

Mobile Bay Audubon Society

September - December 2015 Newsletter

BirdFest 2015

by D. Fran Morley, BirdFest “Nestkeeper”

BirdFest Around the Corner

The 12th annual Alabama Coastal BirdFest is just around the corner: Sept. 30–Oct. 3. And the BirdFest EXPO on Saturday, Oct. 3, is literally “around the corner.” This year, the Expo takes place at the new amphitheater, located on the southeast corner of the Fairhope Faulkner campus. Again this year, the Expo shares the campus with two other events—the Grand Festival of Art and the Festival of Books. All three events are free and open to the public.

This year’s BirdFest—now a birding and nature festival—features new workshops and 15 new trips. In addition to popular birding trips, there are tours that focus on dolphins, wildflowers and gardens, alligators, and more. Did you know that MBAS members are actively involved in planning, guiding tours, gathering items for the silent auction, helping with both evening events, and manning a MBAS booth at the Expo? This is MBAS’s one big project, and it takes a lot of hands to make it successful. Please contact Eleanor Livaudais at 928-8967 for information on how you can help.

And remember, BirdFest is not just for out-of-towners. When you take part, you meet new birders from all over and you help contribute toward the purchase of land in Baldwin and Mobile counties that is set aside for birds and wildlife. Since 2004, BirdFest has donated \$100,000 toward this cause. To register for any BirdFest event or to learn more, visit www.AlabamaCoastalBirdFest.com

MBAS Calendar - September - December 2015

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are held at Five Rivers Delta Resource Center at 7:00 pm and are open to the public.

Bring a friend!

September

8 General Meeting, “Tales from Down Under” presented by **Gaye Lindsey**,

30 Alabama Coastal BirdFest Orientation and Welcome Reception, Register on line at www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com.

October

1-3 Alabama Coastal BirdFest events and field trips, Register on line at www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com.

3 Alabama Coastal BirdFest Bird and Conservation Expo, Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Free Admission, 9:00am-4:00pm.

13 General Meeting “Project Puffin” presented by **Emma Rhodes**,

November

10 General Meeting “The Galapagos Islands” presented by **John Borom**,

MBAS CHRISTMAS PARTY

December 8, 2015

Join us for our annual Christmas Party Tuesday, December 8th from 6:00 to 7:00 at Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, followed by a special Christmas program by Ben Raines.

Please bring your favorite Christmas finger food. Beverages provided. Open to public. Bring a Friend.

Audubon Eastern Shore Birders Fall 2015 Field Trip Calendar

The Audubon Eastern Shore Birders will begin the Fall 2015 season with a *kickoff social event* on September 9 from 1:00 - 2:00 pm. Come meet old and new friends and have a cup of coffee and learn more about this group. And join us at as many of the field trips (listed below) that you can attend.

Note: Except for the September 9 and 23rd trips, carpools will depart from the Unitarian Fellowship in Fairhope at 8:00 am.

September 9	Kickoff Social at Unitarian Fellowship from 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm
September 23	Walk in the Park, Meet at the Fairhope Pier at 8:00 am
October 7	Bayfront Park Daphne
October 21	Dauphin Island
November 4	Meaher State Park on the Causeway
November 18	Gulf Shores, Mariculture Center, Water Treatment Plant
December 2	Blakeley State Park in Spanish Fort or Fairhope Falls
December 16	Blakeley Mud Flats

Please see the Mobile Bay Audubon website at www.mobilebayaudubon.org or the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/mobilebayaudubon> for further details.

For more information, contact Lynne Fitzgerald at aesbrfl@gmail.com or 318-455-8566, Ann McLaurin at 251-402-1742, or Celeste Hinds at 251-233-3369.

Bluebird Predator Guard with Pole Assembly

By Ralph Stemp, reviewed by Gaye Lindsey

MBAS member Ralph Stemp has published the above named article in the Summer 2015 edition of Bluebird, publication of the North American Bluebird Society. The article gives detailed instructions to make and install a predator guard for your bluebird boxes. In particular, this predator guard is designed to protect against snakes, among the most common predators in our area.

The predator guards have been installed on a number of bluebird boxes and has proven successful. The article is well organized, contains a list of materials and tools needed, and step by step directions. The one thing I found confusing is the use of the word "tile" to refer to a sewer pipe, the primary component of the guard. The source of the sewer "tile" (or pipe) is not given. Upon inquiry, Stemp indicated that it has to be purchased at a plumbing supply company since it needs to be 8 inches in diameter, and then has to be cut into 32 inch lengths. Stemp did note that he has a number of these lengths available upon request if anyone wished to make a predator guard. He may be contacted at ralphstemp@gmail.com.

Stemp has kindly made his article available on the MBAS website under the link "Bluebird Predator Guard". He has not patented the device so that anyone who wished to make one is welcome to do so.

THE HUMMERS ARE BACK!

By Celeste Hinds

Look out at what's blooming around your house and you may see a ruby-throated hummingbird buzzing the flowers. August is when the little darlings have completed their nesting duties and are returning to Lower Alabama to dazzle us until cold weather.

Of course they enjoy the special hummer feeders we put out but it's usually the flowers that attract hummingbirds. My cuttings of Turk's Cap came from Bill Summerour's garden but you can find Turk's Cap at most nurseries. While shopping for Turk's Cap pick up a Shrimp Plant and some Ruella. Ruella is locally known as Mexican Petunia but it does not resemble a petunia. It's an annual that grows up to four feet in height and has lilac colored flowers. It will freeze back, thank goodness, for it grows profusely and if not contained will take over your flower bed. Hummers enjoy it in my little back yard at Homestead Village.

Contrary to what you may have heard, hummingbirds are carnivorous and consume a lot of insects. But they favor red flowers and man-made feeders.

Although most hummers go north to breed and raise their young, a few nest south of I-10. One of my personal treasures is a nest Otilie Halstead found in her Fairhope back yard. It's about the size of half a walnut and was well concealed on top of a small twig.

I have birded in Baldwin County for more than twenty years and have only seen two hummer nests, including the one mentioned above. Most of the hummingbirds seen locally are ruby-throated, although several other species have been banded by Fred Bassett and the late Bob Sargent. Unfortunately the banding operation at Ft. Morgan ended with the loss of Bob Sargent and so far the banding has ceased.

If you are putting out feeders be sure to NOT add food coloring. Mix four parts water to one part sugar and when dissolved fill the feeder and hang it where you can easily reach it for cleaning and refreshing. In hot weather I wash my feeders and replace the sugar water about once a week - not so often in cool weather. Hang your feeder high enough the neighborhood tabby cannot nab it, preferably on an "S" hook so ants are not a problem. If ants are found, purchase an ant moat at the local birding store at a hardware store.

Celeste Hinds lives in Fairhope and is a contributing writer for nature publications.

Mobile Bay Audubon Wants You! Join Today!

MBAS is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Every membership supports Audubon's vital efforts to protect birds, wildlife and natural habitats. When you join NAS, you will become a member of the nearest local chapter. To join, go to the NAS webpage www.audubon.org and click on Member Center or send your membership information to National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, PO Box 422247, Palm Coast, FL 32142-6716. A one year membership costs \$20.

For more information about MBAS, please see our website at www.mobilebayaudubon.org.