

Flicker Flashes

Published by
The Birmingham Audubon Society

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

April Monthly Meeting Member's Favorite Slides

Thursday, April 26, 2007 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 slides program!

Dig into your slide collection and begin assembling your favorites. Everyone is invited, BAS members and guests, to share with us their favorite slides 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! For those who have digital images in a Power Point presentation let us know and we can make arrangements for a digital projector too.

We ask you to limit your presentation to five minutes so that we may give everyone a chance to show his or her slides. A slide projector and extra

slide trays will be provided. Please contact our Master of Ceremonies Bob Tate (967-0304; actrgt@bellsouth.net) and let him know if you plan to bring slides, how many and any special equipment requests you may have. We will try to accommodate you.

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 20 – 22.

Editor's Note: This may be the last time you ever see this program titled "Member's Favorite Slides." With the exponential growth and technological advances in digital photography, and the limited availability to process slide film any more, next year we'll probably have to title this program "Member's Favorite PowerPoint!" The kicking and screaming sound you hear is me being dragged into the 21st century! GJH.

Come Early for Refreshments and Conversation

BAS BIRDATHON 2007

Greetings again to all of our BAS members! This year's Birdathon fund raiser will support Ruffner Mountain Nature Center and will provide additional aviary and animal enclosures. Your assistance will help this much needed endeavor and we look forward to your generous contributions.

Our four funding categories will again be named for owl species and will include the Great Horned Owl, the Barred Owl, the Eastern Screech Owl and the Elf Owl. Additional information will be sent to each member by letter within the next few weeks.

In advance, thanks for this support!

Cathy and Lee Nick
Birdathon Chairs

SoSo for the Record

Sightings December 17, 2006 through February 21, 2007

Alison Glascock passed on this information from Pat Byington's Bama Environmental News in January:

Number of Alabama's **Bald Eagles** increasing.

The Department of Conservation announced a record year for Alabama's Bald Eagle Restoration Project. State wild-life biologists counted 77 Bald Eagle nests in Alabama in 2006 - a 21 percent increase over 2005 (61 nests) and the highest since the program began in 1984.

A true Alabama environmental comeback story.

In the middle part of the 1900s Alabama lost its nesting population of Bald Eagles due to habitat loss and the impact of DDT. Prior to restoration efforts, the last known successful Bald Eagle nest in Alabama was in the 1950s. In 1984, Alabama's Non-game Wildlife Program initiated a project to restore nesting Bald Eagles to the state. After a 7-year period, in 1991, two successful eagle nests appeared in Henry and Wilcox counties.

Recently (18 Jan) Helena Uber reported one flying over the 55-acre lake at the Sumatanga Environmental Education Center at Gallant, Alabama. Helena is the Environmental Educator there. On 29 Jan, two Bald Eagles were sighted from the chapel on the mountain. "We are excited to have them here and hope that they nest on the site."

Other birds seen there: **Canada Goose, Mallard, Wood Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, American Coot, and Killdeer. Red-shouldered Hawk** and **Barred Owl** nest in that area.

Bob and Martha Sargent are still busy banding winter hummingbirds. Female **Rufous** (2) were reported by Tyler Huddle, Mountain Brook. One 3-28 Jan (Sargents unable to capture) and one 11 Feb, that had been banded previously at Cullman. A second year male **Rufous** at the home of Harriet Wright, Vestavia, was banded 7 Feb.

Other birds seen were:

12/17 **Pileated Woodpecker**; Trussville (BB).

1/16 **White Pelican (2)**; Gadsden (KW,PP).

1/21 **Peregrine Falcon (1 ad, 1 juv)**; AmSouth Harbert Tower (PR).

1/24 **Forster's Tern**; McCalla (SH).

2/10 **Ross's Goose (2)**; **What a nice yard bird!** McCalla (SH,DG).

Hermit Thrush; "Our cabin" West Jefferson County (RB).

2/21 **Sandhill Crane (200)**; **Horned Lark and Lapland Longspur (flocking together)**; Wheeler Refuge (AC,HW)



Contributors:

Billie Burnett

Rob Brewer

Pat Byington

Alice Christenson

David George

Alison Glascock

Sharon Hudgins

Tyler Huddle

Patricia Patty

Pelham Rowan

Bob & Martha Sargent

Helena Uber

Ken Wills

Harriett Wright

Please submit sightings for May/June issue of *FF* at least five days before April 1st deadline to Ann Miller, 520 Yorkshire Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

Audubon Teaches Nature

The Geological History of the Central Alabama Region ~ Two-hundred Fifty Million Years in 45 Minutes!

By Dr. Jim Lacefield, author of *Lost World in Alabama Rocks*

Sunday, April 8, 2007 at 2:00 P.M.

The Alabama Wildlife Center at Oak Mountain State Park

Everyone is invited to join us on April 8 for our final Audubon Teaches Nature seminar of the season. Our speaker will be noted author and naturalist, Jim Lacefield, author of *Lost World in Alabama Rocks*. The program will be held at 2:00 p.m. in the auditorium at The Alabama Wildlife Center at Oak Mountain State Park.

As many of you know Alabama has a long and rich geologic history. Those of you who attended the October field trip to Fort Toulouse and the Wetumpka Impact Crater were able to witness a sampling of this

complexity at the various sites we visited that day. During this program Dr. Lacefield will survey the geologic history of the Birmingham/Oak Mountain State Park region and compress a 250 million year journey into a 45-minute jaunt through time! Hold on to your seat; it ought to be a wild ride!

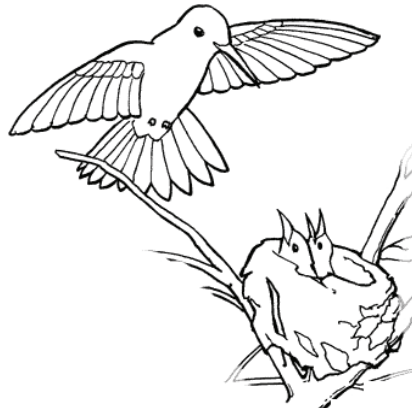
As always, feel free to come early for fellowship and refreshments in the Observation Room at the Center! Door prizes will be awarded but you must register to be eligible. Park admission is \$3.00 but the program is free.

Songbird Aviary Grand Opening Celebration! The Wildlife Center at Oak Mountain State Park Sunday, April 8, 2007

All of our members are invited to come to the grand opening celebration of the songbird aviaries at The Alabama Wildlife Center located in Oak Mountain State Park. You will recall that the funds required to build the enclosures were raised during our Birdathon fundraiser. The aviaries were dedicated to the memory of Russell Bailey, a long-time BAS member. Russell was an avid birder and supporter of The Wildlife Center.

The ceremony will be held immediately following the Audubon Teaches Nature seminar, which will be presented by Dr. Jim Lacefield. This event will also be the perfect opportunity to view the new deck that serves as an outdoor classroom space. Anne Miller, executive director of The Wildlife Center, reports that sitting on the deck is like sitting in your own private tree house, complete with surround sound acoustics!

The songbird baby season is fast upon us, so the timing of this grand opening is ideal. The picture will be complete when you are there to help celebrate the occasion!



Volunteers Needed for a Unique Bird Walk Saturday, May 19, 2007, 8:00am—10:00am. Birmingham Botanical Gardens

The Birmingham Audubon Society will be conducting a bird walk for the sight-impaired in conjunction with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services. We need volunteers to escort the participants along the paths of the Botanical Gardens as we listen for singing birds. You don't have to know all the bird songs, you can locate the birds and identify them by sight, if necessary. So mark this date on your calendar and come join us as we experience birding in a whole new way. Any questions may be referred to Bianca (BJ) Allen, 854-5233.

Mary Burks – In Memoriam

(This article first appeared in a special edition of BEN, the Bama Environmental Newsletter published by Pat Byington. Mary and her husband Bob have long been active in the Birmingham Audubon Society; Mary's guiding touch will be sorely missed).

On Friday, February 16th, Mary Burks, the mother of Alabama's environmental movement and founder of the Alabama Conservancy, passed away at 86 years of age.

My relationship with Mary and Bob Burks started nearly 18 years ago in September 1989, when I became Executive Director of the Alabama Conservancy. Despite its small office space, Kaypro computer and very modest conference room, the Alabama Conservancy was the epicenter of Alabama's environmental movement in those days. The "environmental forum" a coalition of all the environmental groups met there, mainly because it was the only place to meet. Leaders of all the groups dropped by. It was the movement's clubhouse. And then there was Mary and Bob Burks.

They volunteered weekly, always focused on the task they were there for. Bob always smiled, talked a little, even debated a little, and then focused like a laser beam on the Conservancy's financial work.

Then there was Mary. She always wanted to know how things were going. She tutored me about the Conservancy, its history and its future, its people, the stories, the issues, the land and the organization's mission to care for Alabama's environment, protect it and preserve it.

As head of membership at the time, Mary organized mailing parties, stuffing envelopes, placing address labels on the envelopes, and sealing them.

Here was the founder of the organization stuffing envelopes!

These were golden opportunities. As we sat in that conference room, Mary would talk about the Sipsey Wilderness, Blanche Dean or how the Conservancy started recycling in Birmingham. It was such a gift. And it was always neat to see Bob walk in after completing the financial/treasurer's work, to join in sealing the letters and then chiming in with his own stories. Their stories enriched and touched the lives of the volunteers, most of whom were students - the next generation.

A little over a year ago in Anniston, we were able to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Eastern Wilderness Act, the law that created the Sipsey Wilderness. It was a grand reunion organized by Pete Conroy and his group at Jacksonville State University. Mary and Bob were there, along with two former congressmen and John Randolph, a former Conservancy Executive Director and author of "The Battle for Alabama's Wilderness." I remember former Congressman Ronnie Flippo from Florence saying that one of his greatest accomplishments in Congress was the expansion of the Sipsey Wilderness.

The idea for Eastern Wilderness was founded in Alabama. In Randolph's book, the chapter titled "It's Impossible" details how a group of Alabamians embarked on a campaign to create the Sipsey Wilderness - an Eastern Wilderness - something the Forest Service said could never be done. Mary Burks organized a Wilderness Feasibility Study Committee, a group that contained true giants in their fields of study. People like Tom Imhof, author of Alabama Birds, Blanche Dean and Louise "Weesie" Smith, (botany), Charles Kelly (game wildlife), Mike Howell (ichthyology), Dan Holliman (non-game wildlife), Mike Hopiak and James Peavey (herpetology), Denny Bearce (Geology), Dale Carruthers (history), James and Fran Alexander (speleology) and James Manasco (trails). Along with the study group, a public campaign was launched through Birmingham Audubon's Walter Coxe. A film - "The Bankhead Forest - An Alabama Adventure," was produced by photographers Perry Covington and Dennis Holt, and edited by Elberta Reid.

The wilderness campaign eventually secured the support of the entire Alabama congressional delegation. Commenting in Randolph's book years later, Mary stated about the grass-roots wilderness movement, "We didn't have any idea what we were doing. We learned believe me. We learned the hard way."

After the six year Wilderness campaign (1969-1975), not only was the Sipsey Wilderness created but an entire Eastern Wilderness Area System was established. In Alabama, 32 years later, we now have 41,000 + acres of wilderness and hundreds of thousands of acres designated as wilderness in the East.

Mary's ongoing struggle to protect the designated wilderness was not the sum of her effort. She strived everyday to add or enhance the beauty of Alabama from wildflowers to our Natural Wonders.

In her latter years, her knees prevented her to see and touch the beauty she loved so dearly, but it never diminished the strength of her conviction to protect and preserve it.

One final quote from Randolph's book best describes Mary. "If one believes in fate, then surely Mary Burks was fated to become the mother of Alabama wilderness preservation. Passionate, tough, and resilient, a lover of all things wild and natural..."

Somewhere out there Mary is looking down on all of us. There is so much more to be done. A new champion needs to step forward. Who will that be?

I know Mary is saying "Get Busy!"

Best Wishes,

Pat Byington, Publisher
Bama Environmental News

The Birmingham Audubon Society would like to acknowledge the following gifts in memory of Idalene Sned:

Elberta Reid	Mrs. Will G. Holmes	Martha F. Matthews	The Amaranth Club
LaDonna S. Kusta	Margaret Compton	Brenda (BJ) Hodges	Mary Lou Miller

Tom Imhof Family Bird Walk

Saturday, April 14, 2007 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 parking area. Our stroll will take us through the woods on our way to the lodge, and 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.

Plan on Doing A Good Deed and Enjoying Good Company at the Audubon Sessions Sanctuary Workday

Saturday April 7, 2007 – 9:00 A. M. to Noon

The Sessions Sanctuary is underdeveloped property in Mountain Brook on Shades Creek that was donated by the late Mr. & Mrs. Sessions to Birmingham Audubon as a bird sanctuary. The BAS Sanctuary also helps protect the Shades Creek and Cahaba River watersheds.

Please join us for the workday at the Sessions Sanctuary on Saturday, April 7 at 9:00 a.m. Bring your tools and gloves. Plans are to meet at the end of Forest Glen Drive, near the Sanctuary.

To reach the Sanctuary, in Mountain Brook, proceed

east (away from the Zoo) on Montevallo Road, at the Crestline area, turn right at the signal light on to Montrose Rd, bear right onto Old Leads Road, turn left onto Forest Glen, proceed to the end of Forest Glen and meet us at 9:00.

John Swan, 933-6469
Ellen Mc Laughlin, 595-0806.
Co-chairs, Sessions Sanctuary

Join us for lunch afterwards at Golden Rule BBQ in Irondale.

March Half-day Field Trip Report

Roebuck Springs and East Lake Park

March 3, 2007

The half-day field trip to Roebuck Springs and East Lake Park brought out 19 participants on March 3. Our first stop was the springs itself, where we found Hooded Mergansers, Wood Ducks, Rusty Blackbirds, sparrows, Brown-headed Nuthatches, Loggerhead Shrike, and others. After everyone had seen these birds, we walked downstream along the creek bank where we found 2 Palm Warblers, a Merlin perched in a sycamore tree, and a pair of courting Wood Ducks. We were able to get so close to these ducks that we could see the female's dark gray and iridescent green nape. We then drove to East Lake Park where we saw Great Blue Herons, and Black-crowned (on their

nest) and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons. Our total for the morning was 55 species. The group finished the day with lunch at the Golden Rule in Irondale.

Participants in the trip were: Alison Glascock, Ellen W. McLaughlin, Lynn Williams, Greg Harber, Ross Cohen, Ty Keith, May Roll, Danny Brown, Harry and Dee Brown, Mark Lester, Susan and Chuck Hutchison, Ken Archambault, Jean Folsom, Chris Underwood, Pelham Rowan, Harriett Wright, Shirley and Frank Farrell and Janice Bonnett.

THE BIRDING COMMUNITY E-BULLETIN (Excerpts)

The following items are re-printed from the March 2007 edition of THE BIRDING COMMUNITY E-BULLETIN, distributed through the generous support of Steiner Binoculars as a service to active and concerned birders, those dedicated to the joys of birding and the protection of birds and their habitats.

Defenders of Wildlife last month drew attention to the predicament of Ivory Gulls in light of global warming trends. Apparently the wholesale retreat of ocean pack ice from shore is an immediate threat to the gulls, a species that depends entirely on edges of sea ice to find food. Moreover, the disappearance of natural barriers that keep the Ivory Gulls safe at their inland breeding sites seems to be an additional problem. Their isolated inland nesting havens - usually outcroppings of barren rock surrounded by ice and snow - can now no longer keep predators (e.g., arctic foxes) away.

Chris Haney, chief scientist for Defenders of Wildlife and co-author of the BNA account for Ivory Gull, stressed that there are quite possibly fewer Ivory Gulls in the North American population today than there are of the better known and more widely recognized Polar Bear.

The Ivory Gull inhabits remote islands and coastal zones of Alaska (non-breeding), Canada, Greenland, Norway, and Russia. In the early 1970s, aerial surveys of wintering habitats in Canada and Greenland made estimates (possibly inflated) of as many as 35,000 birds. Recent surveys suggest that the population has dropped dramatically. Eastern Canadian populations may have dropped by 75 percent from 1993, and by 85 percent from the 1980s when the Canadian population was thought to be about 2,400 birds. The latest Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) survey came up with only 200 Ivory Gulls, a population drop of 90 percent!

In 2006, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) designated the Ivory Gull as near threatened, and Canada listed the bird as a species of special concern under its Species at Risk Act (SARA). Accurate surveys of Ivory Gulls are urgently needed in Canada, Greenland, Norway, and Russia, especially given the suspected free-fall in Canada.

WHOOPING CRANE: NEWS FROM FLORIDA

On the night of 1 February tragedy struck when almost all of this past year's young cranes were killed in storms. The cranes were being kept in a seasonal enclosure at the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge near Crystal River, Florida, when violent storms hit the region. On 1 February thunderstorms and at least one tornado in central Florida caused widespread damage and killed 19 people.



For the past half dozen years, Whooping Cranes hatched in captivity have been raised at the Necedah NWR in central Wisconsin. They have then been taught, using ultralight aircraft to guide them, to follow a new and novel migration route to Florida. Eventually, the birds learn to migrate on their own, north in the spring and south in the fall.

The various groups and agencies working on the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership have seen the size of the crane flock grow to 81 birds, counting last fall's latest arrivals, so the loss of 17 of the most recent 18-member cohort was a real tragedy.

For more details, see the Operation Migration field journal, especially the early February entries:

<http://www.operationmigration.org/>

Forty-second Annual Spring Bird Count Saturday, April 28, 2007

All BAS members and friends are encouraged to join us for the 42nd 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 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 birds at your feeders and call in your report. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks will surely reward those who take the time to watch at home!

We will compile our list totals at the end of the day and swap stories about the day's exciting sightings and adventures. The compilation will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Reid's house at 2616 Mountain Brook Parkway, Mountain Brook; phone: 879-1935.

Directions to Elberta's house: from the intersection of US 280 and Shades Creek Parkway near Colonial Brookwood Village, proceed east on Shades Creek for about 0.25 miles. Continue straight at the intersection with Cahaba Road when Shades Creek becomes Mountain Brook Parkway. The Reid driveway is the first one on the left past Overhill Road; there is parking along Mountain Brook Parkway.

Greg Harber,

For Bird Counts committee

.....
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).

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

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.

Birmingham Audubon Society *AOO7XCH8

April 2007

- 1 *Flicker Flashes* articles due, May/June issue
- 7 BAS Sanctuary Workday (1/2 day)
- 10 Conservation Committee meeting 7:00 p.m.
- 14 Family Bird Walk -Birmingham Zoo 7:30 a.m.
- 20-22 AOS Spring meeting - Dauphin Island, AL
- 26 Board Meeting, (BZA) 5:45 p.m.
General Meeting, BZA 7:00 p.m.
"Members Favorite Slides"
- 28 42nd Annual BAS Spring Bird Count

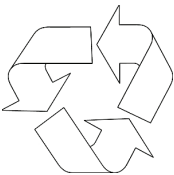
May 2007

- 4-6 North Alabama Birding Festival, Decatur, AL
- 10-13 30th Annual Audubon Mountain Workshop – Mentone, AL
- 19 BAS Field Trip and Campout, Coleman Lake, Talladega N.F.
- 19 Bird Walk for the sight-impaired at Birmingham Botanical Gardens 8:00am

Birmingham, Audubon Society
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