

Flicker Flashes

Published by
The Birmingham Audubon Society



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

Audubon Teaches Nature

An Introduction to the Spiders of Alabama
Presented by Dr. Mike Howell, Samford University
Sunday, October 8, 2006 at 2:00 P.M.
The Wildlife Center at Oak Mountain State Park

It's baaaacck! Our members recall the Audubon Teaches Birding seminar series that was held at The Wildlife Center in recent years. Last year multiple summer obligations prevented me from developing a program for the 2005-2006 season. Well, I am pleased to announce that after a one year hiatus the series is back and better than ever!

You may have seen newspaper reports earlier this summer that Samford University has entered into an agreement with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to operate an Interpretive Center at Oak Mountain State Park. In addition to operating the center for general public use, Samford will develop a Field School there to enhance its degree programs in the Biological and Environmental Sciences.

Additionally, for many years now members of the Samford University Biology Department faculty have generously donated their time and talents to serve on the faculty of the Audubon Mountain Workshop, held each May near Mentone, AL. It has

long been a goal of mine to bring some of that "Mentone Magic" back to Birmingham so that we could offer natural history classes a little closer to home, thereby making them accessible to more of our members. These programs are for you!

Dr. Ron Jenkins and David Frings, Director of the Interpretive Center, agree that we have a unique opportunity here to showcase the beauty and natural history of Oak Mountain State Park and the central Alabama region. Thus, we have broadened the scope of the series and renamed it Audubon Teaches Nature. We will continue to offer birdwatching oriented topics but will also include other topics of interest as well.

Dr. Mike Howell, co-author (with Ron Jenkins) of the book *Spiders of the Eastern United States*, will inaugurate the series with a presentation on the spiders of Alabama. Mike will introduce us to the common spiders found in this region, helping us to understand their field marks, habitat preferences and other characteristics of each species. After the program he will escort us

into the field to demonstrate firsthand how to locate and identify spiders commonly found in Alabama woodlands. This will be a fascinating, educational and exciting program for the whole family; bring your children for sure!

The remainder of the schedule:

November 12: Learning to Identify Winter Waterfowl, Dwight Cooley, Wheeler NWR
January 14: Owls of Alabama, Anne G. Miller, The Wildlife Center

February 11: Geology vs. Ecosystem, an Introduction to the Habitats of Oak Mountain State Park, David Frings, Oak Mountain Interpretive Center

March 11: The Return of the Spring Migrants, Greg Harber, BAS

April 8: The Geological History of Central Alabama Region ~ Two-hundred Fifty Million Years in 45 Minutes! Jim Lacefield, author of *Lost World in Alabama Rocks*

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

Greg Harber, ATN Committee

SoSo for the Record

Sightings August 3 through August 30, 2006

The highlight of this period was an "irruption" of **Roseate Spoonbills**. The first one, at Lake Purdy, 11 August, was discovered by Harriett Wright. Later Larry Knorr reported one at a swamp on highway 87/Shelby County. Eventually two were reported at this same location. This swamp has been a favorite birding spot recently. The list of contributors is long (see later). Birds that have been seen there so far are: **Anhinga, Great Blue Heron, Great and Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Heron, White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork, Black and Turkey Vultures, and Spotted and Pectoral Sandpipers.**

On 12 August Greg Harber headed south of Birmingham to release a juvenile **Mississippi Kite** for Anne Miller, the director of The Wildlife Center. In celebration of **"One last Hurrah for Summer"** he visited several counties; Montgomery, Hale, Autauga, and Perry. His list included **42 Swallow-tailed and 10+ Mississippi Kites**. The best was yet to come later when he found **190 Wood Storks** in one pond and **110** in another pond (Hale Co). These plus a few more added up to **312** for the day, **"A Wood Stork Bonanza."**

8/3 **Canada Warbler**; A window strike that thankfully survived, Mountain Brook (ER).

8/12 **American Avocet!!**; Logan Martin Dam (TK, HK, HW, SF, FF).

8/16 **Bald Eagle**; Perry County (AC, HW, MLM).

8/19 **Common Nighthawk** (20); UAB (GH).

8/20 **Osprey, Laughing** (1ad) and **Ring-billed** (56!) **Gulls**; **Black Terns** (30+) Wheeler Dam (SMcC).

8/22 **Wood Duck**; **Blue-winged Teal**; **Wild Turkey**; Lake Purdy (HK et al).

8/24 **Warblers- Golden-winged, Northern Parula, Yellow, Pine, Prairie, Cerulean, Black-and-white, Kentucky, and Canada**; Botanical Garden (GH, HW, JG).

8/25 **Rufous Hummingbird** (3) Birmingham, and (1) **Huntsville** (BS).

8/27 **American Bittern!!** Neely Henry Dam (JS).

8/30 **American Kestrel**; **Least** (12), **Pectoral** (57), and **Buff-breasted** (5) **Sandpipers**; Shelby County (HW, AC).



Contributors:

B. J. Allen	Peggy King
Gussie Arnett	Helen Kittinger
Malcolm Braid	Larry Knorr
Alice Christenson	Steve McConnell
Frank and Shirley Farrell	Anne G. Miller
Kap Garmon	Mary Lou Miller
Jessica Germany	Wendy Nunnally
Greg Harber	Elouise Rafferty
Mary Hines	Bob Sargent
Catherine Hodges	Mary Frances Stayton
Susan Hutchison	Jim Sherrill
Ty Keith	Harriett Wright

Please submit sightings for November/ December FF at least five days before the October 1st deadline to: Ann Miller, 520 Yorkshire Drive, Birmingham, Al. 35209.

OCTOBER MONTHLY MEETING

Nelson Brooke, Black Warrior Riverkeeper

Thursday, October 19, 2006 at 7:00 p.m.

Birmingham Zoo Auditorium

Find out what the Riverkeeper is and what he does, all of which is closely related to the Black Warrior River. Black Warrior Riverkeeper Nelson Brooke will discuss what a watershed is and how his work revolves around protecting a watershed, not just a river.

Nelson Brooke was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. Nelson attended the Altamont School in Birmingham, Alabama and graduated from the University of Colorado at Boulder with an anthropology degree. Nelson is an Eagle Scout and an outdoor enthusiast who has enjoyed fishing and hunting along the banks of the Black Warrior River since he was seven years old. Nelson has been the Black Warrior Riverkeeper since January of 2004. As Riverkeeper, Nelson patrols

and photographs the Black Warrior River and its tributaries, researches and analyzes pollutants' permits, responds to citizen complaints, educates the public about the beauty of the river and threats to it, and acts as a spokesman for the Black Warrior River watershed.

Attend and enjoy this program. Please come early at 6:45 to socialize and enjoy some refreshments. Guests are welcome.

~Hans Paul
VP Programs

October Field Trip

Fort Toulouse, Wetumpka, AL

Saturday, October 28, 2006

The destination for our October field trip is Ft Toulouse. The fort is located on a forested bluff at the junction of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers. Because rivers function as "highways" for migrating birds, this area is usually pretty good for fall migrants, especially warblers. There are several paths that border the Tallapoosa River that should hold migrating birds. Also present at the fort is an ancient Indian mound.

There are picnic facilities overlooking the Coosa River, so we'll plan to have lunch at the park. There is an admission fee to enter the park, \$5.00 for adults, \$4.00 for senior citizens and college students, and \$3.00 for children ages 6-18. We may qualify for the \$4.00 group rate depending on the number of people on the trip.

As an added bonus, after lunch James Lowery will escort us to several sites around

Wetumpka where we can view the landmarks of the Wetumpka Astrobleme impact crater. One of these "field marks" will be visible as we cross the bridge over the Coosa River. Visible in the bed of the river are steeply tilted layers of metamorphic rocks surrounding the impact crater.

Travel Plans: Depart at 7:00 a.m. from the McDonalds on US 31 across from the Galleria. Bring a full tank of gas, insect repellent, and lunch. We will carpool from here and caravan down I-65 south to exit #181 and take AL 14 east to Wetumpka and then south on US 231 after we cross the Coosa River.

For more information call our trip leader, Greg Harber, at 251-2133 or co-leader Ty Keith at 602-8037.

Tom Imhof Family Bird Walk

Saturday, October 7, 2006, 7:30 a.m.
The Birmingham Zoo

Our half-day field trip, held in memory of long-time BAS member and author of Alabama Birds, Tom Imhof, will be a stroll along the perimeter road adjacent to the parking area. 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. The fall parade of migrants will likely have a few treats in store for us so plan now to attend with your young'uns. 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.

Russell Bailey Memorial Labor Day Birdwalk

Monday, September 4, 2006, 17 BAS members and 2 guests, Rhonda Coretti and Ji'anhua Zhang, met at 8:00 a.m. at Lake Purdy's Coxe's Creek bridge. There we found wild turkeys, herons, egrets, and blue-winged teal. The next stop was the swamp on Shelby CR 87. A solitary sandpiper, spotted sandpiper, lesser yellowlegs, and two Wood Storks were the most notable sightings. Then it was on to the marsh at Limestone Park where a Red-tailed Hawk was spotted. Most of the group decided to end the day at this point, but six individuals, Frank and Shirley Farrell, Charles and Sue Hutchison, Mac Braid, and Helen Kittinger continued on to Harpersville. After lunch at Richie's BBQ the group traveled along AL 25 to the Sunbelt Sod Farm where they saw greater yellowlegs, Least, Buff-breasted, and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Not too bad for an arid central Alabama afternoon!

Shades Creek Cleanup

Date: Saturday, September 30, 2006
Time: 8:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

Place: West Gate of Samford University on Lakeshore Drive

Purpose: To cleanup trash from the largest tributary of the Cahaba River and to educate yourself about the creek as a valuable community resource.

How Can You Help More: Lead the participation of a group of which you are a member. Make this an outing for your civic club, social club, neighborhood association, church group, school class, garden club, friends, book club, coworkers, scout troop, etc.

Why You Should Participate: Shades Creek is a wonderful resource. If protected it will enhance your life and add value to the community. By participating you take an ownership interest in this resource.

Do You Have a Favorite Section of Creek? Contact us and we can help you clean it.

For More Information: Call Hans Paul at 807-7357 or Michelle Blackwood at 879-6866

Sponsored By: Friends of Shades Creek

Important News from the Birmingham Botanical Gardens

Editorial Note: Many of our members frequently visit the Birmingham Botanical Gardens for bird-watching purposes. A few of you have noted the work being done on the "back road" above the Fern Glade and Memory Garden. Fred Spicer, Executive Director at the BBG, sent me the following note in response to our questions about the work being done. Herein is a portion of his note to me. Our thanks to Fred for sharing his thoughts and plans with us. GJH

Recently, a number of deferred maintenance projects were undertaken in the area along the upper road that you have referred to. This work included brush removal (primarily privet and wisteria) along the roads to allow better access for staff and contractor work vehicles, cutting of access paths to facilitate fenceline monitoring and repairs, the removal of stock-piled materials (which were placed there so long ago that vegetation grew up around them), and in some cases, removal of debris thrown over onto our property from neighboring properties.

As I indicated before, all of this work was long overdue and as our schedule allowed, we proceeded. That the work coincided with the fall migration, as you indicated earlier, was not intentional. Whenever it would have happened, the results would have been the same: the habitat would not have been available for birds. From here on out, you should be aware that our intention is to maintain this area with a low vegetated shoulder, and to maintain access to our fenceline, and to initiate and conduct repairs to it as necessary. This will of necessity involve the removal of additional vegetation from time to time.

Something else you need to be aware of is that much of the vegetation in

these buffer areas primarily consists of invasive exotic vegetation, mainly *Ligustrum sinense*, Chinese privet. A stated goal of the management of this facility is to eliminate invasive exotic species, which would include the privet, as well as certain other plants. Many of these plants, including leatherleaf mahonia, nandina, multiflora rose, certain areas of liriopse (monkey grass) and



other species of privet, have fruit which is attractive to birds. Work to control these plants is actively happening in many areas of The Gardens and will proceed as time and resources allow, and eventually into the buffers. (Note that the pokeweed was "collateral damage" - selectively removing the privet among the pokeweed would be ultimately too time-consuming.)

On the plus side, in the past several years, we have

implemented a number of management strategies, mostly in the Barber Alabama Woodlands, with birds (and other wildlife) in mind. Specifically, we no longer treat pokeweed in this area with herbicides, but allow it to grow, along with other, native plants that were formerly controlled whenever they occurred (including Virginia creeper, poison ivy and jewelweed). We also leave tree snags where they pose no threat to pedestrians or structures; when trees fall, we leave them decay in place, for the most part, and only remove what is blocking paths. We have planted multi-hundreds of native (and in other areas, non-invasive exotic) plants that are extremely wildlife-friendly, producing fruit for birds (et al.) and providing host plants and nectar sources for butterfly and moth larvae and adults, respectively.

Also, we have dramatically increased the number of hummingbird-attracting plants on the site through the introduction of additional cannas, salvias, hibiscus and other species. On the whole, have we planted more than we removed? I have no way of quantifying that, but I do feel sure that what we've added is, in the long term, a great deal more important and sustainable than privet.

Excerpts from **The Birding Community E-bulletin - September 2006**

This Birding Community E-bulletin is being distributed through the generous support of Steiner Optics as a service to active and concerned birders, those dedicated to the joys of birding and the protection of birds and their habitats. You can access an archive of our past E-bulletins on the website of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA): <http://www.refugenet.org/birding/birding5.html> and on the birding pages for Steiner Optics <http://www.steiner-birding.com/bulletin.html>

CARBOFURAN RELIEF

In early August, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that the use of the pesticide carbofuran would be banned for use on rice, corn, alfalfa, and potato crops. There will also be a four-year phase-out-period for use on six other minor crops (artichokes, spinach, cucumbers, chili peppers, sunflowers, and pine seedlings). This phase-out for secondary crop uses will give growers time to find effective alternatives.

The EPA recently acknowledged that there are risks associated with carbofuran to both food and drinking water, as well as to pesticide applicators, and birds that are exposed to the chemical in fields treated with the pesticide.

Carbofuran has been perhaps the greatest chemical threat to our wild birds since the pesticides DDT and dieldrin were banned in the early 1970s. In its ecological risk assessment for carbofuran last year, the EPA stated that there simply were no legal uses of carbofuran that did not kill wild birds. For example, if a flock of Mallards were to feed in a carbofuran-treated alfalfa or rice field, the EPA predicted that over 90 percent of the birds would quickly die.

Carbofuran has been one of the most heavily used insecticides in the world, but its extreme toxicity to farm workers and to birds and other wildlife has made it very dangerous. The cancellation will hopefully have a domino effect internationally, as many other countries often follow the U.S. EPA's lead on such policies.

The cancellation follows a multi-year campaign to ban carbofuran. More details, including the role of the American Bird Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, and a number of other groups, can be found here: http://abcbirds.org/media/releases/carbofuran_Aug06.htm

FINAL RULING ON RESIDENT CANADA GEESE

In recent decades, the numbers of Canada Geese that nest or reside predominantly within the conterminous United States (resident Canada Geese, also known as "Giant" Canada Geese) have undergone such dramatic growth that their numbers are increasingly coming into conflict with human activity. In many parts of the country there are concerns over personal and public property damage, as well as over public health.

Expansion of existing annual hunting seasons and the issuance of control hunting permits have all been recently used to try and reduce the numbers of resident Canada Geese. Unfortunately, these efforts have met with varying degrees of success.

In February 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service completed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for resident Canada Goose management. The following year, a proposed rule was recommended to establish proposed action, known as Alternative F. The USFWS said that it received more than 2,700 written comments on the 2002 draft Environmental Impact Statement and almost 3,000 public comments on the 2003 proposed rule. In November 2005, the notice of availability for a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was published, followed by a 30-day public review period.

The upshot is that this final rule now sets forth a policy, Alternative F, which would authorize State wildlife agencies, private landowners, and airports to conduct (or allow) indirect and/or direct population control management activities, including the take of birds and expanded hunting methods, on resident Canada Goose populations.

This final rule will go into effect on 11 September 2006.

BOOK REVIEW: *MEXICAN AND CENTRAL AMERICAN BIRDS*

Some of our "Rarity Focus" birds over the past year have been species from Mexico (e.g., Aztec Thrush, Yellow Grosbeak, Piratic Flycatcher, and Crescent-chested Warbler), and birders along the U.S.-Mexican border are increasingly aware of the possibility of rare avian visitors from points south.

A recent addition to the birder's bookshelf, *BIRDS OF MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA*, may be of some interest to those contemplating these possibilities. This is the only field guide to illustrate every species of bird found from Mexico through Panama. Written and illustrated by Ber van Perlo, this compact and useful work covers more than 1,500 species. This Princeton University Press guide is a handy and portable volume for birders interested in a rapid reference to any of the birds from Mexico through Panama. The 98 color plates appear with corresponding opposite text for quick and easy reference. The written information is virtually in shorthand, with key identification features, habitats, and voice included, along with helpful maps. Bird names are given in common, scientific, and Spanish-language (mainly Mexican- and Costa Rican sourced) versions. Although the maps are painfully small and the voice renditions are disappointing, the final results are still satisfying for such a small book (336 pp), a reference actually billed as an "illustrated checklist."

If you would like to subscribe to the monthly E-bulletin mailing list, please contact either:

Wayne R. Petersen, Director
Massachusetts Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program
Mass Audubon
718/259-2178
wpetersen@massaudubon.org

OR

Paul J. Baicich
410/992-9736
paul.baicich@verizon.net

Fall classes at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens

To register by phone, call the BBG Education Department at 414-3950.

Individual or Family Class

Decorating for the Birds!

Saturday, October 21 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Instructor: Beverly Vogt, Owner, Wild Birds

Unlimited

Materials fee of \$3 included. Total \$15 Members/
\$30 Non-Members

Children free with paid adult attending

Limited to 20 adults

While you are enjoying the many tasty treats that abound this coming holiday season, don't forget to share some goodies with the birds. Decorating for our feathered friends and other wildlife is an activity the whole family can enjoy. Class members will make a fresh cranberry and popcorn garland, a pine cone feeder, and see Beverly Vogt demonstrate how easy it is to make suet muffins and stuffing, grapefruit and bagel feeders, and wild bird seed cookies.

Individual or Family Class

BBG Night-Time Connections (Night Hike)

Friday, November 3 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Rain Date: Saturday, November 4

Instructor: David Hollaway, Senior Naturalist,
McDowell EC

Classroom introduction, then out into The Gardens.

Children free with paid adult attending

\$10 Members/\$20 Non-Members

Registration deadline: November 1

Come walk wild in the dark at the BBG for a fun, new experience exploring Alabama's beautiful biodiversity. David Hollaway, aka "Big Dave" from Camp McDowell, will help you hear natural sounds of the night, touch nature's textures, and experience the amazing smells of night with lots of giggles and hand-holding. This is a chance for families and children to be night-time naturalists! Awesome!

.....
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 *A007XCH8

October 2006

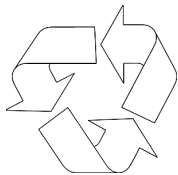
- 1 Flicker Flashes articles due, November/
December issue
- 7 Family Bird Walk - Birmingham Zoo,
7:30 a.m.
- 8 Audubon Teaches Nature - The Wildlife
Center, 2:00 p.m.
- 10 Conservation Committee meeting,
7:00 p.m.
- 13-15 Alabama Ornithological Society
Meeting, Dauphin Island, AL
- 19 Board Meeting, (BZA) 5:45 p.m.
General Meeting, BZA 7:00 p.m.
Nelson Brooke, Black Warrior
Riverkeeper
- 19-22 Alabama Coastal Birdfest, Fairhope, AL
- 28 BAS Field Trip, Fort Toulouse-Jackson
NHP, Wetumpka, AL

November 2006

- 4 BAS 1/2 day Field Trip, Moss Rock
Preserve
- 7 Conservation Committee meeting
7:00 p.m.
- 12 Audubon Teaches Nature - The Wildlife
Center, 2:00 p.m.
- 16 Board Meeting, (BZA) 5:45 p.m.
General Meeting, BZA 7:00 p.m.
Willard Bowers, Alabama Power Co.
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Birmingham, Audubon Society
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
P.O. Box 314
Birmingham, AL 35201

DATED MATERIAL
Please deliver by September 30



Printed on Recycled Paper

Birmingham Audubon Society
www.birminghamaudubon.org
(205)879-7709



Flicker Flashes is published eight times a year by
the Birmingham Audubon Society.
Editor: Bianca J. Allen (205) 854-5233
Asst. Editor: Greg Harber (205) 251-2133

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 3794
Birmingham, AL