



Mobile Bay Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society Since 1971

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Protect and Reauthorize **The Forever Wild Land Trust** By John Borom

According to a 2002 report by NatureServe, Alabama is fifth in the nation in terms of biodiversity. And it does not stop there: Alabama's waters have the largest number of freshwater mollusks and freshwater fishes in the United States. Alabama is also ranked fourth in terms of species at risk and second for extinction, being surpassed only by Hawaii.

Alabama, the 25th largest state by land mass, is diverse in habitats and ecology. Mountains spread into the north portion of the state, freshwater lakes dot central Alabama, and white sandy beaches and rich estuaries greet visitors on the Gulf Coast. According to a report by the Union of Concerned Scientists, the coastal region from the Florida panhandle to Mobile Bay is extremely rich in biodiversity—one of the most dense in the nation.

However, Alabama pales in comparison to other Southern states with only four percent of our land base falling in the protected category. Alabama has the lowest amount of public access lands of any state in the southeast. Adjacent states have the following amounts of protected lands: Florida 21.23 percent, Tennessee 7.25 percent, and Mississippi 5.95 percent.

Thanks to **The Forever Wild Land Trust**, Alabama has been working to address the declining public access lands available to our residents. Since its inception in 1992, Forever Wild

has secured approximately 221,817 acres of land in 22 counties, which are equitably distributed across Alabama. Forever Wild projects have become a refreshing measure of successful government throughout Alabama. When we think about the protection of our greatest outdoor landmarks, most of them have been supported through Forever Wild's involvement. The Mobile-Tensaw Delta, Walls of Jericho, Sipsey River Swamp, Freedom Hills, Lillian Swamp, the Red Hills, Weogufka Creek, Ruffner Mountain, Turkey Creek, Hurricane Creek, Grand Bay Savanna, Little River Canyon, Old Cahawba Prairie, Hatchet Creek, Coon Gulf, Paint Rock River, Coldwater Mountain, Perdido, Weeks Bay and the Meadows....the list of accomplishments mirrors the hopes of Forever Wild's early supporters. By making this land available for public use to hunters, anglers, bird watchers, hikers, canoeing, camping or others who want to enjoy Alabama's great outdoors, Forever Wild has made great strides in protecting the state's legacy.

Forever Wild is funded from ten percent of the earnings off of Alabama's offshore oil and natural gas revenues that are placed in the Alabama Trust Fund. The program does not utilize tax dollars. Forever Wild represents taking a ten percent tithe from the earnings generated by the use of a natural resource and rein-

vesting that tithe back into a natural resource that provides public access to our citizens—they can physically use it and enjoy it. Forever Wild buys land from willing sellers only. While the conservation of Forever Wild's land is forever, the funding for acquiring more land will cease in 2012, as stipulated by Constitutional Amendment 543.

The recent elections in Alabama have created an entirely new political playing field—one that we hope will be helpful to our efforts to protect and reauthorize Forever Wild funding. Remember this, Forever Wild as we know it will cease to exist if it is not reauthorized by the Alabama Legislature. There is a lot of work to be done in order to successfully reauthorize Forever Wild funding in the upcoming legislative session. **The Mobile Bay Audubon Society** is a part of the **Protect Forever Coalition** and needs all of our members to contact your local legislator and secure their support for reauthorizing Forever Wild funding as is in the next legislative session.

By reauthorizing **The Forever Wild Land Trust** as-is, we will insure that an ample supply of public-access lands is available for generations to come, preserve some of the great ecological diversity of our state, and, at the same time, insure that many of the outdoor traditions that have made us who we are will continue.

Board Members

Halo & Luna A Story of Trust

by Brad Andre

Officers:

Dr. John L. Borom, President

jborom@faulknerstate.edu

990-0423 (w) 928-5219 (h)

Chester McConnell, Vice President

WMICMC@bellsouth.net

626-7804

Eleanor Livaudais, Secretary

elivaday@bellsouth.net

928-8967

Ottilie Halstead, Treasurer

ottgrasme@bellsouth.net

928-9537

Delane Small, Newsletter Editor

dhs9700@mchsi.com

626-9700

Gaye Lindsey, Newsletter Coordinator,
Membership

gpilindsey@bellsouth.net

929-2837

Celeste Hinds, Field Trips

hindsite5@bellsouth.net

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I am a very lucky boy. I have made the trust of two wild Red-shouldered Hawks, and they let me feed them every day. They fly free around my neighborhood, and I can whistle to them to come and feed. They screech loudly when they are hungry and are so loud that our neighbors have called us at 6:00am to feed them so they can go back to bed in peace and quiet.

I have named our hawks Halo and Luna and it was Luna that we first noticed watching us in September 2008. My dad and I were trimming some deer meat in our front yard and throwing the trimmings on the grass for the neighborhood critters. She was high in our tree and was watching us intently. Dad told me to throw some deer meat far from us to see what the hawk would do. She swooped down from her perch and picked up the meat and landed in a nearby tree and started to eat it. We watched her until she was through eating, and then gave her another piece of meat. She came and grabbed it and

flew to the same tree to continue eating. It was really something to watch as she would flair out her wings and grab the meat without slowing down much. She took the last piece of meat I threw and flew away.

The next morning I saw her in the same tree, and I went inside to get more deer meat and threw it on the grass. She immediately swooped down on it and flew to her tree to eat it. The school bus was coming and I threw her more meat. She picked it up and flew in front of the bus where everyone could see her. This went on almost every morning and we started taking pictures of her in flight and sitting in her tree. About a week later she brought her mate with her and he would watch her grab the meat and then fly to her and take the meat away from her. Sometimes she would let him take the meat and other times she would fly away with it. I named the friendly hawk Luna and her mate Halo. I would put her meat on our mailbox so we could take better pictures. After

two years, we still feed her this way. I also have a special way to wave to her and whistle so she knows I have food for her. She will come and land in her tree and wait for me to put her food down. We have this morning routine of feeding. If she doesn't show up, I still put the meat on the mail box and it is gone when I come home from school.

The first year they flew away in mid December but they came back to Spanish Fort two months later. They let us know they were back and were hungry by screeching loudly. We were glad they were back and healthy looking. Our neighbors knew Halo and Luna and loved to see them feed and perch on their trees. People would knock on our door and ask if they could see the hawks feed so they could take some photos. By now I could put the meat on the post and in a flash she would fly and grab it. Sometimes she would be perched on the mailbox and feeding and I could get to about three feet from her before she flew to her tree. I once gave her a road kill squirrel and she grabbed it. This was very heavy for her to carry, and it took awhile to gain altitude. I read where they mostly like birds and small rodents. We also feed them uncooked chicken, turkey, fish and beef.

The second year, the longest they were away was about three weeks. When they came back, they built a small nest in a tall pine tree about 50 yards away our house. They started sitting in the nest in April it looked like they took turns sitting on the eggs. About five weeks later we could see they were feeding the chicks, but we could not get a good view from where we were. It was about another month later that you could see two and three chicks on the branches. We started feeding Luna a lot more deer meat so she could feed her chicks. We never got a good photo of the chicks and then they left. Halo and Luna have stayed around all summer, fall and winter and continue to be a part of our daily lives.

We have been working on a trick with Luna. I throw the meat high into the air and hoping she grab it before it hits the ground. However, the meat must be thrown really high to give her extra time to catch it.

We live in Spanish Fort, Alabama near Mobile Bay, and I am a freshman at our Spanish High School. My dad is the security guard on the Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus.



Birdathon 2011

By Elizabeth Williams

For many years people have been strolling, walking and running for worthy causes. Our society counts birds! We have an annual Birdathon, and use the money raised to place Audubon Adventures Curriculum kits in 4th and 5th grade classrooms. This science kit is used by the teachers and the students all year. The goal is to connect students with nature.

To participate, ask sponsors to donate funds to the Mobile Bay Audubon Society for all the bird species you see on a single day. They can donate by the number of species (ie. 10 cents for each species) or give a lump sum of their choice. Then go out one day count bird species. You can go with a group or on your own. April is the best month for us, but anytime is OK. Dauphin Island and Fort Morgan are prime birding spots to consider, but you can do it anywhere there are birds. After you collect the money, please write a check made out to the Mobile Bay Audubon Society and send it to MBAS, PO Box 483, Fairhope, AL 36533.

For further information, call Elizabeth Williams at 643-7257.



Halo & Luna

5 Rivers Delta Resource Center Calendar

Spring Events: April -May

www.Alabama5Rivers.com, 251-625-0814

Recurring Weekly Family Events:

StoryTime Tuesday! Tuesdays at 10-11am. Free.

For anyone who enjoys children's stories with beautiful pictures.

Sunday Matinee and Guest Speakers Sundays at 2-3pm. Free.

Educational and interesting videography on the big screen with full surround sound.

5 Rivers Forever Wild Land Tours March 26, April 9, May 28

Free. Explore Alabama's Forever Wild public lands, such as Splinter Hill Bog, the upper Mobile-Tensaw Delta, Jacintoport, Perdido River, and Lillian Swamp. Take a trek with a knowledgeable guide to see for yourself what the wildlands of Alabama have to offer. Space is limited, and reservations are required. Call 251-625-0814 for information and reservations. Locations to be determined.

5 Rivers Delta Education Classes:

Free. Class description and dates available at www.Alabama5Rivers.com and on our Facebook page. Call 251-625-0814 for information and to register.

Saturday Classes, Grade 3-5, 9-11am

Growing Up Wild Fridays, Preschool-Grade 3, 1pm-2pm

5 Rivers Saturday Adventures:

April 16, 1-3pm, Free. "Ponds" with PJ Waters, Auburn University Marine Extension and Research. All you ever wanted to know about putting in and/or maintaining a pond. Bring along water samples for testing, or plant samples for identification. Registration encouraged, call 251-625-0814.

May 7, 1-3pm, Free. Mother's Day Crafts for kids. Make Mom something special as a gift for her special day.

5 Rivers Roadshows:

Come see us as we take our 5 Rivers education crew and critters on the road. Dates and times available on our website.

Visiting Exhibits:

Free Admission to the 5 Rivers Apalachee Exhibit Hall. Enjoy live and taxidermy animals of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, see local artwork, and learn about the history of the region.

5 Rivers Festivals:

April 30 – 4th Annual Delta Woods and Water Expo. 9am – 4pm. Free and open to the public.

Bringing families together outside. Kayaking, knot-tying, primitive weather forecasting and methods for leaving no trace in the woods -- these are a few of the skills you can learn at this outdoor expo.

If you have any questions about 5 Rivers events, please contact:

Shonda Borden, Assistant Manager. Shonda.Borden@DCNR.Alabama.gov

251-625-0814 (office); 251-331-7969 (cell)

Trip to St. Francisville

Friday, April 8 – Sunday, April 10

by Eleanor Livaudais

If you are thinking about joining us for this trip, now is your last chance to sign up. Please contact Dr. John Borom at 251-990-0423 for further information or to sign up. Be sure to give us your email address so that we will be able to contact you. You should make your own reservations at the Magnuson Hotel in St. Francisville, either by internet (www.magnusonhotels.com) or phone (225-635-3821). We are looking forward to a great time and hope you can join us.

Spring 2011 Calendar

April 8 – 10 Birding in Plantation Country.

Join Audubon members and friends on a birding tour of St. Francisville, Louisiana. See details bottom of page 4.

April 12 General Meeting.

“The Role of Seagrasses as Important Nursery Habitats,” presented by **Ken Heck, PhD**, senior marine biologist, Dauphin Island Sea Lab. Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00p.m. Bring a friend.

May 10 General Meeting.

“Seafood Safety Response in Gulf of Mexico,” presented by **Tony Lowery, PhD**, program coordinator, National Seafood Inspection Laboratory, NOAA Fisheries, Pascagoula, Mississippi. Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00p.m. Bring a friend.

May 20 Field Trip to Gaillard Island.

Join **Roger Clay** and **John Borom** to observe nesting Brown Pelicans, Laughing Gulls, Royal Terns, Sandwich Terns, Black Skimmers and Black-necked Stilts, 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. Meet at the marina at the Dog River Bridge in Mobile County. There will be a \$15 per person fee and space is limited to 20 people. For reservations call John Borom at (251) 990-0423.

Audubon Participates in ESC Open House

by Judy Lovell

Audubon members Edwina Mullins, Edith and Jenny McClinton and Judy Lovell braved the cold and windy day to man the Audubon Booth at the Environmental Study Center Open House. They sold plants, gave out free birdseed and flower seeds from Edith and Jenny’s yard. It was a wonderful day to see old friends and enjoy the visitors who came out in support of the wildlife center. Elizabeth Williams, one of the regular participants, was unable to help that day, but was at the Birdfest booth in October. We thank these ladies for their dedication to Audubon.



Edwina Mullins and Edith McClinton

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.
- Admission to Audubon Centers across the country.
- A 10% discount on products at select Audubon Nature Stores and more!

Yes! I want to join Mobile Bay Audubon and National Audubon Society!

\$20 - 1 year Introductory Rate \$1,000 - Individual Life Membership
 \$15 - 1 year Student/Senior Rate \$1,500 - Dual Life Membership
 \$30 - 2 year Special Rate
 My check is enclosed Please bill me

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Make check payable to National Audubon Society and mail to: National Audubon Society,
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Mobile Bay Audubon Society
P O Box 483
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