



Mobile Bay Audubon Society

Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR

Information and photo from Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR Website

Recently a group of MBAS / ESB birders were treated to a trip to the Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR. The group, led by Gail and Ron Critchley, enjoyed learning about the cranes, seeing them in the wild, and hiking along a beautiful trail.

The Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR in Gautier, MS is home to a small but growing population of Mississippi Sandhill Cranes, groups of migrating birds, and many species of wildflowers. The refuge was established in 1975 under the Endangered Species Act to protect the critically endangered Mississippi Sandhill Cranes and their unique wet pine savanna habitat. Less than 5% of the original acreage of this habitat remains in the Atlantic/Gulf Coastal Plain, making it one of the most endangered ecosystems in the country. The refuge savannas are the last remaining large patches of this habitat.

The crane population, 30-35 birds in 1975, is now approximately 110 birds. Through captive rearing and reintroduction to the area as well as wild birds nesting in the savannas, the crane population continues to grow. The refuge protects and restores the last large expanses of wet pine savanna,



primarily through the use of prescribed fire. The wet pine savanna is one of the most diverse ecosystems in the U.S. with more than 30 plants found in a square meter of land.

Ranger-guided tours are given on Wednesdays and Saturdays and include stops at the crop units where food is grown for the captive birds, and the captive bird units. Visitors may hike a well-maintained trail through a meadow and long-leaf pine forest to Bayou Castelle. The trail is level and easily accessible. To reserve space on one of the tours, call 228-497-6322. There is no charge for the tour but donations are gratefully accepted and go directly to support of the refuge.

Mobile Bay Audubon Society

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Eastern Shore Birding Field Trips Winter 2013 - 2014 Calendar

Here is the Winter 2013 - 2014 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.

Dec 4 - Live Oak Landing, North Baldwin

Dec 20 - Blakeley Mudflats

Jan 15 - Magnolia Landfill, Pelican Point

Jan 29 - Meaher State Park, Battleship Park, 5 Rivers

Feb 12 - Blakeley Mudflats

Feb 26 - Mariculture Center, Gulf Shores Water TP

Mar 12 - Blakeley State Park

Mar 26 - Daphne Waterfront

Apr 9 - Ft. Morgan Bird Banding, Migration

Apr 16 - Dauphin Island, Migration

Apr 23 - Dauphin Island, Migration (extra)

MBAS WINTER 2013 - 2014 CALENDAR

December

10 Christmas Party and General Meeting. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center. 6:00 pm. Program at 7:00 pm. "Panama Panoply". Panama is a mixing ground for birds from both North and South America. Over 970 species of birds, plus a variety of mammals, inhabit this tiny but historically significant strip of land. This past summer several local birders spent seven memorable days birding the area around Gamboa and the Panama Canal. Patsy Russo and Georgia Sims will present an array of stunning photos for your enjoyment.. Bring a friend.

January

14 General Meeting, Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00pm. "Eighty Days on the Back Roads of the United States and Canada" presented by Dr. Bill Summerour. A natural history and cultural trip to points of interest along the Gulf Coast, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, the Oregon and Washington coast, Olympic Peninsula and on to Canada, and back through Montana, Idaho and Colorado. Emphasis will be on natural history and birds. Bring a friend.

February

11 General Meeting, Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00pm. "America's Amazon" presented by Ben Raines. This DVD documentary features the great biodiversity and ecological importance of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. Bring a friend.

March

11 General Meeting, Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00pm. "Year of the Razorbill" presented by Dr. Bill Summerour. This will be a summary of Razorbill sightings, photos, and specimens collected along the Alabama Gulf Coast during the winter of 2012-13. Part of the program describes how the Razorbill specimens were prepared as scientific skins. Bring a friend.



Migrating White Ibises, Photo by Kathy Hicks

Electronic Delivery of Newsletters

The MBAS newsletter only delivered by email, unless a printed copy is specifically requested by people without access to email.

To 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). Then follow the directions. **To receive a mailed copy**, send a letter to MBAS, PO Box 483, Fairhope, AL 36533.

Housing Boom in Baldwin County Submitted by Ralph Stemp

Eastern Bluebirds need housing too. In the past they often nested in a cavity formed at the top of a deteriorating wooden fence post. Unfortunately that convenient nesting situation is rapidly fading away in Baldwin County.

Eastern Bluebirds have survived very well thanks to people putting out simple nesting boxes for them. If you would like to have a nesting box installed on your property, email Celeste Hinds at hindsite9@gmail.com. Celeste is the long-time Secretary of the unique Bluebird Housing Authority of Baldwin County. She can put you on a list to receive an installed nesting box, free of charge. Supplies are limited so don't delay.

Alabama Coastal Birdfest 2013 Report By Fran Morley

The 2013 Alabama Coastal BirdFest was a success despite the government shutdown and forecast of a tropical storm. More than 380 people from 20 states, Canada, and the UK registered for trips and other events. The Wednesday night reception was a huge success, trips went out as scheduled on Thursday and Friday, but Saturday's trips were canceled because of the forecast bad weather.

***** Christmas Party ***** December 10 at 6:00 pm

Join us for our annual Christmas Party on Tuesday, December 10, 2013. Refreshments are from 6:00 pm – 7:00pm in the Delta Room, followed at 7:00 pm by a great program on birding in Panama.

Please bring your favorite Christmas finger food which can be sweets, cheese, veggies or breads. Beverages are provided. Don't forget to bring a friend.



Boy scouts and leaders from Fairhope's Troop 47 are longtime supporters of bird fest and lead the birdhouse build at the expo. Photo by Fran Morley

Possible bad weather on Saturday kept a few exhibitors away, but until a sudden rain shower cleared things out at about 2:30, it was a beautiful day. Crowds enjoyed a raptor show from Mobile County Environmental Studies Center, birdhouse building led by scouts and leaders from Fairhope's Boy Scout Troop 47, hands-on activities from Faulkner State College biology instructor Audra Warren, as well as exhibits, arts, vendors, and more.

The 11th annual Alabama Coastal BirdFest will be October 2 - 4, 2014.

