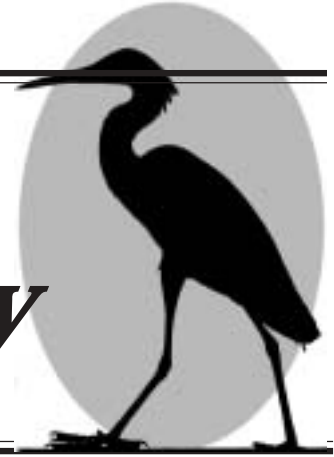


Mobile Bay Audubon Society

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY SINCE 1971



VOLUME XXIII NO. 3

FIRST ANNUAL ALABAMA COASTAL BIRDFEST COMING IN OCTOBER

by John Borom



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No one has been able to estimate accurately the volume of migrating shorebirds, waterfowl, and passerines fanning out over the 600 mile-wide Gulf of Mexico each autumn and spring, but biologists estimate that the number could run as high as six billion. Biologists have documented more than 200 species of birds that use the rim of land around the Gulf as a way station and launch pad.

Every fall millions of migrating birds come to or pass through Coastal Alabama. This fall, birders are expected to enjoy watching and learning more about them when the first annual **Alabama Coastal BirdFest** is celebrated October 14-17, 2004. A series of paid and free events, including guided wildlife and bird tours, nationally known speakers, displays, exhibits, workshops, children's activities, and social events are planned to take place all around the Mobile Bay area. Guided tours along the 240-mile long Alabama Coastal Birding

Trail, which has been noted for its diversity of natural habitats, will be a highlight of the event.

Initial funding support for BirdFest came from a grant from the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program to Faulkner State Community College. Other sponsors include the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau, Alabama Power Foundation, Baldwin County Commission, City of Fairhope, Conoco Phillips, Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant, Mobile Bay Audubon Society, Mobile Convention and Visitors Corp., The Forum, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation.

Coastal Alabama is a perfect location for birding. The *Mobile Bay Audubon Society Check List of Alabama Gulf Coast Birds* identifies 379 species based on records

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2004

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from experienced members of the Mobile Bay Audubon Society, the Coastal Birding Association and the Bird Records Committee of the Alabama Ornithological Society. Migratory birds such as Merlin and Stilt Sandpiper from as far away as Alaska or Canada come here to their wintering grounds on the Northern Gulf Coast or pass through here on their way to Central and South America.

Birders can expect to see birds of all sizes, ranging from the tiny Ruby-throated Hummingbird (0.11 ounce) and Yellow-rumped Warbler (0.43 ounce) to the Brown Pelican (8.2 pounds) and Wild Turkey (16.2 pounds). Semipalmated Plover and Greater Yellowlegs return year after year to winter on Dauphin Island, Little Lagoon Pass, and Mobile Point. Flocks of Lesser Scaup and Short-billed Dowitcher return to Mobile Bay each fall from Canada and Alaska. Sharp-shinned Hawk and Broad-winged Hawk soar into our area before they cross the Gulf. Blue-winged Warbler and Scarlet Tanager are usually seen on Dauphin Island and Fort Morgan.

Such bird diversity is a big attraction to birders that come to see not only birds that are year-round residents to our area but also migratory species from all over North America. Ecotourism is very popular and we hope that this event will encourage people to come and enjoy great birding and the natural beauty of Coastal Alabama in October. We also hope that people will gain a greater understanding that we

share our world with many creatures so our actions have far reaching impact.

According to federal wildlife officials, more money is spent watching birds and other wildlife in Alabama than is spent on hunting. An economic analysis by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that, counting purchases of everything from vehicles for exploring, to birdseed and binoculars, \$626 million was spent in 2001; that's almost \$25 million more than was spent on hunting. Birding is a huge industry and preserving the stopover habitat on the Northern Gulf Coast is important. All of the proceeds from the Alabama Coastal BirdFest will be used to purchase and improve habitats for birds on the Alabama Gulf Coast.

Come let us show you the wild and beautiful Alabama Coast and join us for some spectacular birding and a wonderful time! Most events have limited space, and reservations will be accepted in the order in which they are received. For more information on Alabama Coastal BirdFest 2004, including registration forms and a complete schedule of events, visit www.mobilebayaudubon.org/birdfest or call 251-990-0423.



SPLINTER HILL PITCHER PLANT BOG FIELD TRIP

MARCH 27, 2004

What a great group we had for this outing! More and more people are joining in the fun. Our planned field trips are a wonderful opportunity to experience unique environments that others can only imagine. And, Splinter Hill was no exception. After the walk, we always stop for lunch to relax and enjoy each other's company. Then we are back home in the early afternoon.

The Splinter Hill Bog has recently been purchased by Forever Wild from a private owner. It is an undeveloped tract of land that happens to be

inundated with pitcher plants. The land is hilly, and underneath the surface of the soil it is very moist which accounts for the large number of carnivorous pitcher plants. More land will be purchased in the near future by the Nature Conservancy of Alabama.

Splinter Hill is located north of the Perdido-Rabun exit off of I-65 in the tiny community of Splinter Hill.

Our guide, Keith Galdin of State Lands Division of ADCNR led us through the briars and the brambles, up and down hills to see more pitcher plants than you could imagine. You could never

tell from this area that they are an endangered species. There were so many at times that we could not help but step right on them. There were no roads or trails to follow unless you were a rabbit or a deer. We did see their trails.

Besides seeing so many pitcher plants, there were many types of wildflowers and several birds spotted or heard. Our guide, Keith, pointed out many species that we could see. We were even treated to a visit by a garter snake which Keith caught and let anyone who wanted to hold him. Thanks to everyone, we all had a wonderful day.

Eleanor Livaudais



THE COFFEE-BIRD CONNECTION

Shade-Grown Coffee

- Migratory birds and many resident birds find sanctuary in the forest canopy of traditional coffee plantations.
- Shade trees protect the plants from rain and sun, help maintain soil quality, and aid in natural pest control, thanks to the birds.
- Traditional coffee plantations help to conserve watersheds, leading to higher water quality and quantity for local populations.
- Shade-grown coffee is cultivated in specific ways that help protect biodiversity.
- Shade coffee plants can produce crops of beans for up to 50 years.

Sun-Grown Coffee

- 90% fewer bird species are found in sun-grown coffee areas compared with shade-grown coffee areas.
- Requires chemical fertilizers and pesticides and year-round labor, placing financial demands on the growers.
- Leads to great soil erosion and higher amounts of toxic runoff endangering both wildlife and people.
- Sun coffee plants produce crops of beans for only 10 to 15 years.

What Conservation-minded Coffee Consumers Can Do

If the demand for shade-grown, organic coffee continues to increase due to the efforts of The National Audubon Society and other concerned groups, we will be helping many of the neotropical migratory birds survive to return and breed in our backyards. Here are some ways to help:

- **Buy Locally** Many national retail chains such as Whole Foods, Caribou Coffee, and Wild Birds Unlimited now carry at least one brand of genuine SGC. Coffee beans bought locally through markets, health food and coffee shops marked “Mexican Organic” are likely grown under bird-friendly conditions. If your favorite shop has none of these, ask the management to look into marketing shade-grown and/or organic coffees. When buying these coffees locally, let them know why you made your choice—it’s for the birds!
- **Order By Mail** An increasing number of coffee companies are specializing in high-quality organic coffees that are also shade grown and, therefore, come from good migratory bird habitats. When ordering coffee from these companies, send a message or talk with someone in charge about how important the conservation of tropical bird habitat is to your coffee-buying decision.
- **Get Informed** Gather information about the coffee-migratory bird connection and spread the news to community groups, co-workers, and the news media. Together we can greatly help protect migratory birds breeding in the U.S. and Canada, as well as many of the beautiful resident birds sharing these habitats with the migrants wintering in the tropics.

These companies are making substantial effort to market quality shade-grown coffee:

Audubon Premium

Organic Coffee Co.

1933 Davis St., Suite 308

San Leandro, CA 94577

1-800-829-1300

<http://www.auduboncoffeeclub.com/>

Audubon Premium shade-grown coffee is certified as sustainably managed by the Rainforest Alliance and certified organic by OCIA. According to the distributor the Audubon Premium uses 100% organic Arabica beans grown on traditional farms. Four habitat-friendly, organic blends are available: French Roast, Rainforest Blend, Breakfast Blend regular and decaf in whole bean or Ground.

Birds and Beans Inc.

2415-B Lake Shore Blvd. West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M8V 1C5
9221-9221-9221
FAX: 416-913-6453
<http://www.birdsandbeans.ca/>

All Birds and Beans coffee is purchased by their coffee suppliers directly from coffee cooperatives. In exchange for producing the highest quality coffee using organic and shade-grown methods, the farmers are guaranteed a buyer and fair price for their coffee. Shade-grown coffees certified by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center are Mexico “Hacienda Miravalles”, Bolivia “Colonial Caranavi”, and Peru “Penachi”.

Café Campesino

302 W. Lamar Street, Suite C
Americus, GA 31709
4728-4728-4728
FAX: 912-924-6250
www.cafecampesino.com

Café Campesino only purchases coffee grown in socially and environmentally responsible ways from democratically managed small-scale farmer cooperatives. A source of fair-trade, shade-grown, organic coffees from Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru.

Café Canopy

FMZ International
7966 Arjons Drive, Suite 107
San Diego, CA 92126
4966-4966-4966
www.shade-coffee.com

A source of shade-grown, organic coffees certified by an independent, third-party using shade criteria developed by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. Café Canopy carries the bird-friendly seal of approval, and a percentage of sales support SMBC research and conservation programs.

Café Sombra

Colorado Trading Company
3100 N.W. 72nd Ave., Suite 121
Miami, FL 33122
9405-9405-9405
<http://www.cafesombra.com>

Café Sombra grows on an estate coffee farm located 3000 ft. atop the Borborema Mountain range in northeastern Brazil. Café Sombra received the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center’s certification in late 2002 and will ship certified bird-friendly coffee starting in early 2003. Offers two shade-grown coffees, Sombra Dark and Songbird Symphony Light Roast.

Caffe Ibis

52 Federal Avenue
Logan, UT 84321
4777-4777-4777
FAX: 435-755-9139
www.coffee@cafeibis.com/about.html

Caffe Ibis specializes in mountain-grown, shade-grown, fair-traded, certified organic coffees. Some of their coffees are Smithsonian “Bird Friendly” certified (e.g., Organic Mexican Altura #10, Organic Bolivian #35, Organic Peruvian Rainforest #16, Organic Aztec Dark #28).

Caribou Coffee Company

615 North Third Street
Minneapolis, MN 55401
888-CARIBOU (888-227-4268)
<http://www.cariboucoffee.com/>

Rainforest Blend, a 100% organic, sustainable coffee, is grown without chemical fertilizers or pesticides, under a lofty canopy of shade trees. These groves provide a home for thousands of plants, animals, and migratory birds; and the farms maintain the highest standards of housing, medical care and education for all workers.

Counter Culture Coffee

4823 Meadow Dr., Suite 112
Durham, NC 27713
888-238-JAVA (5282)
www.counterculturecoffee.com

Markets Sanctuary brand line of shade-grown coffees, including those from Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Mexico. “A better cup of coffee and a safe haven for songbirds.”

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters

33 Coffee Lane, P.O. Box 657

Green Mountain Coffee offers a full line of certified organic and fair-trade coffees, with 5% of pre-tax earnings

Waterbury, VT 05676
6768-6768-6768
829 Parkway Drive
Leeds, AL 35094
8575-8575-8575
<http://www.highergroundroasters.com>

Jim's Organic Coffee
21 Patterson Brook Rd.
W. Wareham, MA 02576
800-999-9218
<http://www.jimsorganiccoffee.com>

Montana Coffee Traders
5810 Highway 93 S.
Whitefish, MT 59937
5282-5282-5282
FAX: 406-862-7680
www.coffeetraders.com

Peace Coffee
2801 21st Ave. S., Suite 120
Minneapolis, MN 55407
7872-7872-7872
email: info@peacecoffee.com
www.peacecoffee.com

Poverty Bay Coffee Company
3902 West Valley Hwy. N
Suite 106
Auburn, WA 98001
5203-5203-5203
email: info@povertybay.com
www.povertybay.com

**Sacred Grounds
Organic Coffee Roasters**
686 F Street
Arcata, CA 95521
2532-2532-2532
email: sacred@tidepool.com
www.sacred-grounds.com

Seattle's Best Coffee
1321 Second Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101
9659-9659-9659
email: sbc@seabest.com
<http://seabest.com/organic/html>

Thanksgiving Coffee Company
19100 South Harbor Dr.

donated each year to social and environmental initiatives. Recent partnership with Newman's Own® Organic line protected, Higher Ground roasts exclusively 100% certified fair-trade and organic coffees that are also shade grown. Offering 12 oz. or 2 lb. bags, whole bean or ground.

Full line of organic coffees certified by Quality Assurance International. QAI regularly sends inspectors to the farms to ensure that rigid quality control standards for organic production are met.

Markets the "Good Migrations" line of sustainably produced coffee that is certified organic, shade grown, co-op produced, and fair traded. Six regular blends and two water-process decaf blends available. A supporter of International Migratory Bird Day—"Good coffee doing good work."

Organic and shade-grown coffee that is fair traded is a component of sustainable communities, where ecology, economics and culture overlap. Organic coffee promotes healthy farmers and environments, shaded coffee farms increase biodiversity and bird habitat, and fair trade sustains vital communities. All Peace Corps coffees are shade grown, organic, and fairly traded.

Poverty Bay Coffee Company is a micro-roaster of 100% shade-grown coffee. As a member of the Northwest Shade Coffee Campaign, it has pledged to support and assist the campaign in their efforts to inform the public about the benefits of shade-grown coffee and to raise the public awareness about the connection between coffee-growing practices and threatened segments of the environment. Order online or by toll-free number.

Sacred Grounds is a QAI-certified organic coffee roaster, buying exclusively organic and shade-grown coffee. Organic coffees are generally grown on small, family-owned farms under diversified shade cover, the natural habitat of hundreds of species of migratory songbirds. Shade coffees include Organic Peruvian French Roast and Organic Guatemalan Aroma Roast.

Mountain-farmed and shade-grown OCIA-certified organic coffees. Organically grown coffees are farmed above 4,000 feet in the shade of surrounding jungle canopy. Besides being much easier on the environment, they offer a superior taste. Six choices available in their line of 100 percent organic coffees.

Offers six shade-grown coffees under the Song Bird brand in partnership with American Birding Association.

P. O. Box 1918
Fort Bragg, CA 95437
800-648-6491
FAX: 707-964-0351
www.songbirdcoffee.com

Thanksgiving uses the Rainforest Alliance certification program (ECO-OK) to certify the shade level of its coffees.

Vienna Coffee Company
1813 Southcliff Drive
Maryville, TN 37803
2058-2058-2058
Fax: 865-981-9319
Email: cafeginer@charter.net
www.viennacoffeecompany.com

Working to expand their line of organic, fair-trade, and shade-grown coffees. Current sustainable coffee offerings are: Organic Mexican Chiapas and Mexican Pluma San Pablo.



The Audubon Mission

The Audubon mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

From The 500 Most Important Bird Areas in the United States © 2003

By American Bird Conservancy

There are approximately 80,000 communication towers in the United States, and about 5,000 new towers are being built each year. This rate will likely increase with developing cell tower and digital television networks. Nearly 50,000 of these towers are more than 200 feet tall, are in the vicinity of an airport, or are along major highways, and thus are required to be lit according to regulations established by the Federal Communications Commission.

Bird kills caused by towers, their guy wires, and related structures have been documented for over 50 years. Most birds killed by towers are neotropical migratory songbirds that migrate at night and seem to be confused by towers lights, especially in

poor weather conditions. The extent of tower mortality is not well documented: the Fish and Wildlife Service estimates four to five million birds are killed each year at towers, but others estimate an annual loss of up to 40 million birds. At least 230 birds species are known to have been killed by collisions with towers. The Swainson's Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow, and Henslow's Sparrow, all listed as extremely high priority for conservation, have been documented as being killed at towers. In 1998, approximately 10,000 Lapland Longspurs were killed at three towers in a single night in western Kansas.

Little research has been conducted into the causes of this mortality, or into discovering ways

to reduce bird kills at towers. Research protocols have been developed, and funding that research should be a priority for both government agencies and industry. Until more is learned, a number of steps can be taken to minimize bird mortality: reduce the number of towers by collocating multiple antennae on existing structures; construct towers below 200 feet to avoid the need for lights; where lighting is necessary, use minimum intensity; dismantle inactive towers as soon as possible; use visual markers in areas of raptor and waterfowl movements; down-shield security lighting for towers, and use best current knowledge in lighting towers (e.g., white strobes seem to attract fewer birds than red).



New Members

Welcome to the Mobile Bay Audubon Society, the local chapter of the National Audubon Society. We thank you for your support. A few facts about our chapter: Monthly meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday from September thru May at 7:30 PM alternately in Fairhope and Mobile (See calendar for details of programs and locations.) Programs of interest are planned for each meeting and field trips are scheduled regularly. We are a non-profit organization—all donations are tax deductible. A list of officers is listed in the newsletter; feel free to call any of them for information. Join us as often as you can—we want to get to know you.

Ottillie Halstead, Membership Chairman

Cullman

John Thrasher

Daphne

Linda Dawson
Pataricia L Meador
Susan Ross
Sylvia Walding
Rebecca Bowen

Dauphin Island

Kay Breitenfeld
Shirey Clark

Elberta

B. Gonzalez

Fairhope

Shirlee Lewis
Thomas L McCullough
Roger Richardson
Dorothy Thompson

Foley

Carol B Burkle
Sobieck

Gulf Shores

Don Byrd

Irvington

Doris J Pack

Lillian

Mary Cooper
Jean B Schmitz

Loxley

Carolyn Rivero

Magnolia Springs

Mr.-Mrs Joe Sankey

Mobile

John Buckley
L P Carolton
Brandon Flynn

Tuck Hayward

Sue Kilborn
Joycelyn Kilpatrick
David W Turner
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Allen Mathis
Mable Wilsey

Saraland

Allen E Gleghorn

Spanish Fort

Brenda G. Anderson

Summerdale

Barbara Harbrecht

Did You Know?

By John Borom

As it is with the rest of the country, the future of wild lands and wildlife rests firmly in the hands of people. In addition to lands set aside for conservation by organizations like The Nature Conservancy, the National Audubon Society and the Forever Wild Land Trust, the purchase of hunting licenses is extremely important.

Congress passed the Pittman-Robertson Act in 1937 to provide money for the selection, restoration, rehabilitation and improvement of wildlife habitat and wildlife management research. Since its inception, the act has produced more than \$2 billion for conservation efforts in the nation. It generates, on average, about \$200 million each year. The funding comes from an 11 percent tax on sporting arms, ammunition and archery equipment and a 10 percent tax on handguns. In 2003, Alabama received \$3.7 million in act money, which ranked 29th in the nation. That amount was combined with a 25 percent state match.

Thanks to the Pittman-Robertson Act, programs exist that have helped keep the populations of a number of game species viable. In 1920, the

North American elk population was 100,000 and today it is up to 500,000. In 1920, the Wild Turkey was scarce, and today the population is estimated at 2 million. In 1920, the white-tailed deer population was 500,000 and today it is up to 14 million. In 1920, the pronghorn antelope population was 25,000, and today it is over 750,000. The Wood Duck has been brought back from the brink of extinction in the 1920's to the most common breeding duck in America today.

The population and number of hunting licenses it sells each year determine each state's share of the act's money. A 2001 survey done by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shows there were 423,000 hunting licenses sold in Alabama that year.

In Alabama, successful conservation efforts through the nongame wildlife program include:

- Releasing 91 Bald Eagles to restore a nesting population;

- Releasing 66 Ospreys to increase nesting pairs;

- Building more than 10,000 Eastern Bluebird nest boxes and coordinating more than 1,000 volunteers to "Bring Back the Bluebird";

- Managing and protecting Gaillard Island in Mobile Bay to



produce more than 10,000 Brown Pelicans in eight years—more pelicans produced in Alabama than in the last century;

- Starting a monitoring program to conserve Alabama's songbirds.

"The Pittman-Robertson Act money is just as important to our conservation efforts today as it was in 1937," said Gary Moody, chief of the wildlife division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. "It doesn't matter if you're talking about songbirds or endangered species or deer, improving habitat is beneficial to them all," Moody said. "The money we get goes to improving habitat, but it also goes to wildlife management and hunter education programs. So it's not just the hunters who benefit, it's everyone who enjoys watching wildlife."

Nonhunters and birders can do their part in helping improve wild lands and wildlife in the state, and they do not have to buy guns or ammunition to do it. State officials are urging nonhunters to buy hunting licenses. A resident hunting license costs \$15 per year.



Boreal Conservation Framework Lays Out Vision for Protecting Vital Breeding Grounds for Billions of North American Birds

Stretching from Alaska to the Atlantic Ocean, Canada's boreal forest is one of the world's largest forests. It accounts for 25 percent of the earth's remaining intact forests, covers 1.3 billion acres, and is larger than the Brazilian Amazon. With more fresh water than any place on earth, Canada's boreal forest supports some of the largest populations of wildlife such as grizzly bears and wolves, and provides vital breeding grounds for up to a third of North America's land birds and 40 percent of its waterfowl.

In December 2003, the Canadian Boreal Initiative (CBI) announced a landmark vision to protect this global treasure. The Boreal Conservation Framework proposes a new approach to balancing conservation and economic development: the establishment of a network of large interconnected protected areas covering about half of Canada's boreal region, and the use of cutting-edge sustainable development practices in remaining areas. The Framework reflects an extraordinary alliance of conservation organizations, First Nations, and timber and oil companies who have signed on to the Framework. (Information about the Framework can be found at CBI's web-site: www.borealcanada.ca)

While vast tracks of the boreal region remain unspoiled at this point, the release of the Framework comes at a time when development is rapidly escalating

and land use decisions in every Canadian province and territory will determine the fate of much of the boreal region within the next three to five years. With over 90% of the boreal under public ownership, a critical next step will be to persuade Canadian governments to play a central role in making the Framework's vision a reality.

Much of the resource development in the boreal is being driven by U.S. consumption. The U.S. is the leading importer of Canadian forest products and oil and gas. Eighty-one percent of Canada's forest products go to the United States, and most of the wood cut in Canada's boreal is used to make paper, including catalogs, junk mail, magazines, and newspapers. And the U.S. buys more of its oil and gas from Canada — 60% of which is produced from the boreal — than any other single source.

Of the 298 bird species that have some of their breeding grounds in the boreal forest, at least 40 species of land birds and several species of ducks are already experiencing population declines in part due to habitat loss from logging and oil and gas development.

While American consumption is largely responsible, it also means that American citizens and companies can influence the fate of this global treasure. The boreal is perhaps the greatest forest conservation opportunity left on earth.

An international campaign focused in the U.S. is emerging. The Boreal Songbird Network is a

new network of conservation groups that include: the Boreal Songbird Initiative, the National Audubon Society, the National Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the American Bird Conservancy. These groups are working to build a broad base of international support for boreal conservation and the adoption of the Boreal Framework.

For more information on how you can help protect the boreal forest, please go to the Boreal Songbird Initiative website at www.borealbirds.org.

The Boreal Songbird Initiative is a new project dedicated to educating bird conservationists and naturalists throughout the United States about the importance of North America's boreal forest to migratory birds.

Newsletter Deadline

Any member is welcomed and encouraged to submit articles for the newsletter. I would be happy to include anything you think would be of interest to the membership.

Please send your articles for the July/August issue to Delane Small by June 25.

Address:

1 Fiesta Drive

Spanish Fort, AL 36527

Email: dhs9700@bellsouth.net



Calendar



May

- 11 Board Meeting 6:30 pm
General Meeting 7:30 pm: "All You Ever Wanted to Know About Hummingbirds but Didn't Know Who to Ask," presented by **Fred Bassett**, a Master Bird bander with the Hummer Bird Study Group. Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus. Centennial Hall.
- 14 Field trip to Gaillard Island in Mobile Bay to observe nesting Brown Pelicans as well as gulls and terns. Meet at Beachcomber Dry Dock and Marine Supply at Dog River in Mobile County. Going south take the first left at Dog River Bridge. There will be a \$15 per person fee. Limit 20 people. 9:00 am-1:00 pm. For reservations call **John Borom** at 251-990-0423.
- 15 Annual Picnic, Blakeley State Park-Bring your own picnic and we will meet at the picnic area at Blakeley. There will be an exhibit at the Wehle Nature Center about birds from 10:00-2:00. We can enjoy the exhibit, explore the birding trails and enjoy the fellowship. There is a \$3.00/person admission charge to the park.

Florida Saints are for the Birds

Celeste Hinds

Florida did it right! State parks along the Panhandle are wild, pristine and a joy for camping. Hot showers in clean bath houses and miles of trails for hiking are a real plus.

Near Panama City, St. Andrews State Park has white sandy beaches where Black Skimmers line up in the wind. Little Blue Herons squabble over nesting sites in their rookery. Ruddy Turnstones were busy on the big rocks. Black Terns mingled with Least Terns.

On south where Highway 98 bends eastward, we took a right toward St. Joseph's Peninsula, our next camping spot. Hooded Warblers and Eastern Towhees watched us set up gear and laid out sleeping bags in our little blue mini-van. This was April 11 and winds blew at near gale force, hinting that we just might witness a full fledged fall-out. We were not disappointed!

Next morning we hesitated to

make coffee because the trees and low shrubs sparkled like they had been decorated for the winter holidays - almost a shame to move around with little fluffy guys everywhere, resting up from a long journey across the Gulf. Shining red fluffs (Tanagers), fuzzy blue balls (Indigo Buntings) and multi-color decorations (Rose Breasted Grosbeaks) were the ornaments.

Other campers enjoyed the birds, not realizing they were being treated to what might be a once in a lifetime experience. They were not birders for they had no field glasses. Binoculars were not needed anyway. Flocks of Indigo Buntings fed at roadside. Many Warbler species flitted through the brushy growth.

Two days later we headed east to St. George's State Park where there was not a full fallout, but an excellent birding day. American Oystercatchers, Bald and Golden

Eagles, Lesser Nighthawks and even a Painted Bunting waited for us. A special treat was a Black Throated Blue Warbler! Swainsons were heard but not seen. On to St. Marks where we stayed in Sweet Magnolia, a fancy bed and breakfast, and took day trips to St. Mark's Refuge and to Wakulla Springs. More birds awaited us including Glossy Ibis and nesting Willets. Tourists watched the alligators while we enjoyed Black Neck Stilts and Blue Wing Teal.

Because Florida State Parks are so beautiful and well kept they are often filled, making advance reservations necessary. Fortunately we had reserved several months in advance.

Every spring we head a different direction for birding and camping and every time we say "this is the best". Whether it's Eufaula, Big Bend, Cape May or Madera Canyon - there's always something wonderful.

Mobile Bay Audubon Wants You! Join Us Today!

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 including:

- ◆ A 1-year subscription (6 bi-monthly issues) 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;
- ◆ Admission to Audubon Centers across the country
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“Everyone wants to understand painting. Why is there no attempt to understand the song of the birds?” Pablo Picasso

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