



Mobile Bay Audubon Society

THIS IS THE LAST NEWSLETTER YOU WILL EVER GET!!!

UNLESS YOU SIGN UP FOR ELECTRONIC DELIVERY NOW!!!

What is going to happen? The MBAS Newsletter will ONLY be delivered electronically, **with exceptions listed below**. It will be posted on the MBAS website (www.mobilebayaudubon.org) and an email will be sent to everyone who has signed up notifying you when the newsletter is available.

What if I don't have email? Don't worry, we will print copies for those of you who do not have email. To request a printed copy (if you have not already done so), please send a letter to the Mobile Bay Audubon Society, PO Box 483, Fairhope, AL 36533. Include your name and the address where you would like to receive it.

When will this take effect? Immediately! This is the last printed newsletter to go to everyone.

Why are we doing this? Currently we spend about \$1400 each year to print and mail the newsletter. The cost of sending it electronically is minimal since we already maintain the website. We could do a lot of good things with this money, and save a few trees. In addition, most recipients ignore the newsletter. This is probably due to the fact that everyone in the nearby area who joins the National Audubon Society is assigned to our chapter. We have over 900 members by this count, most of whom have never attended a meeting or participated in any of our events.

How do I sign up for electronic delivery? Go to the MBAS Website (www.mobilebayaudubon.org) and click on Newsletter (on the left side of the home page, in yellow). When the newsletter page comes up, click on "Click Here to Sign Up for Electronic Delivery" link. Fill in the form and click "Submit".

Mobile Bay Audubon Society

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MBAS FALL 2013 CALENDAR

September

10 General Meeting. “**My Audubon Adventure at Hog Island**” presented by **Emma Rhodes**. Come and learn about the National Audubon Society’s summer program at Hog Island. The Mobile Bay Audubon Society provided a scholarship to encourage this young birder. Emma is a freshman at Faulkner State Community College. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center. 7:00p.m. Bring a friend.

October

8 General Meeting “**Gulf Coast Birds 2013**” presented by **John Borom**. Come and enjoy a musical slide show and hear about the success of the 10th Annual Alabama Coastal BirdFest. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center. 7:00p.m. Bring a friend.

November

12 General Meeting. “**The Underwater Forest and the Mobile Tensaw Delta**” presented by **Ben Raines**, Executive Director of the Weeks Bay Foundation. Come and hear about the discovery of a 50,000 year old cypress forest in the Gulf of Mexico about 10 miles south of the present Alabama shoreline. Also, learn more about the Mobile Tensaw Delta. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center. 7:00p.m. Bring a friend.

December

10 Christmas Party and General Meeting. Program TBA. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center. 6:30 pm. Bring a friend.

Eastern Shore Birding Field Trips Fall 2013 Calendar

Here is the Fall 2013 schedule! About a week before each field trip, anyone who has signed up for email distribution will receive an email giving details of each trip. This includes meeting time and place, lunch plans, etc. If you are not currently receiving the emails and wish to, please email Gaye Lindsey at gplindsey@bellsouth.net or call 929-2837.

Sep 18 – Meaher State Park, Battleship Park

Oct 9 – Ft. Morgan Bird Banding, Fall Migration

Oct 16 – Dauphin Island, Fall Migration

Oct 23 – Grand Bay, Bayou La Batre, Fall Migration

Nov 6 – Daphne Bayfront

Nov 20 – Gulf Shores Water Treatment Plant, Gulf State Park

Dec 4 - North Baldwin Discovery Trip

Dec 18 - Blakeley Mud Flats

Five New Trips for 10th Annual Alabama Coastal BirdFest

by D. Fran Morley

To celebrate 10 years of BirdFest, organizers have come up with several new trips and have a couple of new partners that will add to the excitement of this year's event.

“We welcome the participation of **Birmingham Audubon**,” said BirdFest founder John Borom. “They will be working with us in several ways: They are co-sponsors with **Mobile Bay Audubon** of the Wednesday night Orientation, Presentation, and Welcome Reception; we hope to have the assistance of a couple of their members as guides on some trips; and they will also have a presence at the Bird & Conservation Expo and may help present some educational programs as well. We are happy to include them this year.”

This year, the **Grand Festival of Books** will share the Faulkner campus with the Expo. This event will be set up on the south side of the campus and the **Grand Festival of Art** takes place just adjacent to Faulkner on Fairhope Avenue. “We're thrilled to share the weekend with these two events that will bring even more people to downtown,” Borom said.

BirdFest is excited to have five new trips this year.

Bottle Creek Indian Mounds Adventure (trip #12, Friday, Oct. 4) gives you a chance to journey deep into the Delta and back in time to visit the mounds built by 13th century Mississippian Tribes that lived in our area. The trip will first travel by bus and then onboard the *Osprey*, 5 Rivers Delta Safaris' new 40-passenger boat. It will culminate in a reasonable hike and climb up the highest mound at 45 feet. Guides from 5 Rivers Delta Safaris will talk about the flora and fauna of the middle Delta Cypress swamps, the history of the Native

Americans, and of course point out a multitude of birds!

The **Southbound Delta Adventure Cruise** (trip #14) is also on Friday, Oct. 4. It starts with a short bus ride from 5 Rivers up to Live Oak Landing on the Tensaw River and then a boat trip back to 5 Rivers onboard the *Osprey*. The trip will explore 25 miles of river and Delta shoreline with a stop on Gravine Island.

There are two new “online only” paddle trips: **5 Rivers/Mud Flats Paddle** explores the bays and tidal marshes just minutes from 5 Rivers; and **Graham Creek Paddle** plies the water of Graham Creek Nature Preserve in Foley, from the narrow creek to Wolf Bay. These trips aren't in the brochure—you must register online for either of these paddles.

The 2013 BirdFest concludes in an inviting way, with a **Sunset Wine Tasting Cruise** on board the *Osprey* at 5 Rivers. Wrap up BirdFest and wind your way through the rivers, bays, and marshes while enjoying a variety of wines and light snacks. The captain will position the boat just right to catch a spectacular Delta sunset: A perfect conclusion to another Alabama Coastal BirdFest!

The BirdFest begins on October 2 and ends October 5.

For more information and to register, visit www.AlabamaCoastalBirdFest.com



Kayaking on Graham Creek, photo by Fran Morley

Feds Propose Change to Wood Stork Status

Reprinted with permission from *Bird Calls*, the newsletter of American Bird Conservancy

Roughly 40 years ago the Wood Stork looked like it was wading toward extinction. Many of the wetlands it requires for successful nesting had been drained or otherwise destroyed. By the 1970s, the breeding population had dipped to a low of 5,000 nesting pairs.

In 1984, FWS declared the Wood Stork an Endangered species, which meant that the Endangered Species Act could be used to protect some of its habitats. For this and other reasons, wetland conservation efforts gained momentum, as did efforts to restore the swamps that had been lost. The Wood Stork has bounced back since then and no longer appears to be headed toward extinction. The number of Wood Stork nesting pairs now stands at roughly 9,500, according to FWS. That's more than the 6,000 listing pair mark required for a change to Threatened status, but less than the three-year average of 10,000 nesting pairs needed for complete delisting.

FWS Director Dan Ashe calls these figures proof that the Endangered Species Act works. "This is a

good day for the Wood Stork, and a good day for conservation," said Ashe when the proposal was announced.

The Wood Stork is the only true species of stork that nests in the United States. Its all-white body and jet-black, featherless head have earned it nicknames like "Flinthead" and "Ironhead."

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Wetlands Reserve Program helped reverse the fortunes of the Wood Stork by restoring over 200,000 acres of wetlands in Florida and more than 115,000 acres in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina during the past 18 years. Thousands of acres of wetlands are also being protected on private lands to assist in habitat and wildlife protection through restoration in conjunction with establishing conservation easements. Meanwhile, the Endangered Species Act required landowners to minimize, avoid or mitigate wetland losses.

Curiously, Wood Stork numbers have not risen in Florida's Everglades (see sidebar), which used to be a stronghold for the species. Instead, the birds have expanded their nesting range, turning up as far west as Mississippi and as far north as North Carolina.

Wood Stork numbers in Florida could start to rise again as large-scale restoration projects in that state continue. These include the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program, the Kissimmee River Restoration Project, and the St. Johns River Headwaters Restoration Project.



Wood Stork carrying nesting material

Photo Courtesy of American Bird Conservancy

Too Many Bluebirds

By Celeste Hinds

No, there will never be too many, but from the determination of those in my yard one might think so. Contrary to common belief, two couples of this *Sialia sialis* species successfully fledged in boxes near my back porch. One box was old and went a full year with nothing but chickadees. The next year a new nest box was placed about twenty feet from the old one and bluebirds promptly occupied both boxes.

The first couple began to bring in nest material in early February, first a layer of moss, then pine straw and leaves. Perhaps the green moss would decay and provide warmth for such early spring nesting. The family who used the old box waited for warmer weather and did not use the green moss. That's my assumption, but I tend to assign human reasoning to birds.

The green moss takes up about two inches of the box, leaving less room for hatchlings. Jane McPherson said her baby birds would be too cramped so, against my advice, she carefully removed the bottom layer of moss in her bluebird nest box. I was wrong again – the birds stayed put and did not seem to notice the remodeling job.

Females in both my boxes laid five eggs and four hatched. How the fifth egg remained without being trampled defies reasoning.

Contrary to what I read in guide books, the males did assist in feeding the baby birds. Again, like humans, perhaps the males are becoming less macho and are participants in helping with traditional female duties. Again, I am prone to anthropomorphism. Teko Wiseman liked to use that big word.

While I boasted of nests in two boxes a neighbor had no bluebirds. Did the birds know how welcome they were in my yard and how much I appreciated their antics?

In summary - birds, like plants and people, don't always go by the book.

Tiny Bugs

By Ralph Stemp

Have you noticed those very, very tiny ant-like critters at the bottom of your Bluebird nesting box? They are often seen when lifting up a used nest. They are MITES. You and the Bluebirds do not want to have them.

Do not get the Mites on your body. Carefully remove the old nest and dispose of it in the trash. Then dust the bottom of the nesting box with about a teaspoonful of anti-Mite poison. I use Sevin 5% dust (containing carbaryl) and it has been effective. It is available at Lowe's and at your Garden Store.

Can Bluebirds Count?

By Gaye Lindsey

Recently our bluebirds fledged their second brood. We had been watching to try to observe the blessed event, and had noticed that recently, in addition to the parents, there were a couple of immature bluebirds flying in and out of the box, presumably members of the first brood helping out.

So when Sally saw one of the babies fly away from the box one Sunday afternoon, she called me to come watch. The next two babies fledged in short order, but we knew that there had been four babies. So after about a half hour, when no more babies flew out and we didn't see any of the adults around, I decided to check to see if we had missed the first one, or if it was still in the box.

As soon as I opened the box, I was bombarded by flying bluebirds! I saw that the box was empty though, closed it and made a quick retreat. The parents continued to fly around for some time before disappearing into the woods. This has proved to me, beyond any doubt, that bluebirds can NOT count! Just in case you ever wondered.



