



# Mobile Bay Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society Since 1971

Volume XXIX No. 2

## Birdfest

The 7<sup>th</sup> annual John L. Borom Alabama Coastal BirdFest is just around the corner, Oct. 14-17, 2010. This year's BirdFest will repeat many popular land and boat trips from previous years and introduce a few new trips – two canoe/kayak trips on the Delta, two new Middle Delta pontoon boat trips, and a Saturday boat trip at Weeks Bay!

Registration is open at [www.AlabamaCoastalBirdFest.com](http://www.AlabamaCoastalBirdFest.com).

“People have asked for a Saturday Weeks Bay boat trip and about canoe and kayak trips, so I’m happy we can offer those this year. And the new boat trip in the Middle Mobile-Tensaw Delta will give participants a chance to see deeper into the wonders of the Delta,” said John Borom, BirdFest chairman. “All of the Delta trips will be led by professional guides from 5 Rivers Delta Safaris and will give participants a real up-close view of birds and wildlife.”

The Friday night BBQ and Seafood Dinner has a new location and new partner this year, explained BirdFest coordinator Fran Morley. “We are very pleased to partner with Organized Seafood Association of Alabama for a shrimp boil that we’ll pair with BBQ and tasty sides. Our Friday night dinner will be at the beautiful Life Center, located next to St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Daphne. The church’s food committee has generously volunteered to help us with side dishes and serving, which we really appreciate.”

Also new this year are two host hotels. “Our visitors have a great choice with special BirdFest rates at both hotels. They can stay at The Hampton Inn in Daphne and be close to 5 Rivers, or at the Holiday Inn Express in Fairhope and be close to everything going on in Fairhope

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## Coastal Bird Survey Takes Flight along Alabama Shoreline

Contributed by Finley Hewes, Communications Coordinator,  
Audubon Gulf Oil Response

While the media attention surrounding the BP disaster is slowing down, the Audubon Coastal Bird Survey is gaining momentum in Alabama. This Citizen Science based program further designates Audubon as a leader in environmental stewardship by documenting the conditions of Alabama coastal bird populations and their habitats since the catastrophe.

Along with volunteers deployed out of the Audubon Volunteer Response Center in Moss Point, MS, our members have been patrolling local beaches. They are gathering the base-line data that will be a valuable resource as scientists assess the damage from the spill and study the trends and impacts on habitats and wildlife.

Mark LaSalle, Director of the Pascagoula River Audubon Center (PRAC), was instrumental in the creation and implementation of the program. A long-time champion of the Citizen Science aspect of Audubon’s core mission, LaSalle saw an opportunity to turn tragedy into opportunity. “I hope this provides an outlet for amateur birders to get out and learn more about birding while also being an active participant in Audubon’s coastal restoration initiatives,” said LaSalle.

Each survey team consists of two to five people, one of whom has strong birding skills and is designated as the Birding Mentor. Together, they walk a one-mile

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that weekend," Morley said.

Non-birding spouses and friends will enjoy 'Fall into Fairhope,' a weekend of fun, Oct. 16 & 17, with the 28<sup>th</sup> annual Grand Festival of Art (Saturday & Sunday), the 5k Mullet Run (Saturday), a free bluff-top concert by the Baldwin Pops (Sunday), and of course, the Bird & Conservation Expo, all day Saturday on the grounds of Faulkner State College.

BirdFest has been closely monitoring the oil situation in the Gulf. "At this point, we hope that the oil won't interfere with migration, but this threat to the environment just underscores the need to protect our coastal habitats, which is the mission of BirdFest," Borom said. "Since 2004, we have donated more than \$50,000 toward the protection and preservation of bird and wildlife habitat on the Alabama Gulf Coast."

For the full schedule of tours and events and to register for this year's BirdFest, visit [www.AlabamaCoastalBirdFest.com](http://www.AlabamaCoastalBirdFest.com).

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stretch of shoreline and record their observations. Among the data they collect is: general weather conditions, general habitat conditions, the species and count of coastal birds, the physical and behavioral condition of the birds, as well as any presence of oil or other man-made substances.

"The Audubon Coastal Bird Survey is an excellent opportunity for everyone to get involved in making a difference and contributing to Alabama's long-term recovery efforts," said Kelsey Blum, Audubon's volunteer coordinator for Alabama. "One doesn't have to be an expert birder to participate. Just go out and walk the shoreline and learn from seasoned, expert birders. This program is one of the most hands-on, educational activities that I've been a part of. What a great way to spend an hour or so."

More training sessions are being scheduled as the number of eager participants grows. For more information on upcoming classes or to find other ways to get involved with Audubon's long-term commitment to Alabama's coastal restoration, please contact Kelsey Blum at [kblum@audubon.org](mailto:kblum@audubon.org) or call 228- 474-3290. Details can also be found on the PRAC website, [pascagoulariver.audubon.org](http://pascagoulariver.audubon.org).



*Birding Mentor, Don Mckee, sets up his spotting scope while volunteer, Eugenia Casey, prepares to catalog their findings for the Coastal Bird Survey on Dauphin Island, AL (Photo credit: Kelsey Blum, Finley Hewes, Jr.)*

# Blue Bird Box Building Project

*By Ralph Stemp*

In the Fall of 2009 George Hinds initiated a project of building and installing nest boxes for the Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*). He enlisted Phenix Palmer and Ralph Stemp to help. They have built and installed dozens of Bluebird boxes on the Eastern Shore. Reports from box recipients indicate that three broods of Bluebirds are not unusual over a summer, and most boxes produce two broods. There are usually 4 or 5 chicks in a brood. Eastern Bluebirds begin nesting on the Eastern Shore in late February and are through nesting by September. Nest boxes should be installed at least 100 yards apart because Bluebirds are very territorial. The entrance hole is precisely 1.5 inches in diameter in order to hinder other birds from taking the box. There is no perch on the box in order to discourage the House Sparrow.

A predator guard is essential to protect the box from snakes, cats, squirrels and mice. The guard is a 2 feet long piece of aluminum downspout that slides over the post and then is crimped to the post at both ends of the aluminum sleeve. Or a guard may be purchased from local hardware stores.

The box itself is not painted. Do not install the box on a tree or on a fence, even though that installation is so temptingly convenient. The area below the entrance hole on the inside of the box has wire mesh attached to the box. That mesh is the "ladder" for the young birds to grasp as they climb up and then exit the box. They do not return to the box after they have fledged.

It is advisable to clean the box after each brood and dispose of the nest. Dust for mites at that time, if appropriate. Close the box and watch for your next nesting. If you are interested in having a nest box, call 928-6526 and get on the list.

## Audubon Coastal Bird Survey Training

In response to the oil spill, Audubon will be holding another Coastal Bird Survey (CBS) training course on September 3 from 5:30-9:00pm at Faulkner Community College. For additional information or to register contact Kelsey Blum, Alabama State Volunteer Coordinator, via e-mail at [kblum@audubon.org](mailto:kblum@audubon.org) or by phone at 504.261.6433

## Florida Field Trip March 2010

*By Celeste Hinds*

Roseate Spoonbills kept interrupting happy hour on the deck by hanging out in trees so close binoculars were not necessary. We could have grabbed supper from an Osprey who flew so near we could see the scales on the fish he was carrying. Eagles, Black Skimmers and Swallow-Tailed Kites performed daily for the fourteen Eastern Shore birders. A Florida Scrub Jay was a treat at the Scrub Preserve and Wood Ibis flew over as we approached the Shell Mounds. Yes, there are shell mounds at Cedar Key. And those mounds serve the same purpose as the shell mounds at Dauphin Island. They are covered with old growth trees that provide

cover and a resting place for migrants. Hundreds of White Pelicans and shore birds crowded the sand bars on a perfect day at Cedar Key. Captain Doug's boat nudged right up to the oyster reefs where plovers, sandpipers and little short-legged peeps were close at hand. Cedar Key was our final destination after enjoying the boat trip at Wakulla Springs where Wood Ducks and a myriad of other colorful birds posed for us. We spent a full day birding St. Marks Refuge where Black Necked Stilts, along with many ducks and shore birds were almost at arm's reach. Let me know if you are interested in doing this 4 - 5 day trip next spring. The whole affair is planned well in advance to take advantage of perfect tides for viewing the greatest number of birds. Due to capacity of the boat, next year's group will be limited to twelve birders.

## 2011 Calendars \$5.00

The 2011 calendars have arrived and they are beautiful as always. The Maslowskies have outdone themselves with their prints of backyard birds. Many are common in our area. Each print has an interesting note about habitat. At \$5.00 they are a bargain. If you would like 5 or more, call Elizabeth (643-7257). She will put them aside for you. They make great stocking stuffers at Christmas. They will be for sale at each meeting and at the Birdfest. The supply is limited so get yours early.

# Audubon Calendar Fall 2010

## September 2010

14 General Meeting. Lloyd Scott, "The Environmental Studies Center in Mobile County" and John Borom, "Gulf Coast Butterflies". Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 pm. Bring a friend.

## October 2010

12 General Meeting. Chazz Hesselein, "Identifying Raptors in Lower Alabama", just in time for winter raptor sighting. Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 pm. Bring a friend.

14 – 17 John L. Borom Alabama Coastal BirdFest. For more information about tours and events, go to [www.mobilebayaudubon.org](http://www.mobilebayaudubon.org) and click on Alabama Coastal BirdFest or go to [www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com](http://www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com). Look for the tours #5, #9 and #17 which feature Weeks Bay, the Reserve and a cruise on the *Weeks Bay Explorer*.

## November 2010

9 General Meeting. Thelma Topper, "What Lives in Mongolia?" Share Thelma's adventure covering different cultures and several ecological systems and the birds that inhabit that remote corner of the globe. Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 pm. Bring a friend.

## December 2010

14 Annual Christmas Party. Noted artist and birder Dr. Bill Summerour will present "Exploring the Gulf Coast, Ten Years of Aimless Wandering in Baldwin and Mobile Counties". Five Rivers Delta Resource Center. Party at 6:30 pm, program at 7:00 pm. Please bring a tray of Christmas goodies to share. Beverages will be provided. Bring a friend.

## Fall 2010 Field Trips

Field trips are sponsored by the Mobile Bay Audubon Society and the Eastern Shore Wednesday Birders. There is no charge for field trips. There is entry fee to Maecher Park, Battleship Park, Blakeley and Fort Morgan so be prepared to pay your share of those fees. If you ride with someone pay your driver \$2.00 for local trips and \$4.00 for all others. Lunches at moderately priced area restaurants are Dutch treat.

Be flexible, weather and other conditions may cause changes. If in doubt about a trip call the trip leader or Celeste Hinds 928-6526.

Each participant is responsible for his/her own safety and comfort. Always wear closed toe shoes and dress appropriately for rain, wind or cold. We walk over uneven terrain so take care in where you step.

## Fall 2010 Field Trip Schedule

**Sept 15** – Maecher Park – Five Rivers – Seasoned birders will assist newcomers in identifying local birds. Meet at Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship at 8:00 or at D'Olive Bay overlook about 8:25. Lunch at China Dragon in Daphne.

**Sept 22** – Battleship Park and new site at Arlington Park at Brookley – led by Ralph and Anne Stemp. Gather at the Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship at 8:00. Stop at D'Olive Bay overlook in Daphne about 8:25, before heading to Battleship Park. Lunch at Naman's Brookley Buffet.

**Oct 6** – Nancy Martin will lead the group to a new local site and to the usual sites on Mobile Ave. Meet at 8:00 Unitarian Fellowship. Lunch at Hong Kong Buffet in Fairhope.

**Oct 13** Fall bird banding at Ft. Morgan – Eleanor Livaudais and Elaine Snyder Conn are leaders. See bird banding and other sites in that area Leave Unitarian Fellowship at 8:00. . Bring sack lunch and water.

*(banding takes place Oct 9 – 21)*

**Birdfest** - Oct 14 – 16 – Everybody sign up for one or more trips. Visit [Alabamacoastalbirdfest.com](http://Alabamacoastalbirdfest.com) or call 625-0814 for information.

**Oct 20** – Dauphin Island – Diana Gardiner and Thelma Topper will lead. Bring \$\$ for mid morn stop at The Bakery on D.I. Meet at Unitarian Fellowship at 8:00 or at D'Olive Bay overlook about 8:25. Bring sack lunch and water.

**Oct 27** - Bayfront – Jackson Oak – Clay Havard and Djuana Moreno are leaders to this local site. Meet at the Unitarian Fellowship at 8:00 or at D'Olive Overlook about 8:25. Lunch at Moes on Bayfront.

**Nov 3** – Blakeley Park – Chester and Dorothy McConnell will lead. Meet at Unitarian Fellowship at 8:00 or D'Olive Bay overlook about 8:25 or at entrance to Blakeley about 9:15. Bring sack lunch and water.

**Nov 17** Mariculture Ctr and Gulf Shores Water Treatment Plant – Kris Lindquist and JoAnn Wettlaufer will lead. Leave Unitarian Fellowship at 8:00. Lunch on Bo Davidson's pier at Orange Beach. Bring sack lunch and water.

**Dec 1** – South end of Fairhope Airport, Camp Beckwith and end of Hwy 1. Celeste Hinds and Ann Crosby will lead. Leave Unitarian Fellowship at 8:00. Lunch at Paul's on 32.

**Dec 8** - Blakeley Docks / mud flats – Leaders are Gaye Lindsey and Jane McPherson. Leave Unitarian Fellowship at 8:00, stop at D'Olive Overlook about 8:25. Lunch at Ed's on the Causeway.

# Coastal Birding Association

## Fall 2010 Field Trips

For details and directions, call Chazz Hesselien at 251-666-3118 or see the CBA website at <http://coastalbirdingassoc.org/>.

### October 2

*Fort Morgan: Fall Migrants and Western Vagrants*

Meet at 8 AM at the Fort's stable grounds near the entrance. **Please bring bug repellent.** We will picnic on the grounds of the fort after the field trip.

### October 8-10

*Alabama Ornithological Society (AOS) Meeting/Dauphin Island*

Check your Fall AOS newsletter for more information.

### November 4-6

Jennings, LA: The second annual "[Yellow Rails and Rice Festival](#)".

As the name suggests, Yellow Rails are the target species at the [Yellow Rails and Rice Festival](#). For details see [www.birdlouisiana.com](http://www.birdlouisiana.com). Contact Chazz to join CBA carpool.

### November 20

*Baldwin County Birding: Magnolia Springs Landfill and Fairhope Falls subdivision*

Meet at 8:00 AM at the Magnolia Springs Landfill parking lot.

### December 11

*Mississippi Sewage Lagoons (Seaman Road Wastewater Facility)*

Details to be announced in the [AL](#) and [Coastalbirds](#) listservs and at the [CBA website](#). Feel free to call field trip coordinator, Chazz, at 251-666-3118.

### December 14-Jan 5

[National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Counts](#).

There are many opportunities to participate in Audubon's CBCs. Check the [AOS's Christmas Bird Count web page](#) and <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/albirds/> for more information.

# Bird-a-thon

by

Elizabeth Williams

## A Happy Success Story

Many, many thanks to all who donated to Bird-a-thon 2010. When spring came, April is our Bird-a-thon count month we (Edith and Elizabeth) realized, that we could not do our usual active count so what were we do do! How could we fund the Audubon Adventure kits for classrooms? The plea went out and you responded \$1,593.00 has been given to place the natural resource kits in Mobile and Baldwin County classrooms. A special thank you to these generous donors:

Mr. & Mrs. Sirmon Lee

Edwina Mullins

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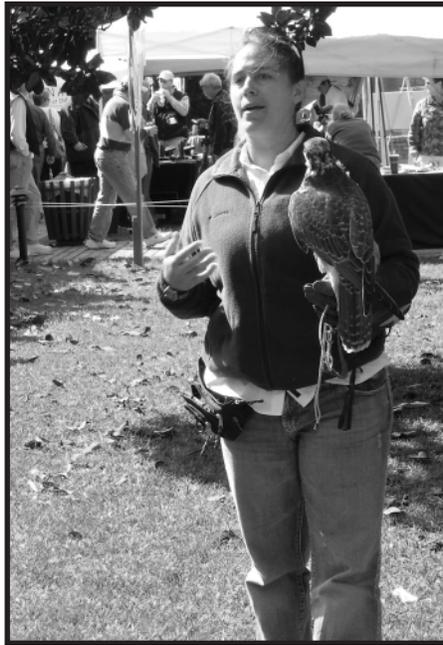
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*Becky Collier and her raptors from the Alabama 4-H Center/Coosa River Science Center are a popular part of the Bird & Conservation Expo. She and her birds, including a recently acquired bald eagle, will be back for this year's Expo.*

## MBAS Accepts Donation

John Borom, president of Mobile Bay Audubon Society, recently accepted donations totaling \$700 from Gulf Coast visitor Debra Kos, a litigation specialist with the Erie Insurance Group in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Kos and her friend Bill Odoms collected the donations from friends and associates to show support for the Gulf Coast in the wake of the BP oil disaster. "We wanted to do something to help and decided that the best thing we could do was to come spend our money on vacation here," she said, noting that it was the first time she and Odoms had visited the Alabama Gulf Coast. "I sent one email to people saying that we were coming

here and that I'd like to donate money to the Audubon Society, and friends generously sent donations." Borom thanked Kos and Odoms for their support. "This really means a lot, not only because it will allow the Mobile Bay Audubon Society to do more to protect birds and help restore the habitat here, but because these are people from far away who are thinking of us and doing what they can to help. We all appreciate that."

Kos and Odoms said that they were impressed with what they had seen of our area. "It's really beautiful here, and it will be more so when the oil is completely gone from the Gulf. We definitely want to come back again some time," Kos said.



*Debra Kos hands over \$700 in donations to John Borom, president of the Mobile Bay Audubon Society. Kos collected the money from friends and business associates in Pennsylvania before coming to Alabama on vacation. Borom said the money would be used to help protect bird and wildlife habitat on the Alabama Gulf Coast.*

*Mark LaSalle, director of the Pascagoula River Audubon Center, will once again introduce kids to simple, homemade suet feeders at this year's Bird & Conservation Expo. Also this year, Mark will present a program on the Audubon Coastal Bird Study and Moz DeDeaux, education director at PRAC, will talk on Citizen Science or what anyone can experience of nature in their own backyards.*



## MBAS Summertime Happenings

By Eleanor Livaudais

MBAS had a busy summer, beginning with the oil spill and the resulting uncertainty about the impact on birds. Our President, Dr. John Borom, received hundreds of phone calls from people wanting to help with the cleanup. National Audubon Society set up an office in Pascagoula to coordinate volunteers and provide training for Audubon's Coastal Bird Survey.

John Borom, Gaye Lindsey, Sally DeMott, and I went to Moss Point for the first Audubon Volunteer Training. The program was conducted by Dr. Mark LaSalle, of Mississippi Audubon, Dr. Tom Bancroft, Chief Ornithologist for National Audubon, and others. We learned how to identify and report oiled birds and were given general safety instructions concerning oil we might encounter. Then we went out on the beach for a practice run of the actual Bird Survey.

A similar training session was held at Faulkner in Fairhope, and teams were organized to survey defined coastal areas in Baldwin and Mobile counties. The teams have been surveying and reporting on

ShoreBirds once or twice a month since then and will continue for the rest of the year. If you wish to join a team for the Coastal Bird Survey you may contact me at 928-8967. Even though the oil is no longer flowing, we still need to do the survey.

If you missed the annual picnic in May, you may count yourself as one of the unlucky ones. We always have a good picnic, but this one was VERY GOOD. It was held at the new Tonsmeire Building at the Weeks Bay Reserve. We had a ride on the Weeks Bay Explorer, and everyone brought their favorite dish. It was truly a feast. On a personal note, I was lucky enough to sit and eat with a couple who I knew only from seeing them at every meeting. During the meal I got to talk with them and to know them. It was a wonderful experience.

If you have never taken the trip to Gaillard Island to see the nesting grounds of thousands of Pelicans, Terns, Gulls, and Skimmers, I encourage you to do so. You may never have the chance again to be practically in the nest with the birds. The trip is somewhat strenuous, but

well worth the effort. We observed all stages of birdlife from the egg to chicks to adults. Our guide, Roger Clay, has been keeping tabs on these birds for several years and knows them all personally. We had to be careful not to disturb them as they went about their daily business. The boat trip to and from the island was delightful.

We also presented a three-part summer series on identifying local birds. In June, Professor Ann McLaurin led a presentation entitled Sparrow School that taught us how to identify the local Sparrows. In July, various members of MBAS presented information on two dozen local warblers in a Warbler Workshop. And in August, Dr. Bill Summerour closed the series with his slides entitled Shorebird Identification. About 35 MBAS members, along with members of the public, attended each event. The series was organized by Celeste Hinds with assistance from Diana Gardiner, Ann McLaurin and Ralph Stemp and was held at the Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship.

# Mobile Bay Audubon Wants You!

Every membership supports Audubon's vital efforts to protect birds, wildlife and natural habitats. As a member, you'll become an important part of our dynamic chapter and receive a host of benefits

- A 1-year subscription (3 issues, one per quarter, excluding summer) of our chapter newsletter.
- Automatic membership in National Audubon Society, and a 1-year subscription (4 issues, one per quarter) of Audubon, its award-winning magazine.
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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 - 2 year Special Rate        |   |
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