham, AL 35201

Birmingham Audubon Society *AOO7XCH8

April 2008

- 1 *Flicker Flashes* articles due, May/June issue
- 5 Family Bird Walk - Birmingham Zoo 7:30 a.m.
- 6 Audubon Teaches Nature, The Wildlife Center
at Oak Mountain State Park, 2:00 P.M.
- 11-15 Spring Tour trip #1
- 16-20 Spring Tour trip #2
- 18-20 AOS Spring meeting - Dauphin Island, AL
- 20 Earth Day at the Gardens, 1:00 – 5:00 P.M.
- 24 Board Meeting, (BZA) 5:45 p.m.
General Meeting, (BZA) 7:00 p.m.
“Members Favorite Slides”
- 26 43rd Annual BAS Spring Bird Count

May 2008

- 3 BAS Spring Campout
- 10 BAS Field Trip, Noxubee N.W.R., Mississippi
- 15-18 31st Annual Audubon Mountain Workshop
Mentone, AL

June 2008

- 7 Talladega National Forest, east of Sylacauga
(Note date change from 6/21)

July 2008

- 26 BAS Field Trip, Prattville & Autaugaville

August 2008

- 2 BAS Field Trip, Gainesville & Aliceville

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