

Flicker Flashes

Published by
The Birmingham Audubon Society

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

Audubon Teaches Nature Return of the Spring Migrants

Presented by Greg Harber
Sunday, April 13, 2014, 2 P.M.
Alabama Wildlife Center Auditorium

As I write, it seems as though the last vestiges of a long and cold winter are finally beginning to wane. Bloodroot and daffodils are pushing upward toward the sunshine, waterfowl have begun their annual retreat back north and frogs have begun to vocalize, so spring cannot be far behind.

Early reports from the coast whet our appetite as the first purple martins and swallow-tailed kites have arrived on the scene. And so here in Birmingham, we eagerly anticipate the arrival of our favorite birds, whether they are warblers, vireos, tanagers or hawks. While it may seem that spring migration is a chaotic, disorderly affair, in reality it follows a fairly organized script. This program will offer you some insights as to when to expect which species at

your backyard feeder, water feature or any number of local parks.

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.

Weather-permitting we'll enjoy a nature walk after the program so be sure to bring your binoculars.



Nothern Parula and Tent Caterpillars

Next Month's seminar:

Butterflies - Nature's Bejeweled Winged Wonders

Sunday, May 4, 2014 - Time 1:00 P.M. - Vitaly Charney, Guest Speaker (OMIC)

New Book Coming from Doug Tallamy **Former Featured Speaker at Birmingham Audubon's Annual Banquet**

A home garden is often seen as separate from the natural world surrounding it. In truth, it is actually just one part of a larger landscape made up of many living layers. And the replacement of the rich layers of native flora with turf grass greatly diminishes a garden's biological diversity and ecological function.

The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden seeks to reverse this trend by showing gardeners how to create a landscape that is full of life. Written by Rick Darke and Douglas W. Tallamy, two of the most important voices in sustainability and horticulture, it is the definitive guide to designing a beautiful, biodiverse home garden. The authors first explain each layer of the landscape and what role the plants within them play in the larger environment, from provid-

ing berries for birds, food for bugs, or a place for bees to pollinate. The authors then put this information into context and offer design strategies to implement into a home garden. Helpful charts offer suggested plants, including natives and non-natives, for each region.

Douglas W. Tallamy's award-winning Bringing Nature Home revealed the pressing need for a biodiverse home landscape. In a gorgeously illustrated, inspirational, and practical way, The Living Landscape supports the important message by showing gardeners how to make it happen.

Doug Tallamy was the featured speaker at Birmingham Audubon's Annual Banquet in December 2012.

The book is expected to arrive in stores on June 11, 2014.

Source: Timber Press

April Field Trip Tuskegee National Forest

Saturday April 5, 2014 - 7 A.M.

The Tuskegee National Forest of central Alabama is the smallest forest in the National Forest system and the destination of Birmingham Audubon on its April 5, 2014 field trip. The forest incorporates a diverse mix of habitats including mixed pine and hardwood groves, upland sand hills, broad ridges and floodplains with stream terraces within its 11,252 acres. Uhapee, Tsinia, Choctafaula and Hodnett Creeks all flow through the forest.

A portion of the Bartram Trail also winds through the forest. The trail approximates the supposed path that naturalist William Bartram may have used during his exploration of the region. The list of birds you can see here is quite impressive, as is the unusual variety of plant species. We will be visiting several sites in the forest that have been designated as sites for the Black Belt Birding Trail.

MEETING PLACE: Hoover McDonald's on U.S. 31
(across from the Galleria)
Address: 1731 Montgomery Hwy, Hoover AL 35244
Please park in the lot across from McDonald's.

TRAVEL PLANS: We will depart at 7 a.m. for the drive down Interstate 65 south to Montgomery (80 miles, 1 hr, 15 minutes. Approximate travel time.). Proceeding then onto Interstate 85 north (toward Atlanta) to Exit 42 Wire Road (42 miles, 45 minute approximate travel time) Turn right (south) onto AL 186 and travel for a half mile. Then turn right (west) onto Forest Service Road 900 to the trailhead for Pleasant Hill Trail. At that point, we will reconvene and begin our exploration of the Tuskegee. For those who live south of the Birmingham area or reside in the Montgomery area, you may meet us at the Pleasant Hill trailhead around 9 a.m.

As of this writing, there is the possibility of catered barbeque picnic lunches being furnished through a local eatery.

Please continue to check our website or our Facebook page for updates on lunch plans.

Springtime weather can change rapidly, so rain gear may be welcome. Bring water, snacks, your binoculars and cameras. Make sure you have a full tank of gas.

DESTINATIONS:

Pleasant Hill Trailhead, Bartram Trail, Tsinia Wildlife Viewing Area, Taska Recreation Area, Okhusee Thloko and Okhusee Chutkee fishing ponds, and Lake Tuskegee in the municipality of Tuskegee-time permitting.

ADDRESS: Tuskegee National Forest
125 National Forest Road 949
Tuskegee, AL 36083

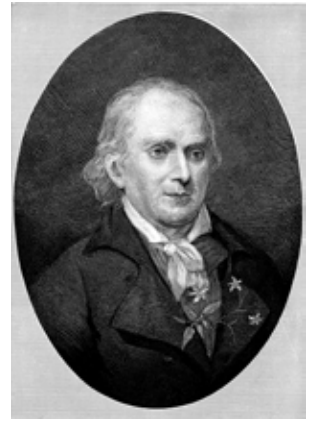
PHONE: 334-727-2652

GPS: N32.46833 W85.57703

Websites:

www.fs.usda.gov/alabama/aboutforests/districts?cid=stelprb5152167
www.alabamabirdingtrails.com/sites/tuskegee-national-forest
www.birminghamaudubon.org

TRIP LEADER: Please contact Maureen Shaffer 205-822-8728 (home) or 205-222-2662 (cell) for updates or additional details.



William Bartram, for whom the trail within the Tuskegee National Forest is named.
Photo - Thinkstock by Getty



Birmingham Audubon April Program Membership Appreciation Program and Pot Luck Supper

April 24, 2014 - 6:30 P.M. (Fourth Thursday in April)
Ireland Room, Botanical Gardens

Please join Birmingham Audubon for the First Annual Membership Appreciation Program April 24 at 6:30 p.m. in the Birmingham Botanical Gardens Ireland Room. This program is designed to honor you, our members, as we consider both the fun we have had and our many accomplishments during the last year.

Bring your favorite dish for the evening, and Birmingham Audubon will provide drinks, a meat and vegetarian entree and plates, etc. We also invite members to share a story that might qualify you or someone else for induction into our "Birders Hall of Fame." The "Birders Hall of Fame" is a strictly an oral tradition, so any exploits shared will not actually be enshrined or recorded. You will, however, have to attend to hear these gems for the first time, first hand.



April is also our annual membership meeting during which we elect our officers and complete a brief agenda of annual business. The evening will include very little work, but lots of fun and fellowship.

We are accepting digital images of Birmingham Audubon programs and activities for potential inclusion in our un-narrated slide presentation to be shown during this event. Please submit your electronic images for consideration to Hans Paul, chair of the Membership Committee, (cooterp14@gmail.com) by April 15, 2014.

Birmingham Audubon will celebrate its rich tradition of shared interests and appreciation for each other.

Alabama's Biodiversity - Inspiring a New Century of Discovery Alabama's Citizens Pay Tribute to Dr. Edward O. Wilson

Wednesday, April 23, 2014 - 6 P.M.
Concert Hall, Moody Music Building
The University of Alabama

Citizens from throughout Alabama will join together for an evening of storytelling and sharing discoveries about Alabama's natural world to honor Alabama native son and internationally recognized naturalist and biodiversity expert Dr. Edward O. Wilson. The tribute is part of Edward O. Wilson Week at The University of Alabama April 21-25.

"Alabama's Biodiversity-Inspiring a New Century of Discovery" will take place Wednesday, April 23 at 6 p.m. in the Concert Hall of the Moody Music Building on the UA campus.

Frog callers, butterfly experts, and other naturalists will share their experiences and expertise in this fun-filled and information packed night to honor Dr. Edward O. Wilson. Wilson is well known for his passions for promoting and protecting Alabama's impressive biodiversity and in supporting Alabama's future naturalists. Indeed, he frequently returns to his home state for field work and explorations. Our speakers will include both professional researchers and lay naturalists who will focus on those

two passions and how they have given them a greater appreciation of Alabama's natural environment

The event is open to the public. Admission is a minimum \$10 donation to the Edward O. Wilson Biodiversity Fellowship program at The University of Alabama. This program, established by Wilson, provides support to young scientists to conduct field work in biodiversity throughout Alabama.

The evening will also feature the presentation of a special gift to Wilson from the children of Alabama.

Edward O. Wilson Week will also include the Edward O. Wilson Biodiversity Symposium, in which international biodiversity experts will join Wilson for three days of presentations and forums on the state and future of biodiversity on our planet. To register for the symposium and learn more about Edward O. Wilson week, visit: biodiversity.ua.edu on the Web.



SoSo for the Record

Sightings January 25 through February 26, 2014

According to the "National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds," some Baltimore Orioles may winter at feeders in the southern United States. This came true for two lucky, local bird watchers. Lisa and Lyndon Churchill reported one at their feeder in Hoover on January 31, 2014. Their friend and Birmingham Audubon member, Martha Coghlan, helped to determine that it was a female. A second sighting occurred on February 11 at the home of Dale Carruthers in Mountain Brook. This species of oriole is largely an insect eater, but they are known to favor raisins, orange slices and suet at bird feeders.

Other Sightings:

- 1/25 **Pileated Woodpecker**; Hoover, pecking on a tree stump, possibly looking for carpenter ants (CC, MC).
- 2/1 **Lapland Longspur (175); Rusty Blackbird (500)**; Lauderdale County (GJ).
- 2/3 **White-winged Scoter (37)**; Guntersville (SM, JA).
American White Pelican (80); Weiss Lake, Cherokee County (JL).
- 2/10 **Ring-billed Gull (400)**; Cherokee County (JL).
- 2/20 **American White Pelican (70); Gadwall (75); Brewers Blackbird (7)**; Shelby County. The pelicans were flying north over Highway 280 (HW, AC).
- 2/23 **Eastern Bluebird; Pine Siskin; American Goldfinch**; Included in a list for her Great Backyard Bird Count list (IM)
- 2/26 **Winter Wren (2)**; Vestavia (MH).

Contributors:

Jane Allen
 Carl and Maryann Carson
 Dale Carruthers
 Alice Christenson
 Lyndon and Lisa Churchill
 Martha Coghlan
 Matt Hunter
 John Imhof
 Greg Jackson
 Sue Moske
 Inez McCollum
 Harriett Wright



White-winged Scoter - Thinkstock by Getty Images

Please send sightings for April Flicker Flashes at least five days before the April 1, 2014 deadline to Ann Miller, 520 Yorkshire Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209 annmiller520@aol.com

ATTENTION • ATTENTION

Please help Birmingham Audubon communicate electronically with you. If you are a National Audubon member please go to www.audubon.org, and at the top of the page click on "Member Center." Then please enter the requested information under either option B or C and then hit the submit button. This will provide Birmingham Audubon with your email address. You may also simply send us your name and email address to basoffice@birminghamaudubon.org

Be assured that your email address will never be shared or sold.

Watch for these Migrants!

Get prepared with binoculars and backyard feeders - the migrants will soon be here. The migrants have been wintering in locations to our south, such as Mexico, South America and Florida and soon will be flying north over Birmingham. Some will spend the summer with us and others will fly further north. Be ready to welcome back our summer birds as well as opportunity to see some birds not often seen.

It is always weather dependant, but usually around early April, look for purple martins, Northern rough-winged swallows, barn swallows, yellow throated warblers, Northern parula, and prothonotary warblers,



Yellow throated warbler - Thinkstock by Getty Images

In mid to late April, you may see eastern kingbirds, great crested flycatchers, orchard orioles, cattle egrets, yellow crowned night-heron, and raptors.



Blue grosbeak - Thinkstock by Getty Images

And also look for these beautiful birds: rose-breasted grosbeak, blue grosbeak, indigo bunting, and bobolinks.



Bobolink - Thinkstock by Getty Images



**BIRMINGHAM
AUDUBON**

**INVITES YOU TO JOIN THEIR
WILDLIFE AND EDUCATIONAL EXPEDITION
TO
THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS**



Swallow-Tailed Gull photo by Greg Harber during his May 2013 Galapagos Islands excursion

**10-DAY DISCOVERY EXPEDITION
ESCORTED BY GREG HARBER**

Departs 30 MAY, 2015

Projected costs: \$5650 per person on the Dolphin Deck, \$5250 per person on the Booby Deck and \$4750 per person on the Iguana Deck

Cabins will be assigned on a first registered first served basis

The Birmingham Audubon Society invites you to join Greg Harber on his return expedition to Ecuador and the enchanted Galapagos Islands. This expedition has been designed with the objective of seeing as many of the unique inhabitants of these enchanted islands as possible. Based on one of Ecoventura's 20-passenger motor-yachts, custom-designed exclusively for Galapagos excursions, with excellent food, Galapagos park certified naturalists, and crew, we'll travel by night to maximize our enjoyment of these ruggedly beautiful islands. Following our arrival in Ecuador we'll fly to and from the Galapagos, focusing our time on the islands and their fascinating natural history.

Please call World Discovery Safaris at 205-972-8733 or send an e-mail to wds2830@bellsouth.net with any questions and/or to receive a detailed itinerary and registration form.

Monarchs, Milkweed, and Alabama

By Paulette Haywood Ogard

Every day seems to bring more bad news about monarch butterflies. Populations have plummeted, and although the species is not endangered, its awe-inspiring annual migration to and from Mexico may be.

No single event is responsible for this decline. Degradation of the over-wintering forests in Mexico has long been a concern, but changes in agricultural practices along the major monarch flyway through the mid-western United States have also taken a huge toll. Monarch caterpillars feed on milkweed plants, and the Midwest was full of them. However, as herbicide use has increased with the advent of herbicide-resistant crops, and traditionally fallow fields have been planted with corn, the milkweeds that traditionally thrived in those areas are all but gone. Add a two-year stretch of bad spring weather, and an almost perfect storm of catastrophic events is the result. The number of monarchs moving north out of Mexico this spring is the smallest ever recorded.

Help may be on the way. Conservation groups across the country are focusing their resources on the problem, and at February's North American Leaders Summit, the presidents of the United States and Mexico, along with the Prime Minister of Canada, agreed to set up a task force charged with devising a plan to save the migration.

But what can Alabamians do on a local level? We need to continue our efforts to protect native habitats, and we need to create habitat in our own yards by planting milkweed. Although our state is not in the major monarch flyway, milk-



Monarch butterfly on Liatris - © Photo by Sara Bright

The number of monarchs moving North out of Mexico this spring is the smallest ever recorded.



Monarch caterpillar on Asclepias tuberosa - © Photo by Sara Bright

weed-planting efforts are still important. Some monarchs do migrate through Alabama each year, and small groups spend the winter along the Gulf Coast. As soon as spring arrives, females are searching for milkweed so that their life cycle can continue.

Not all milkweeds are created equal. Tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*), a native of Mexico, is often available in the nursery trade, but for our area, the verdict is out as to whether it is ultimately helpful to the migrating population or dan-

gerously invasive. So why take a chance? Plant native Alabama species like butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) and swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*). These milkweeds are garden-worthy and nectar-rich. Even if monarchs do not find your plants, their flowers will feed

many butterflies and other important pollinators. If your favorite nurseries don't stock these milkweeds, ask them to begin - ask them every time you go. Demand will create supply. For now, local native plant nurseries are a good source as is the Birmingham Botanical Gardens' Spring Plant Sale (April 10-13, 2014).

So plant milkweeds for monarchs. Make sure that there are spring and fall-flowering plants for nectar too. And remember that, while creating "way stations" for migrating monarchs is impor-

tant, so is the development of "homesteads" for other butterfly species. Maintain native host and nectar plants for our resident butterflies to sustain healthy population levels for all.

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: _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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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

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