

Flicker Flashes

Published by
The Birmingham Audubon Society

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

Audubon Teaches Nature
Butterflies
Nature's Bejeweled Winged Wonders
Presented by Vitaly Charny, Guest Speaker
Sunday, May 4, 2014, 1 P.M.
Alabama Wildlife Center Auditorium

Our final seminar in the 2013-2014 Audubon Teaches Nature series features one of our more popular subjects and speakers. Butterflies, those winged jewels of spring and summer skies, are the topic and Vitaly Charny, a veteran of this series and the Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop, is the speaker. Anyone who has ever experienced a slow day of birding and instead turned to watching butterflies will appreciate this seminar.

A wide variety of colorful butterflies can be found in Alabama, and late spring is the perfect season to watch for these winged beauties as they flutter from flower to flower. Fritillaries are strikingly beautiful, and cloudless sulphurs dart about the bright landscape. Snout butterflies have a distinctive profile; they are easy to spot. So, too, are the tiny eastern tailed-blue and the common buckeye. Come learn

more about these and other butterflies found at Oak Mountain State Park. A butterfly walk will follow this program. Please note the earlier time for this event.

Be sure to come early and enjoy some refreshments and conversation in the Observation Room at the Alabama Wildlife Center. 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.



Gulf fritillary

Birmingham Audubon Urban Wildlife Habitat Initiative:
Avondale Park - Rose and Habitat Garden

The Birmingham Audubon Conservation Committee has listed Avondale Park as one of our four priority public spaces for projects and outreach through the Urban Wildlife Habitat Initiative. Other sites will include East Lake Park and Railroad Park in Jefferson County and Limestone Park in Shelby County.

The committee recently received approval from the Birmingham Park & Recreation Board to work in partnership with Avondale Samaritan Place to restore the historic Rose Garden and add native plants to empty beds to appeal to butterflies, finches, warblers, hummingbirds and other species. Friends of Avondale Park and the Forest Park-South Avondale Neighborhood Association have also endorsed the project.

During the next few months, the project team will complete planning for activities ranging from improving the conditions of the garden and planting to training opportunities for volunteers. The costs of the project will be supported by donors. If you would like to contribute to the fund for this project, please contact Suzanne Langley, Executive Director, at 205-714-8227 or suzannelangley@birminghamaudubon.org. Please forward gifts to: Birmingham Audubon, Attn: Avondale Rose & Habitat Garden, 200 19th Street North, Birmingham, AL 35203.

May Half-Day Field Trip Turkey Creek Nature Preserve

Saturday May 3, 2014 - 8 A.M.

The Turkey Creek Nature Preserve, a site on the Appalachian Highlands portion of the Alabama Birding Trail, is home to some of Alabama's most outstanding natural beauty and some of its more interesting fauna. The creek, a tributary of the Black Warrior River, helps to create biodiverse habitats that provide for a multitude of bird species. Within the creek, one can find three endangered endemic fish: vermilion darters, watercress darters, and rush darters. Turkey Creek is the only place in the entire world where one can see vermilion darters.

During our excursion to the preserve, we hope to encounter spring migrants such as warblers, vireos, tanagers, and flycatchers. Year-round residents of the area include herons, kingfishers and hawks.

Please meet at Turkey Creek Preserve Nature Center at 8 a.m. The center is located at 3906 Turkey Creek Road, Pinson, Alabama 35126. We will be met there by Charles Yeager, manager of Turkey Creek Nature Preserve, who will provide

us with us a history of the area and answer our questions.



Turkey Creek

DIRECTIONS: From Birmingham take Interstate 20 East/Interstate-59 North. Exit at Tallapoosa Street (exit #128). Keep right at the fork to merge onto Highway 79/Tallapoosa Street. Continue on these roads for approximately 11.9 miles. Turn left onto Narrows Road (at the intersection of Hwy 75). Turn right onto Turkey Creek Road.

This is a half day trip; there are places to picnic, if desired. There are four trails open on the preserve for hiking. Bring water or snacks

TRIP LEADER: Susan Barrow 205-942-8667 or 205-253-8667

Living River Canoe and Field Trip

Saturday, May 17, 2014

Living River, the site of Birmingham Audubon's May canoe and field trip, is a 440 acre retreat and camping facility being built by a consortium of Central Alabama Presbyterian churches along the Cahaba River near Montevallo. The plan is to bird and canoe a four mile stretch of the river within the confines of the retreat. **However if the conditions of the river present above normal hazards, the canoe portion of the trip will be cancelled.** If you do not want to canoe or if dangerous conditions exist on the river, we can explore the trails and rolling grasslands also found within the retreat's grounds.

The retreat was designated as a stop on the West Alabama Birding trail due to the excellent and varied habitats for birds found on site. It counts among its year round residents the following bird species: American goldfinch, eastern bluebird, eastern towhee, field sparrow, chipping sparrow, multiple hawk species and wild turkey. During the spring and summer months, the area attracts prairie warbler, yellow-breasted chat, gray catbird, common yellowthroat, wood thrush, black and white warbler and several species of vireo. Mississippi Kites breed nearby, so keep your eyes on the sky.

THE CANOE PORTION: Robert Hay, Associate Executive Presbyter for Nurture, and the staff of Living River have made 12-14 canoes available for us to use, or you may bring your own canoe or kayak. Life preservers will also be

provided. These are being offered for free, but it is suggested a donation be made to the retreat. The provided canoes should cover 28 persons at 2 persons per canoe. Put in and take out are easy. **Please register with the trip leader either by phone or e-mail so that she will have a general idea regarding the number of people wishing to participation in this event.** The trip leader may be contacted via the following: sabarow@att.net or 205-942-8667 or 205-253-8667.

MEETING PLACE: Meet at 7 a.m. at the McDonald's Restaurant on US 31 (across from The Galleria) 1731 S Montgomery Hwy. Hoover AL 35224.

TRAVEL PLANS: We will be traveling approximately 36 miles southwest of Birmingham. We will take Interstate 65 South to Exit #234 (Shelby County Airport) and merge left onto County Road 12. We will follow that road until it dead ends in approximately 1.5 miles. Turn right on County Road 22, and proceed for 9.6 miles until that road also dead ends. Then turn right onto County Road 10 and follow it for 5.5 miles. At that point the road will junction with County Road 251. Continue on County Road 10 for 0.8 miles to Living River Parkway. Turn right and proceed on the Parkway to the complex.

GPS 33.1169544,-87.025851

TRIP LEADER: Susan Barrow 205-942-8667 or 205-253-8667

Summer Field Trips

Kites, Wood Storks and More!

Saturday, July 26, 2014 (Autaugaville and Prattville)

Saturday, August 2, 2014 (Lakeland Farms and Greensboro Area)

Once again Birmingham Audubon is offering two summer field trips in search of kites, storks and scissor-tailed flycatchers. All three species are regular late summer visitors to the Tombigbee and Alabama River systems in the upper coastal plain of Alabama. If you have never witnessed the spectacle of Mississippi and swallow-tailed kites feeding on the wing, then you are missing one of the most spectacular aerial shows on earth. Their acrobatic maneuvers while catching insects in flight is truly spectacular. And speaking of eating, another bonus on these outings is the food, Chef Lee's in Autaugaville and the Pie Lab in Greensboro – or perhaps the Faunsdale Bar and Grill in Faunsdale may be our destinations for lunch.



Swallow-tailed kite - Photo by Greg Harber

Hopefully, we also will see wood storks on these outings; their numbers fluctuate from year to year but hopefully we'll have at least some to view – particularly on the Lakeland Farms-Greensboro trip. Wood storks have to be one of the homeliest creatures the good Lord ever made, but in the air their striking black and white forms are beautiful sights indeed. You won't want to miss these field trips so mark your calendars now and be prepared to brave the summer heat!

HERE ARE THE DETAILS OF BOTH TRIPS:

SATURDAY, JULY 26, 2014 TRIP: We will head to the Prattville/Autaugaville area as we have in previous years. Kites are wide ranging species, but based on our past success in finding them on previous trips I feel confident that we'll observe them on this trip at some point. As a bonus, the areas east of Autaugaville have yielded sporadic sightings of painted buntings and lark sparrows in the past.

OUR DEPARTURE POINT: The McDonald's Restaurant on US 31 in Hoover located at 1731 S Montgomery Highway (US 31) across from the Galleria. Plan to depart at 7 a.m. and caravan to our destination from there. **We will have lunch at Chef Lee's in Autaugaville** to take a break from the heat.

After lunch for those who wish to continue their summer adventure, we'll drive to the south side of the Alabama River where we will check a few sites that have yielded kites in the past. The picturesque "ghost town" at Robinson's Switch Road will be worth a short visit as well, so bring your cameras!

If the necessary arrangements can be made, we'll visit a heron rookery in Pine Level, south of Montgomery off US Hwy 231, at the end of the day. We'll have **dinner at Red's Little School House Restaurant in Grady at 5:30**, and then depart for the rookery from there. If you participate in this optional side trip expect a very long day in the field as we will be at the rookery until sunset. The return trip to Birmingham is about a two-hour drive.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 2, 2014 TRIP: The ever-popular Galleria McDonald's, located at 1731 S Montgomery Highway (US 31) across from the Galleria, will serve as our departure point for this trip as well. Plan to leave at 7 a.m. again. We will caravan west on Interstate 59/20 to exit #97 and head south on Alabama Hwy 5 to Centerville/Brent, where we'll make a rest stop before continuing to Lakeland Farms and the catfish ponds south of Greensboro. We will have lunch either at the Faunsdale Bar and Grill in Faunsdale or the Pie Lab in Greensboro depending on which arrangements can be made in advance for a group our size. A stop at Perry Lakes Park to watch herons and egrets returning to their roost at day's end is a likely bet too.

Remember, these trips will be daylong affairs so plan accordingly and bring plenty of drinks and snacks in addition to a full tank of gas, insect repellent, rain gear, and appropriate summer attire.

TRIP LEADER FOR BOTH OF THESE TRIPS:
Greg Harber, 251-2133 or gharber@mindspring.com

Your fearless trip leader for these summer trips has been known to arrange additional trips on short notice, so please remember to monitor the Birmingham Audubon website, Facebook page, Twitter feed and the BASbirding Yahoo group for up-to-date summer trip plans!



SoSo for the Record

Sightings March 7 through March 26, 2014

On March 7 Steve Mc Connell made a trip to the Winifred Thomas Research Center in Madison County hoping to locate a previously seen Smith's longspur. In this endeavor he was, much to his disappointment, unsuccessful. Then he spotted a large raptor flying overhead. After examining the facial and tail pattern, he realized it was not a buteo or falcon. The bird cooperated by soaring close enough for a view through the scope, and he was able to identify it as a Northern goshawk!

There are very few Northern goshawk records in Alabama according to Steve, this was a fantastic birding day!

Other Sightings:

- 3/8 **Brewer's Blackbird (20)**; Irondale (GH).
- 3/12 **Common Loon; Louisiana Waterthrush**; Oak Mountain State Park (HW,AC).
- 3/15 **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**; McCalla (SH).
- 3/16 **Great Egret**; Fultondale (DH).
- 3/18 **Northern Shoveler (4)**; Fultondale (DH).
- 3/19 **Eared Grebe**; Lauderdale County (DS).
- 3/22 **Eurasian Collared- Dove; White-crowned Sparrow (4)**; Shelby County (HW,AC).
- 3/23 **Spotted Sandpiper**; Shades Creek in Homewood (RR,SR).
- 3/26 **Red-necked Grebe**; Madison County (SM,JA).

Contributors:

Jane Allen
 Alice Christenson
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Northern goshawk - Thinkstock by Getty Images

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

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

Summer Birds in Alabama

Now that the spring migration has concluded, summer offers us the chance to focus our birding efforts on the species that breed here in Alabama. Three species which we hope and/or expect to find on our field trips are cerulean warbler (June), great egret (July) and wood stork (August).

Although there were more than the usual number of cerulean warbler reports in April, this species is an uncommon breeder in the forests of north Alabama, where it prefers tall deciduous trees with an open understory.



Cerulean warbler - Wikipedia

Great egrets are widespread and can be found throughout the state. Look for these large long-legged waders in shallow water, where they feed mainly on small fish, but also on amphibians, reptiles, small mammals and birds.



Great egret - Photo by Greg Harber

The black-and-white plumage of a wood stork is striking when viewed in flight, and its grace is a joy to behold. Look for these magnificent birds on our two trips to the Black Belt region, although they do occasionally occur in Birmingham in late summer, too.



Wood stork - Photo by Greg Harber



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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.

June Field Trip

Saturday, June 21, 2014

Paint Rock River, Larkin Fork and Jackson County, AL

Birmingham Audubon kicks off its summer field trips with the ever-popular trip to scenic Jackson County in northeast Alabama, where we'll spend the morning birding at a couple of sites along the Larkin Fork of the Paint Rock River. One of the target birds for the trip will be cerulean warblers, which breed in the area, along with the usual species common to forested, riparian zone habitat. American redstarts and worm-eating warblers are a good possibility, too. Those attending this trip in 2013 will recall the fantastic birding opportunities afforded to us during our visit to the Graham Farm and Nature Center, and we'll attempt to make similar arrangements for a visit this year as well.

Following a picnic lunch in the field, we'll head slightly east to the Skyline Wildlife Management Area. Here we'll continue searching for species typical of the habitat found there. Certainly indigo buntings will be plentiful. There are several other birding options in Jackson County that we can explore as well as time and weather permit. If the day is sunny and warm, we'll also enjoy lots of butterfly sightings so bring your butterfly field guides.



Graham Farm, Paint Rock River Valley

Bring bird and butterfly guides on this trip!

TRAVEL PLANS: (Note the earlier than usual departure time). Depart at 6:30 a.m. from the Birmingham Botanical Gardens (2612 Lane Park Rd, Mountain Brook, AL 35223) parking lot. We will carpool and caravan north on Alabama Hwy 79 (Tallapoosa Street) through

Guntersville to the town of Gurley, located on US Hwy 72 east of Huntsville. We'll reconvene about 8:30 a.m. at the Hardee's in Gurley, on the main highway. Those wishing to meet us directly at the Hardee's are welcome to do so; an advance notice to the trip leader is appreciated. Once we've had a short rest break, we'll depart for our first birding stop located up County Road 65 almost to the state line.

This trip is one of the more distant trips Birmingham Audubon takes so plan accordingly and bring plenty of drinks and snacks in addition to your picnic lunch, a full tank of gas, insect repellent, rain gear, and appropriate summer attire.

TRIP LEADER: Greg Harber, 251-2133 or gharber@mindspring.com



Cerulean warbler - Wikipedia

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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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I want to be contacted to learn about volunteer activities
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- 8-13 **Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop - Mentone, Alabama**
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Summer 2014

- June 21 Paint Rock River, Larkin Fork and Jackson County Field Trip
- July 26 Autaugaville and Prattville Field Trip
- August 2 Lakeland Farms and Greensboro area Field Trip



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