

Mobile Bay Audubon Society

September - December 2017 Newsletter

MBAS Christmas Party December 12, 2017 6:00 pm

Mobile Bay Audubon Society Christmas Party will be December 12, program to be announced later. Bring a plate of your special holiday goodies (finger food only) to share around the Wassail Bowl.

Open to the Public! Bring a Friend!

Audubon Eastern Shore Birders

The Audubon Eastern Shore Birders (AESB) will host a Kick-Off Coffee Social on Friday, September 15, 2017 at the Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship on 1150 Fairhope Avenue (across from the Satellite Courthouse) at 9:30 -11:00 a.m. *Continued on page 2*

Interesting Articles about Birding

Three articles were submitted for publication for this newsletter. There is not enough space to include them all. Instead, a short summary of each article is provided, with a link to the actual article. Note: you may have to copy and paste the link if clicking doesn't work.

1. Why are eggs shaped differently? Scientists say they have figured it out, and it's NOT what you think! Article by Ben Guarino in the Washington Post, June 22, 2017.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2017/06/22/ever-wonder-why-eggs-are-shaped-like-eggs-scientists-say-theyve-figured-it-out/?utm_term=.88386f03a169

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MBAS Calendar - September - December 2017

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 12

General Meeting. "Gamboa Panama" presented by **Patsy Russo**.

October 4 - 7

14th annual Alabama Coastal Birdfest. Sign up for a trip, a boat ride or dinner at <http://www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com>.

October 10

General Meeting 7:00 pm Emma Rhodes will give a presentation about her job monitoring coastal shorebirds.

November 14

General Meeting 7:00 pm Susan Rouillier will give a presentation on nature photography.

National Audubon Society
Mobile Bay Audubon Society
P O Box 483
Fairhope, AL 36533

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.

Audubon Eastern Shore Birders, Continued

It is time to find your binoculars, brush off your hiking boots and start reviewing your Field Guide on fall migrants. We welcome all who would like to meet other birders, renew old acquaintances and learn about our plans for the 2017 birding activities. Our birding trips take place on Wednesday mornings and concentrate on the birding hotspots within a 60 mile radius of Fairhope. We are fortunate to have some of the best guides in the area leading our group. There is no charge, no membership dues, and no tests. Just come and enjoy!

Contact R. Lynne Fitzgerald
318-455-8566 or aesbrlfl@gmail.com

Birding Articles, Continued

2. **History of Whooping Crane Egg Removal Program**, by Chester McConnell. Why were 457 whooping crane eggs removed from nesting grounds in Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) from 1964 to 1998? Follow this link to find out:

<http://friendsofthewildwhoopers.org/457-whooping-crane-eggs-taken-from-canadas-nesting-grounds/>

3. **Avalon Bluebird Trail Report**, by Ralph Stemp, member of the North American Bluebird Society. Photo to the left accompanies this article, Page 3.

4. **Wanna a New Job?** by Ralph Stemp. Page 4.



Photo is from a tract near the Avalon Trail.

3. **Avalon Bluebird Trail Report**, by Ralph Stemp

Mother Nature Has Been Replaced

Data over the past two years have been collected from the 5 Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes comprising the Avalon Bluebird Trail. Even with little data, some conclusions can be drawn about our Bluebirds. They are:

1. The realtor's mantra of "location, location, location" is appropriate for Bluebirds. The Avalon nesting boxes that were most productive in producing chicks each year were next to a large expanse of green lawn. The lawn's short grass held an abundance of bugs for the birds and their chicks. Food is most important!
2. The boxes must be separated at least 100 yards from each other because the Bluebirds are very territorial. The Avalon Trail has five boxes due to the space that is available. But Trails can be dozens of boxes or just a single box in one's yard. All Trails are important for the Bluebird's survival.
3. Bluebirds start nest building in late February. Nesting is over by early August. Our Bluebirds do not migrate, they just "disappear" into the nearby woods.
4. Most Bluebird parents had two broods and each brood usually had 4 or 5 eggs in it. Most of the eggs did hatch and the chicks did fledge. Over thirty chicks were produced and fledged each year from the Avalon Trail.
5. Monitoring nesting boxes is important in order to gather good data. Once or twice a week is sufficient monitoring and data gathering.
6. Predation is an issue that must be addressed. Putting up a nesting box is only half the job. An effective predator guard completes the installation. Plans for a Bluebird Predator Guard are on the Mobile Bay Audubon Society website (www.mobilebayaudubon.org).
7. Finally, people often ask whether Mother Nature would have produced these chicks in the wild. In other words, are we simply supplying luxurious accommodations to the parent Bluebirds. The answer is No, Mother Nature is unavailable for this job today - there are no holes in old trees. And the few woodpecker holes that do exist are often taken by starlings and other birds. If it were not for the artificial cavities that our boxes provide there would be no Bluebirds at all. Bluebirds nearly disappeared in America until the correlation with disappearing cavities was noticed. A national effort was begun in 1978 to build and install nesting boxes to augment the few natural cavities occurring in trees and it has been very successful. Surprisingly, all Bluebirds now come from boxes, not from Mother Nature's woodpecker holes in the woods.

4. **Wanna Good Job?** by Ralph Stemp,

You set your own pay. You set your own schedule. You are your own boss. You don't have to compete for it. Sounds like the ideal Job doesn't it.

A Bluebird Trail was constructed around the William F. Green State Veterans home in Bay Minette several years ago by Chester & Dot McConnell and Ralph Stemp. Four of the boxes are easily accessed from the perimeter road around the building. Two of the boxes are in a courtyard and are accessed from inside the building. The staff at the "Old Soldiers" home is very accommodating and supportive of the Trail.

This Trail can be monitored by anybody who desires to do so. Minimal data should be collected - mostly date and contents of the boxes. Trail repairs and maintenance are already provided.

No need to formally accept this Job. Just do it. Quietly stop when you want to stop - no need to find a replacement.

For more information, contact Ralph at ralphstemp@gmail.com



Photo is Roger Wettlaufer spray-painting the Bluebird Predator Guard at Box no. 1 at Bay Minette.