

# Flicker Flashes

Published by  
The Birmingham Audubon Society

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

Audubon Teaches Nature

## Freshwater Snails of the Cahaba River

Presented by Lori Tolley-Jordan, Guest Speaker

Sunday, March 22, 2015 - 2 P.M. - Oak Mountain Interpretive Center Auditorium

The speaker for our March Audubon Teaches Nature program is Lori Tolley-Jordan, a faculty member in the Biology Department at Jacksonville State University. Her presence at this month's seminar is the direct result of a chance encounter at Oak Mountain State Park when she was doing aquatic invertebrate surveys

Aquatic systems in North America have the greatest gastropod diversity in the world, with 675 species in 14 families. In the United States, 516 gastropod species have been reported, and 313 are found in the Southeastern U.S. The Mobile River Basin is the epicenter of this diversity (118 species). The Cahaba River has the highest recorded diversity of extant pleu-



Snail shells - Thinkstock by Getty Images

rocerid snails - 20 of 47 species, and all genera found in the Mobile River Basin. This program will examine not only the snails' ecology, but also how they contribute to the river's biodiversity, its structure and its function.

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 lingering winter species, with an outside possibility of finding an early spring migrant or two.

**Next "Audubon Teaches Nature" April Seminar:  
Native Plants for Wildlife: Attracting Birds to your Garden -  
Sunday, April 12, 2015 - 2 p.m. - Michelle Reynolds, Guest Speaker**

Coming in April -



### Two New Half Day Field Trips!

Ruffner Mountain - April 4

Vulcan Trail - April 11

(Mark your calendars now!)

Look for details in  
April Flicker Flashes!

# March 2015 - Half-Day Field Trip Limestone Park and Ebenezer Ecological Preserve

Saturday, March 7, 2015 - 7 A.M.

Join Birmingham Audubon for a half-day field trip to Limestone Park, a City of Alabaster park, on March 7, 2015. Participants will get a chance to see grassland and wetland birds such as meadowlarks, blue winged teal and snipe. Learn about ongoing Birmingham Audubon conservation projects in the park as well. Limestone Park is both a designated site on the Appalachian Highlands Birding Trail and a Birmingham Audubon Urban Bird Habitat Initiative site.

We also will visit the Ebenezer Swamp Ecological Preserve, 60 acres of upland hardwood swamp located on Spring Creek near Montevallo. The preserve has a boardwalk which meanders deep into the swamp and is home to such avian species as woodpeckers, songbirds, and long-legged waders. In addition, spring migrants and lingering winter visitors may also be present. The preserve is also a designated site on the Appalachian Highlands Birding Trail.

**MEETING PLACE:** The McDonald's in Hoover that is adjacent to the Galleria (1731 Montgomery Hwy South 35244). Please park in the lot across from the McDonald's.

**TRIP LEADERS:** Ken Wills, Matt Hunter

**TRIP LEADERS PHONE CONTACT:**  
205-515-9412 Ken Wills

**WEBSITE:**  
[www.alabamabirdingtrails.com/sites/limestone-park/](http://www.alabamabirdingtrails.com/sites/limestone-park/)  
[www.alabamabirdingtrails.com/sites/ebenezer-swamp/](http://www.alabamabirdingtrails.com/sites/ebenezer-swamp/)



Eastern Meadowlark -  
Thinkstock by Getty Images

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# All Day Field Trip Perry Lakes Park and Marion Fish Hatchery

Saturday, March 21, 2015 - 7 A.M.

Please make plans to travel with Birmingham Audubon on March 21 to Perry County, Alabama. Perry Lakes Park is the site of a swampy oxbow lake just off the Cahaba River. Lowland hardwood forest is the predominant vegetation type. The Park is located adjacent to the Marion Fish Hatchery operated by the Alabama Department of Conservation and contains numerous small ponds where various game fish species are raised for stocking.

We will visit the Fish Hatchery ponds first. Here we may see several species of waterfowl, swallows, kingfishers, herons and egrets. Following that, we will enter the park to look for early songbird migrants, waterfowl, and perhaps bald eagles. Viewing areas that we will explore will be the oxbow lake edges and trails in the park. There is also a unique opportunity for you who are not afraid of heights to climb the birding tower. At the top of the tower, you can look at the floodplain forest below and perhaps get a glimpse of the birds in the upper canopy. We will also walk down a short trail to visit the Nature Conservancy's Barton Beach, a large and picturesque sandbar on the Cahaba. If river conditions allow it, we will put a seine in the water and point out some of the common fish species native to the Cahaba. Finally, if we have time, we will make a brief stop at the Bibb County Fishing Lake on Highway 5 on our way back. Here, we will look again for early migrants.

Please meet at the Hoover McDonald's adjacent to the Galleria (173 Montgomery Hwy South). At 7 a.m. we will travel west on I-459, then west on I-20/59 to exit 97 (Caffee Junction). Here we head south on Hwy 5/US 11. In roughly 3 miles, Highway 5 turns to the south. We will proceed on Highway 5 to just south of Heiberger. Hwy 175 turns off to the left, and the Fish Hatchery will be roughly 4 miles down 175.

Please bring a picnic lunch and dress according to whatever early spring weather we may get. At this time of the year, some of the trails are likely to be a little muddy or have some standing water in places.

**TRIP LEADER:**  
Ken Marion;  
home - 969-3969,  
cell - 907-2774



## March Membership Program

# Imperiled Aquatic Critters in Alabama: Surprises Around Every Bend in the River

Presented by Dr. Bernie Kuhajda of the Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute  
Birmingham Botanical Gardens, East Room  
Thursday, March 19, 2015 - 7 P.M.

Alabama is home to the greatest freshwater aquatic biodiversity of any state in the country. Unfortunately, we also rank number one on the number of freshwater taxa that are extinct or imperiled. Over the last 25 years scientists have come to understand the habitats and distributions of a great many of these imperiled species, especially fishes, but they are continually surprised to find species in places where current knowledge indicates they are supposed to exist no longer. Recent genetic studies have also surprised us on how similar or different isolated populations of fishes may be.

Bernie Kuhajda has been an Aquatic Conservation Biologist at the Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute in Chattanooga, Tennessee for the last three years. Before that he was the Collections Manager of the University of Alabama



Dr. Bernie Kuhajda - Photo by Michelle Blackwood on Shades Creek

Ichthyological (Fish) Collection on the main campus in Tuscaloosa, which houses 100,000 jars and 1 million preserved specimens of fishes. Even though he has relocated to Tennessee, he continues studying freshwater fishes and cave organisms in Alabama, now for a total of 27 years, with an emphasis on imperiled species. Some of these include sturgeons, minnows, catfishes, cave fishes, darters, cave shrimps, and cave crayfishes. He continues to teach a variety of graduate-level biology courses at

The Gadsden Center, a branch campus of the University of Alabama. Bernie holds a B.A. in Chemistry and a B.S. and M.S. in Zoology from Southern Illinois University and a Ph.D. in Biology from the University of Alabama.

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

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## Spring Beginner Bird Walk Limestone Park in Alabaster

Sunday, March 29, 2015 - 2-4 P.M. - Meet at Limestone Park

Want to learn more about the birds that you have been seeing? The Beginner Bird Walks are designed to help you become a better birdwatcher. Families with children ages 5 and up, as well as adults without children, are invited to attend our Spring Beginner Bird Walk at Limestone Park. The park is an excellent place to see early spring migrants, ducks, grebes, and long-legged waders such as great blue herons. Birmingham Audubon members will be available to help you find and identify those birds and to share their spotting scopes for looks at the distant birds. Loaner binoculars will be provided for use during the walk. A parent or grandparent must accompany children.

One of Birmingham Audubon's Urban Bird Habitat Initiative projects is cultivating prairie at Limestone Park. Volunteers from both Birmingham Audubon and Hands on Birmingham work at tending the half-acre prairie demonstration plot installed by the City of Alabaster Public Works Department. The volunteers also work to control invasive plant species,

non-native fire ants and other threats to a healthy and balanced habitat.

### **Space is limited and reservations are required.**

Please call 205-714-8228 or email Helena Uber-Wamble at [huberwamble@birminghamaudubon.org](mailto:huberwamble@birminghamaudubon.org) to reserve your spot. Reservations accepted through Friday, March 27. Include in the message, your name, the number of adults and children in your party, phone number, and email address. After you are registered, you will receive an email confirmation.

### **DIRECTIONS TO LIMESTONE PARK:**

From Birmingham, drive south on I-65 to exit 238. From the exit take US 31 south for 4.2 miles. After passing Saginaw Pipe on the right, turn right onto a gravel road with a yellow pipe gate. The address is 2400 Highway 31 - South, Alabaster. Look for the new Limestone Park sign at the entrance.



## SoSo for the Record

Sightings December 29, 2014 through January 27, 2015

A male Bullock's Oriole was initially reported at a home in Montevallo on December 29, 2014 and was still there as of February 7, 2015. According to Steve McConnell, Alabama Rare Bird Alert reporter, this is the eleventh record for Alabama. The last record was in 2005. Thanks to Steve's generous hospitality, many visitors have been able to see this very rare bird in Alabama.

### Other Sightings:

- 1/1 **Tundra Swan (2);** Limestone County (HD,DB).
- 1/7 **Rough-legged Hawk ;** Wheeler Refuge (DC).
- 1/8 **Rufous Hummingbird (male);** Vestavia Hills (SK). Even though Mary Davis tried unsuccessfully to band the bird, she was able to help with its documentation.
- 1/24 **White-winged Scoter;** AOS boat trip (DS et al ).
- 1/25 **Hooded Warbler (male);** Linn Park (BA).

### Contributors:

Bianca Allen  
 Rick Bruer  
 Dwight Cooley  
 Mary Davis  
 Harry Dean  
 Steve McConnell  
 Damien Simbeck

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



Bullock's Oriole - Thinkstock by Getty Images



Hooded warbler - Thinkstock by Getty Images



Rough Legged Hawk - Thinkstock by Getty Images

## Birmingham Audubon 3rd in the Nation in Sponsoring Audubon Adventures

Birmingham Audubon is currently ranked third in the nation by National Audubon in sponsoring the Audubon Adventure program in classrooms. Audubon Adventures is an educational program focused on birds, bird habitats and conservation that is offered free to teachers each school year.

We began offering this program to about ten teachers over thirty years ago, and our Education Committee has grown local participation to 100 teachers during the current school year. Much of this growth can be attributed to Jean Folsom and her efforts to engage local educators into this program.

We would like to thank the Education Committee, and especially Jean Folsom, for their hard work in the success of this endeavor.



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



# Rusty Blackbird Blitz Continues in 2015

Year two of the rusty blackbird Spring Migration Blitz starts on March 1, 2015 throughout Alabama and other southeastern states. Many of you already know this species is imperiled as a result of its long-term population declines throughout North America. So I'm asking each of you to dedicate at least one outing in March to search for and report rusty blackbirds in Alabama. The survey period for Alabama is the entire month of March. This initiative is part of a much broader monitoring effort across the eastern/mid-western United States to document locations and numbers of rusty blackbirds during their migration. For more info about this important initiative as well as other resources, please visit the following links:

(<http://rustyblackbird.org/outreach/migration-blitz/>), or check out the Blitz Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/rustyblackbirdspringblitz>)

Despite being an important state for the species, Alabama's participation with the Spring Migration Blitz last year was, at best, minimal. Alabama birders submitted a total of 51 checklists (noting rusty blackbirds in March) to eBird, which was among the lowest number of submissions from all eastern states participating, except Mississippi and Florida! As a challenge, I'd like to see the number of submissions from Alabama doubled this year.

You don't have to change how you bird, just please make an effort to visit a place that has habitat favored by rusty blackbirds; such as wet bottomland forests; pecan orchards, rural lawns covered with acorns. Also take the effort to glean through large blackbird flocks; sometimes you can find them foraging in small groups along the margins of the other flocking blackbird species. If you don't see any rusty blackbirds during your outing, that's fine, we still want your checklist data. Documenting not finding the species during your outing is just as important as finding them for this project.

We'd also like birders to revisit Areas of Interest identified from 2014 data to assess the consistency of rusty blackbird habitat use and migratory timing. Check out the map of Areas of Interest for 2015 at <http://rustyblackbird.org/outreach/migration-blitz/2015-areasof-interest/>

Reporting your rusty blackbird sightings is easy using eBird. When entering your checklist, select the "Rusty Blackbird Blitz" observation type which will be available through the month of March. Please select this observation type instead of the typical "stationary" or "traveling" observation types for your checklists. For the non-eBird users, please note when and where you observed them (with any pertinent details) and send me your information.



Rusty blackbird - Thinkstock by Getty Images

Eric Soehren  
Wehle Land Conservation Center  
AL DCNR, State Lands Division  
[eric.soehren@dcnr.alabama.gov](mailto:eric.soehren@dcnr.alabama.gov)

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## The Birmingham Audubon Office Has Moved!

After several great years, Birmingham Audubon has outgrown our office space at McWane Science Center in downtown Birmingham. Our offices are now located on the second floor at **3720 Fourth Avenue South**, Birmingham, AL 35222. You may recognize this as being in the Avondale neighborhood and within walking distance of one of our Urban Bird Habitat Initiative projects. Our new phone number is 205-719-3678. Thank you in advance for your patience as we settle into a new location. Hope to see you soon!





## 38TH YEAR

# Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop

Thursday, May 7 - Sunday, May 10, 2015

**The Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop offers hands-on nature-based classes in a broad range of topics.** Campers enjoy classes during the day, an evening keynote speaker, and a selection of evening outings from spider walks to night birding to the Saturday evening dance. Classes are scheduled 8:30-11:30 am and 2:30-5:30 pm, offering each camper five different class options.

**The Workshop promotes a better understanding and appreciation of the natural history and ecology of the Southern Appalachian Mountains.** A broad overview is provided through classes on topics including animal ecology, beginning and advanced bird identification, stream biology, mammals, insects, reptiles and amphibians, geology and fossils, canoeing, mountain crafts, and many more. Classes take place on the campus of Alpine Camp and around Mentone, an old Alabama resort area featuring rustic cabins and lodges, broad mountain vistas and clear streams. Little River flows for almost its entirety atop Lookout Mountain carving Little River Canyon on the way to the Coosa River Valley. Little River Canyon is the deepest canyon east of the Mississippi. Alpine Camp is situated directly on the West Fork of the Little River. Recreational opportunities in the Little River canyon area include canoeing, fishing and hiking. Miles of trails are within easy access of the camp.

**Our faculty** includes professors from regional universities and colleges, recognized experts, and Alabama artists.

**Participants**, whether beginners or seasoned naturalists, enjoy a relaxed atmosphere in small classes.

**Staff** consists of Birmingham Audubon employees and volunteers who coordinate daily activities for the workshop.

**The Young Naturalist Program is a curriculum based program for children ages 5 to 12.** The Young Naturalist courses and activities are taught and supervised by our academic adult faculty along with Birmingham Audubon's teaching naturalist staff. Kids love this program that includes lots of hands-on activities and extensive science and nature based learning.

### **Lodging and Facilities:**

There are two options for lodging during the Workshop. You may stay in the rustic dormitory style cabins at Camp Alpine or you may be a "Mountain Resident" and make your own arrangements for lodgings. If you choose to obtain lodging outside the camp, indicate that on your registration form.

**Camp Alpine lodging** is typically in a rustic cabin with a detached communal bath house. A limited number of spaces are available in the Ridge Cabins which have in cabin toilet and shower facilities. These cabins are available for an incremental

charge of \$27 per person. All cabins typically accommodate 8 to 12 individuals and are assigned in categories defined by gender and familial relationship.

**Mountain Resident Lodging** - Desoto State Park, which is less than ten minutes from Alpine Camp, offers a variety of lodging options from campground rental, to cabins to hotel rooms at the lodge. ([www.alapark.com/desotoresort/](http://www.alapark.com/desotoresort/)) Mentone has a variety of bed and breakfasts and Fort Payne also has many lodging options. As a Mountain Resident you are welcome to participate in as many or as few camp activities as you like.

**Camp Alpine Facilities** - Meals are served in a central dining hall. The Alpine Lodge, located on the bluff overlooking Little River, serves as an informal gathering place and is home to the Workshop Canteen.

No smoking is allowed in any building on campus. No pets allowed.

### **REGISTRATION:**

This year's workshop requires online registration. You register for the workshop and make all class selections on line. Class sizes are limited. Timely registration insures best class selection. To begin your registration visit:

[www.regonline.com/birminghamaudubonmountainworkshop](http://www.regonline.com/birminghamaudubonmountainworkshop)

Birmingham Audubon member (1).....	\$275
Birmingham Audubon nonmember (2).....	\$300
Young Naturalist (includes t-shirt).....	\$250
Mountain Resident member (3).....	\$260
Mountain Resident nonmember (4).....	\$285

Registration prices will increase by \$25 after April 22, 2015  
Onsite registration will be \$350 per person

(1) Registration includes tuition, room and meals, beginning with Thursday evening meal and ending with Sunday lunch.

(2) Registration includes tuition, room and meals beginning with Thursday evening meal and ending with Sunday lunch, as well as a 1 year Birmingham Audubon membership.

(3) Registration includes tuition and meals, beginning with Thursday evening meal and ending with Sunday lunch.

(4) Registration includes tuition and meals beginning with Thursday evening meal and ending with Sunday lunch, as well as a 1 year Birmingham Audubon membership.

Birmingham Audubon members must be on our member roll. A good indicator of whether you are a member is if you get our Flicker Flashes publication. Please email registrar if you are unsure of your membership status.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Registration is fully refundable less a \$25 administrative fee through April 15. Half of the registration fee will be returned for cancellations made from April 16-22, 2015. No refunds after April 22.  
ANY QUESTIONS??? Email: [registrar@birminghamaudubon.org](mailto:registrar@birminghamaudubon.org)

# 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

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## **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](http://www.audubon.org)

**Birmingham Audubon's policy is to not share or sell our mailing list. Your privacy is of the utmost importance to us.**

Birmingham Audubon Society  
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

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Please check your mailing label for your membership expiration date.

Birmingham Audubon Office: 205-719-3678

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Published by  
The Birmingham Audubon Society

For conservation and greater knowledge  
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*Flicker Flashes* is published eight times a year by  
the Birmingham Audubon Society  
Editor: Ty Keith 205-602-8037  
Graphic Design: Michelle Blackwood

## Consider gifting a membership to Birmingham Audubon

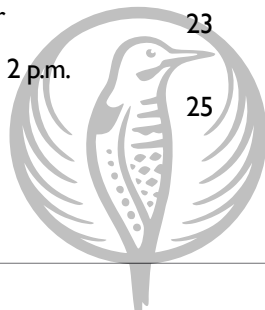
[www.birminghamaudubon.org](http://www.birminghamaudubon.org)  
or 205-714-8227

### March 2015

- 7 Limestone Park/Ebenezer Field Trip (Half-day)
- 19 Monthly Program 7 p.m.  
Birmingham Botanical Gardens
- 21 Perry Lake Parks Field Trip (Full day)
- 22 Audubon Teaches Nature -  
Freshwater Snails of the Cahaba River
- 29 Beginner's Bird Walk, Limestone Park - 2 p.m.

### April 2015

- 4 Ruffner Mountain Field Trip (Half-day)
- 11 Vulcan Trail Field Trip (Half-day)
- 12 Audubon Teaches Nature - Native Plants for Wildlife
- 17-19 Alabama Ornithological Society Spring Meeting (AOS),  
Dauphin Island
- 23 Monthly Program - 7 p.m.  
Birmingham Botanical Gardens
- 25 Birmingham Audubon Spring Bird Count



Copies of *Flicker Flashes* can be viewed and downloaded from the Birmingham Audubon web site: [www.birminghamaudubon.org](http://www.birminghamaudubon.org)