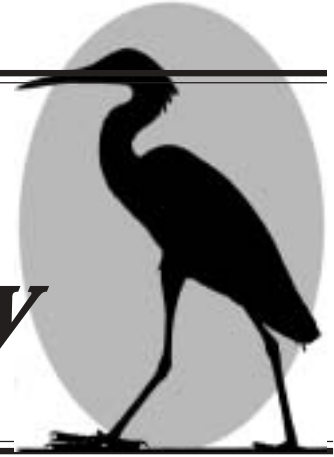


Mobile Bay Audubon Society

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY SINCE 1971



VOLUME XXII NO. 5



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Let's Get Going. . .

As summer ends, it's time to get going with new projects, field trips, meetings. We have trips planned to the Forever Wild Grand Bay Savanna Tract, Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries and Mobile Tensaw Delta. We have interesting speakers lined up for our regular monthly meetings such as Jim Griggs, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Dr. John Porter and Commissioner David Ed Bishop. There are special projects throughout the year such as bird banding, AOS meetings, film series, Birdathon, Audubon Adventures and much, much more.

Looking forward to a great year!



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Fall Banding

October 4-18



As always, the Fort Morgan Bird Banding Station welcomes both supporters and the general public. Every year the Hummer/Bird Study Group host nearly 6000 guests at the banding station.

The Station is headed by Bob and Martha Sargent of Clay, Alabama. The Sargent's have been researching hummingbirds and migrating songbirds for many years; in the beginning at their own expense. In 1994 they formed the Hummer/Bird Study Group so that supporters donation's could be tax deductible.

The Hummer/Bird Study Group has an extensive education effort through seminars, adult education sessions and banding demonstrations. In addition, HBSG is an active Partner in

Education with local school districts. HBSG places great emphasis on the environmental education of children. They also operate several banding stations where hummingbirds and other songbirds are captured, banded, weighed, measured, photographed and released.

The Fort Morgan Bird Banding Station is operational each spring and fall. They capture and band hummingbirds and other Neotropical migrants at this location, which is the first landfall and the last departure point for thousands of migrating birds. They have an excellent opportunity to monitor population levels and the general condition of migrant birds, as well as gaining important insights into the effects of weather on bird migration.

The banding gives the public exposure to all aspects of identification, behavior and habitat needs of the migratory species. It is a treat for visitors of all ages to have the chance to touch, hold and release many of these birds.



The Migratory Challenge

By Celeste Hinds

Not all shorebirds are long-distance migrants. American Oystercatchers are non-migratory. Avocets, Stilts and Dunlins migrate moderate distances, wintering, for the most part in the southern part of the U.S. Almost every year we see Stilts nesting along the ponds on the periphery of the Mobile docks.

Of the forty-nine shorebird species that breed in North America, forty migrate to winter-

ing sites in temperate and tropical regions in Central and South America. Thirty-one species fly annually between the Arctic and South America, with most birds making a round trip of 7,500 miles, and some, like the Red Knot, 15,000 miles annually. It is a curious characteristic of shorebird's migration that those that breed farthest north also winter farthest south –

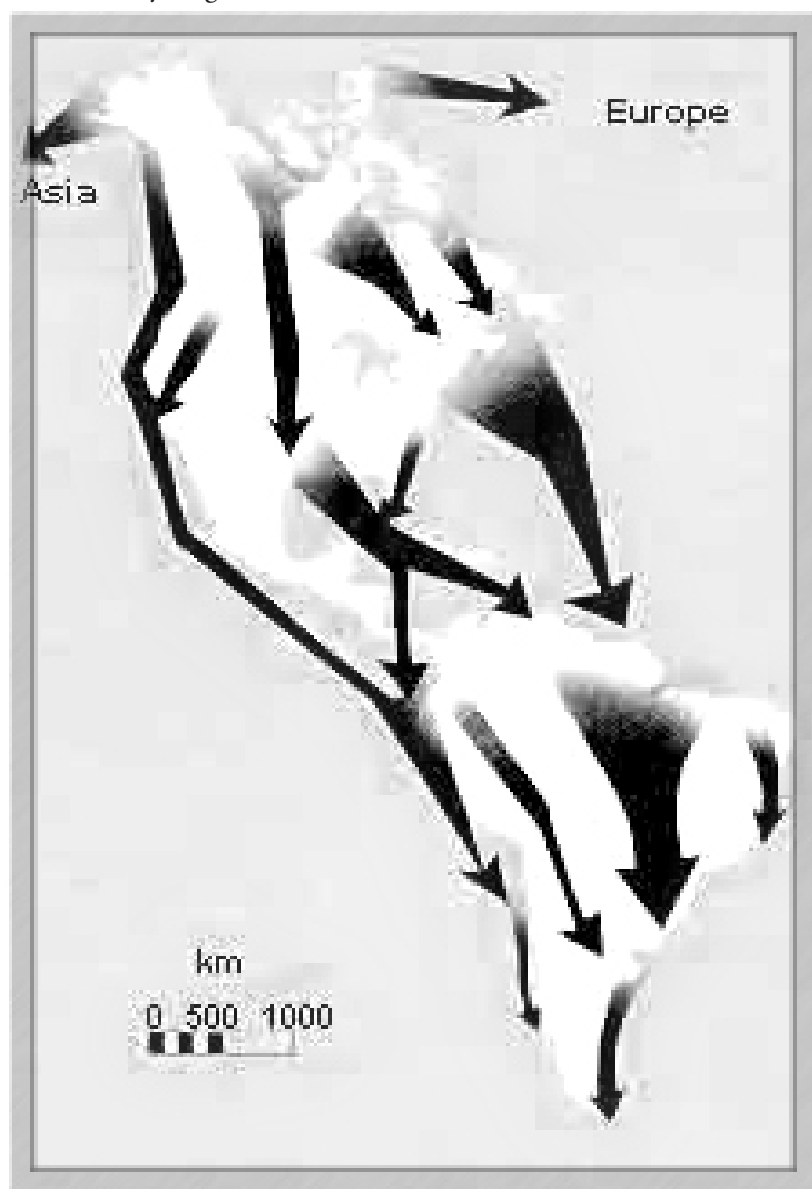
a phenomenon called “leap-frogging.”

Shorebirds, whose breeding and non-breeding grounds are widely separated must replenish their fat reserves, accumulating and burning several times their body weight, in order to complete their journey. Some do so by exploiting a chain of staging areas. Think of staging areas as rest and feed stops.

A brief time observing at the Fort Morgan banding station will show you the fat reserves. Banding personnel will gently blow the feathers of even the smallest creature to uncover fatty deposits, deposits that will give much needed energy for long flights. Birds arriving at Fort Morgan in spring will have used much of their reserves, while those ready for the trip south in fall will have stored fatty reserves.

Radar studies have shown that shorebirds staging from northeast North America first wait for the passage of a northwesterly wind. This sets them on a southeasterly course. If this flight line were extrapolated, most would wind up in West Africa. The birds, in general, do maintain a steady compass course. In the area of the Sargasso Sea, they encounter northeasterly trade winds that steadily push them back towards their destination, the north coast of South America.

Entire books have been written about migration, postulating many different theories about how birds navigate. But one thing is certain, birds far exceed humans in strength and endurance – maybe even intelligence!




New Members

Welcome to the Mobile Bay Audubon Society, the local chapter of the National Audubon Society. We thank you for your support. A few facts about our chapter: Monthly meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday from September thru May at 7:30 PM alternately in Fairhope and Mobile (See calendar for details of programs and locations.) Programs of interest are planned for each meeting and field trips are scheduled regularly. We are a non-profit organization—all donations are tax deductible. A list of officers is listed in the newsletter; feel free to call any of them for information. Join us as often as you can—we want to get to know you.

Ottilie Halstead, Membership Chairman

Birmingham

Shirley McVey

Chunchula

Ben Blankinchip
Cynthia A Miyaji

Fairhope

Romaine T Murray
Genny Whitword

Loxley

Eddie McGee
Sandra K Pate

Mobile

Kaiya Carman
Sandra Kendall

Orange Beach

Gayule Brown Cahn

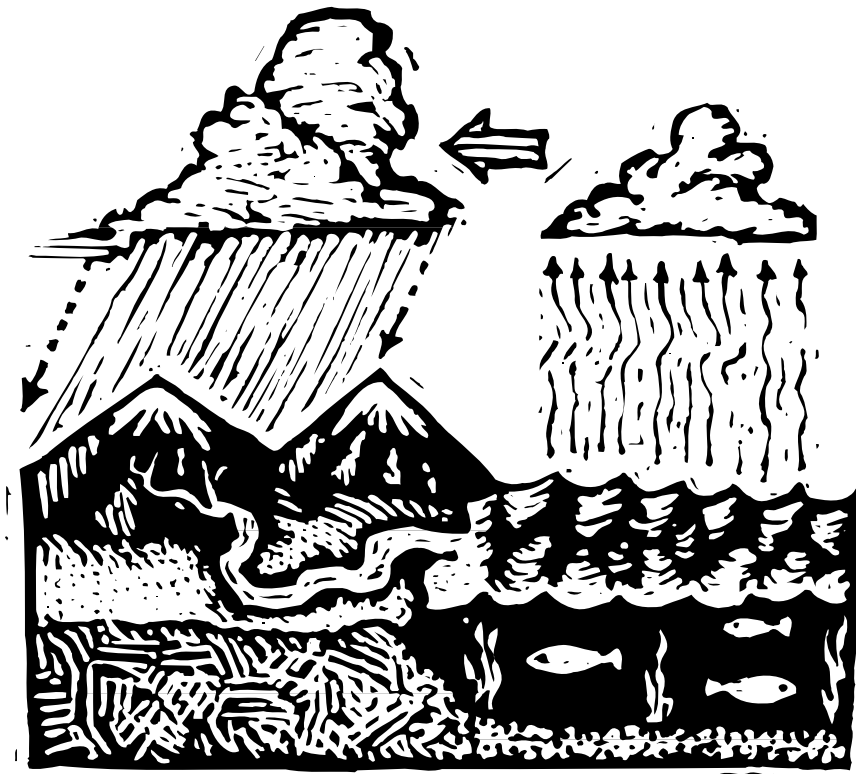
Theodore

Dorothy Paris

Transfer into Chapter

Michael Colley
George Dale
George Whitlock
John W Dillon
Jane A Hawkins
Gerald Lindenmuth
Jeffrey Powell
Georgia Andrews

Stormwater Pollution



According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, urban stormwater is the largest source of water quality damage in estuaries and the second largest source of wetlands degradation. Stormwater runoff rivals or exceeds discharges from factories and sewage as a source of pollution throughout the United States.

Regional land use and transportation policies often encourage developers to pave over the soil which traditionally absorbs rain. Unfortunately, the result is an increase in the volume and speed of often contaminated runoff which leads to widespread and hazardous flooding in low-lying areas.

Some of the contaminants commonly found in stormwater discharges include heavy metals, such as copper, zinc, and lead, which have been shown to cause health and reproductive problems in pregnant women and children, as well as

oxygen-robbing nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, which can choke the life out of aquatic systems. Stormwater is also a major source of bacterial contamination in coastal zones. Lastly, high flows of rushing floodwater scour stream banks and beds, destroying habitat for aquatic life already under the gun from pollution.

What can we do about all of this? Because humans create stormwater pollution, humans can reduce or prevent it through responsible, efficient urban design, public works, pollution prevention and homeowner practices. Progressive cities and counties across the country have prevented and controlled stormwater pollution through several methods- including:

- recycling used oils;
- preserving natural drainage systems such as streams and vegetative buffers;
- controlling soil erosion from construction;
- yard waste collecting and composting;
- finding and eliminating illegal discharges;
- creating new green spaces and waterfront landscapes such as constructed wetlands, detention ponds, recreation areas and urban forestry projects.

Many workable and effective stormwater management measures are affordable, and the money spent is a good investment. Stormwater controls have many economic benefits, including protection from flood damage, safeguarding of coastal bathing beaches, and protection of valuable recreational and commercial fisheries.

Sharks and People

by John Borom

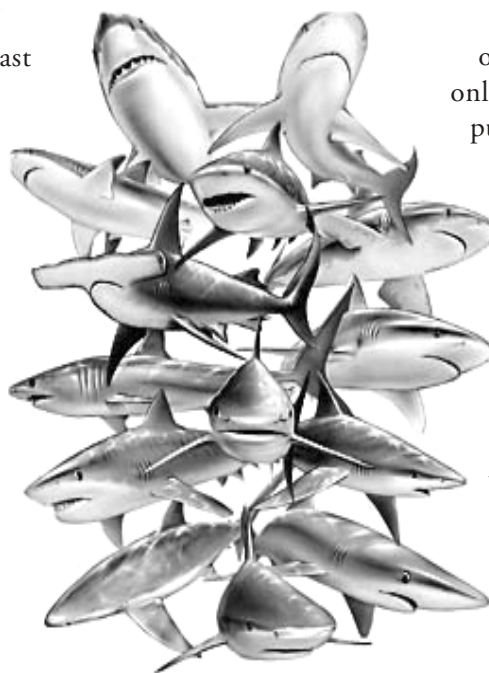
Over the last 20 years, shark fisheries have grown and multiplied, fueled by an increasing demand for shark meat, fins, cartilage, skin, liver and teeth. Millions of sharks are also killed by non-shark fisheries, because the nets currently in use are not selective and catch many non-target species.

Today, some shark populations are in serious trouble. While many commercially exploited fishes have declined in abundance, sharks have been the most radically and quickly affected by fishing. The reason sharks are unable to bear current fishing pressure lies in their basic biology.

As top predators in marine food pyramids, large sharks are much less abundant than species at lower levels. So unlike menhaden, snapper and mackerel, there are fewer sharks to start with.

To compound the problem, sharks grow slowly and can take 10 years or more to

reach sexual maturity. Females produce relatively few



offspring-at most only a few hundred pups in a lifetime. Low reproductive rates make shark populations particularly sensitive to overfishing, and overfished populations are very slow to recover.

The ocean is an extremely important source of protein, but

many species are being fished at greater levels than their populations can sustain. Overfishing, coupled with pollution and destruction of marine habitats-particularly key estuarine nursery areas- have sharply decreased the abundance of many animals, and threaten the health and stability of marine ecosystems on which we all depend.



























Research, education and stewardship are important parts of the solution. Only by understanding the biology, distribution, and ecological role of sharks can we develop wise management plans. Can we learn to balance the needs of all living species? Will we cooperate on a global scale to implement sustainable fishing practices? The survival of many species, including our own, depends on swift, affirmative answers to these questions.

New Bird Sanctuary and Sign

by John Borom

Resolution 2003-29 was passed on April 7 designating the City of Daphne a bird sanctuary. This sign will be placed at the Daphne Bayfront Park.

Thank you Mayor Harry Brown and the Daphne City Council for this positive effort, and thank you David Yeager and the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program for funding the sign.

 <p>Least Bittern</p>  <p>Yellow-crowned Night Heron</p>  <p>Black Skimmer</p>  <p>Laughing Gull</p>  <p>Forster's Tern</p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Bird Sanctuary</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">The Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay provides excellent birdwatching opportunities. An abundance of birdlife can be found throughout the year. Residents include the Northern Mockingbird, Brown Pelican, Northern Cardinal, and Great Blue Heron. Great Crested Flycatcher, Blue Grosbeak, Prothonotary Warbler, and Yellow-crowned Night Heron nest here in the summer. In winter, the bayfront is a sheltered place to scope Lesser Scaup, American Coot, Common Loon and American White Pelican. The wooded environments offer excellent opportunity to see vireos, thrushes, woodpeckers and warblers.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Daphne was designated as a Bird Sanctuary in April 2003.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Information on this sign provided by the Mobile Bay Audubon Society.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Funding for this sign provided by the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">    </div>	 <p>Great Blue Heron</p>  <p>Great Egret</p>  <p>Green Heron</p>  <p>Snowy Egret</p>  <p>White Ibis Osprey</p>
 <p>Prothonotary Warbler</p>  <p>Yellow rumped Warbler</p>  <p>Gray Catbird</p>  <p>Black and White Warbler</p>  <p>Summer Tanager</p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Neotropical Migrants</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">In the spring and fall of each year, hundreds of bird species make the incredible journey between South and Central America and North America. Their flight carries them to the shores and estuaries of the Northern Gulf Coast.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Studies by the National Audubon Society and Partners in Flight show a general decline of Neotropical migrant bird species in Alabama by 56 percent. Some species have declined by as much as 70 percent. A major factor in this decline is habitat loss. Many birds need the coastal zone for resting, breeding, and feeding. Natural areas such as this park in Daphne provide precious havens for tired and hungry migratory birds.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">    </div>	 <p>Wood Thrush</p>  <p>Cape May Warbler</p>  <p>Scarlet Tanager</p>  <p>Indigo Bunting</p>  <p>Painted Bunting</p>

LBJ's and Peeps

By Celeste Hinds

When I cannot identify a little brown bird it becomes an LBJ. "Little Brown Jobs" include many Sparrows and other passerines.

Peeps are another story. They may be the most often seen and least identified birds in my repertoire.

Eliminate the Sanderling. It has a telltale wing stripe and thick nail-like bill. It winters along the Gulf Coast. Also its foraging behavior is unique. No other sandpiper likes sandy beaches as much as Sanderlings do, and none will be seen feeding in the same style, sprinting to the surf edge to dabble at tiny crustaceans washed up by the waves. A tiny bird running in and out of the surf is almost certainly a Sanderling. Sanderlings are often, though not always, lone birds.

Five peeps, all Sandpipers, include Least Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper and Baird's Sandpiper. These four pick food from the surface, though Baird's is seldom seen in Alabama.

Western Sandpiper drills or probes in the mud for food.

The Least is the most distinctive of the five peeps and its yellow legs are a dead giveaway. Look for the thinnest, sharpest and daintiest of peep bills and it's probably a Least Sandpiper.

Sandpipers usually cluster in like kind. The yellow in the Least's legs is not always apparent. The White-rump's rump is readily visible only in flight. Not all Baird's are buffy and scaly backed, and not all buffy, scaly-backed peeps are Baird's. Not all Semipalmateds have short, stubby bills. Not all Westerns have long, drooping bills.

I like to think of Dowitchers as "little sewing machines".

When viewed from a great distance it's hard to tell little birds apart. If I can't get a good sighting for proper identification, I just call them peeps. Nature is wonderful, but keeps an amateur birder like yours truly doing a lot of guessing.

Albino Northern Mockingbird



This photograph of a young albino Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) was made around the first part of June 2003 at Laverne Circle, off Moffett Road in West Mobile in the Crawford Community. This is the third year that Norma and Truman Goff have had hatchlings of Northern Mockingbirds that have included from one to two of these albinos. This year there were two hatchlings that included an albino.

Audubon Society Award

Robert Gard, a student at Phillips Preparatory School in Mobile was the winner of the Audubon Society Award at a recent Science Fair at the University of South Alabama. Robert's project was entitled: "Effect of Fire Ant Mound Soil on Germination and Growth of Rye Grass."

His project also won the First Place award in Botany and the "Best of Junior Division". Dr. David Nelson, a biology professor at USA presented Robert the *Sibley Guide to Birds* on behalf of the Mobile Bay Audubon Society. He was also given a gift membership to The National Audubon Society. Congratulations to Robert.



2003 Fall Film Series

September

- 3 - A Celebration of Birds - Nature
- 10 - Adventures in Birdwatching I - Janson
- 17 - Adventures in Birdwatching II - Janson
- 24 - Adventures in Birdwatching III - Janson

October

- 1 - The Life of Mammals I - BBC
- 8 - The Life of Mammals II - BBC
- 15 - The Life of Mammals III - BBC
- 22 - The Life of Mammals IV - BBC
- 29 - A Conversation with Koko - Nature

November

- 5 - The Ultimate Guide Sharks - Discovery
- 12 - Shark Encounters - National Geographic
- 19 - The Secret World of Sharks and Rays



Faulkner State Community College
Centennial Hall - Giddens Auditorium
440 Fairhope Avenue Fairhope AL 36532
Phone: 251/990-0420

<http://www.faulknerstate.edu/meer>



*Join us
each Wednesday
at 10:00 am.*

*Films are
approximately
50 minutes.*

*Refreshments
provided
free of charge!*



Invasive Species

Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1975 to safeguard the critically endangered Mississippi Sandhill Crane and its unique disappearing habitat. The 19,000-acre refuge protects forested swamps, pine scrub, tidal marshes, and the wet pine savannahs that are critical to the survival of Sandhill Cranes.

The Refuge is threatened by an invasion of nonnative fire ants, as well as a rapidly spreading nonnative weed called cogon grass. Cogon grass is degrading and destroying the last remaining savannah habitat, which is the last bastion of the Mississippi Sandhill Crane. Cogon grass spreads especially quickly in roadsides and areas where there have been fires or other soil disturbances, a problem exacerbated by a major drought in 2000. With their voracious appetites, fire ants invade drier long-leaf pine savannah habitat where Mississippi Sandhill Cranes nest. The fire ants also represent a direct predatory threat; they devour the freshly hatched young of the imperiled cranes.

Listed by the federal government and the state of Mississippi as endangered, the Mississippi subspecies of Sandhill Cranes is limited to about 110-120 birds, with only 25 breeding pairs. Nesting effort and success, as well as survival of young, relies on the availability of quality savannah habitat for nesting. By destroying native savannah habitat, invasive cogon grass represents a profound threat to the Mississippi Sandhill Crane. The loss of chicks to invasive fire ants is particularly alarming

The Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) is common throughout the coastal region especially along the edges of swamps and bottomland

forests. This species is one of the more handsome constituents of our state's mammal fauna. Its lithe, graceful body and its beautifully marked facial pattern combine to give it great physical character, and its skill as a hunter inspires admiration on the part of those who love the out-of-doors.

The Bobcat generally does not mate until its second year. Males are sexually active all year, but most females are in heat in February or March. In the breeding season it becomes especially

given the low annual fledging rates characteristic of Sandhill Cranes; each crane rarely raises more than one young to fledging in a given year, even in the absence of such threats. This low fledging rate limits the ability of Mississippi Sandhill Cranes to recover from population declines.



Bobcat

by John Borom

vociferous; its harsh cries consisting of howls, wails, screams and snarls, some of which pierce the air with sound on an otherwise

quiet night in the forest. Like most members of the cat family, it can see well in semidarkness. Hunting is not confined to dark hours, and it is often on the prowl in broad daylight.

Breeding takes place in midwinter, and after a gestation period of approximately 62 days, the one to five (but usually two or three)

blind, rather heavily furred and spotted young are born usually in late April or early May. At birth the kittens weigh about one pound and possess sharp claws. The natal den is usually located under an uprooted tree in a hollow log, or it may be in the middle of a cane thicket. In about ten days the eyes have opened and the kittens come out to frolic and play under the watchful eyes of the mother. They begin exploring at one month and are weaned at two. By the time fall begins the youngsters have learned to hunt to some extent on their own, but the family ties do not begin to dissolve until the middle of the winter, when again the mother becomes pregnant.



Black Skimmer

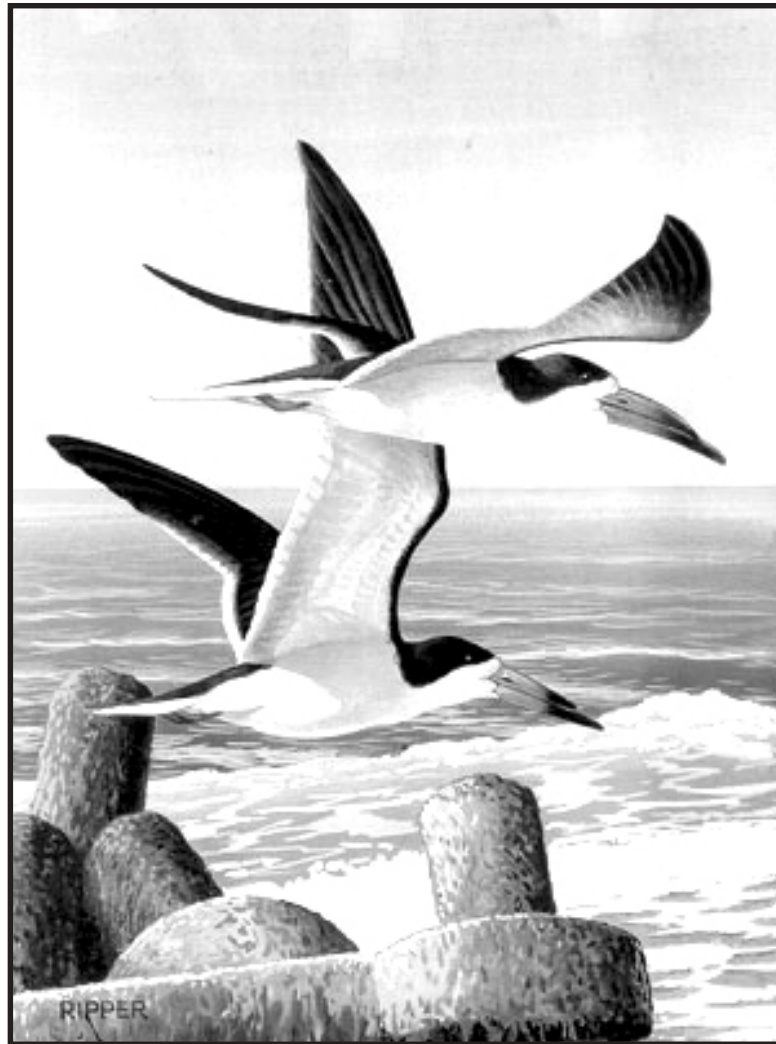
by John Borom

The Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) is a large, long-winged bizarre, ternlike bird. Adult birds are from 16 to about 20 inches long and they have a wingspan of about 4 feet. It is strikingly colored, with black upperparts, white underparts, red legs and a bright red, black-tipped bill in which the lower half is greatly compressed and longer than the upper half. The upper bill is peculiar in that it is movable, and the lower bill is well supplied with touch corpuscles. It skims close to the water of coastal bays, tidal creeks and lagoons with the long lower bill just cutting the surface of the water like a knife. When this strikes a tiny fish or a shrimp, the upper and lower bills clamp together tightly. The bird flips its prey out of the water, swallows it without missing a wingbeat, and lowers its lower bill into the water again for more.

Onesided wear on the lower bill would soon reduce it to a stump but for the remarkable fact that the lower bill, adapted to excessive friction, grows more rapidly than the upper. A Black Skimmer reared in captivity, lacking this water friction, will grow a lower bill over twice as long as its upper bill.

To withstand the shock of impact with its prey, the neck muscles are strengthened and extra bony processes attach the skull firmly to the neck.

Black skimmers feed mostly in the early evening and at night when the water is calm and fish and shrimp come to the surface. The call note is a houndlike yap yap, from which the local name "sea dog" is derived. By day they rest in



flocks on open beaches. To protect their sensitive eyes against the glare from the sun off the water and the white sand, they have vertical pupils that can be narrowed to a slit.

The Black Skimmer is a colonial nesting species with nest building occurring from May until September. The nest of these birds is merely a slight hollow in the loose sand made by squatting down and turning round and round.

It lays four or five chalky white, heavily blotched eggs that blend perfectly with the mixture of

broken shells and debris that litters the seabeach. Precocial young are able to run when no more than two days old. They are covered with light gray down and are difficult to see as they crouch flat on the open sand. The young birds have bills of equal length at hatching and can pick up bits of food for themselves in addition to the small fish and other tidbits which their parents bring them from the estuary. The lower bill does not grow longer than the upper bill until the birds are almost full grown and have acquired the power of flight.



Calendar



September

- 9 Board Meeting 6:30pm
General Meeting "State Lands" Division Activities" presented by Director Jim Griggs, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 7:30pm. Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall. Bring a friend.
- 20 Field trip to the 2,734 acre Forever Wild Grand Bay Savanna Tract to observe carnivorous plants, wildflowers and birds. If you are coming from Baldwin County, meet in the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries office parking lot on the Causeway at 8:00am.
- 25 Alabama's Forever Wild Land Trust Board will meet at the Gatra L. Wehle Center at Blakeley State Park at 10:00 am. For more information, call ADCNR State Lands Division Office (334) 242-3484 or (251) 990-0900. Bring a friend.

October

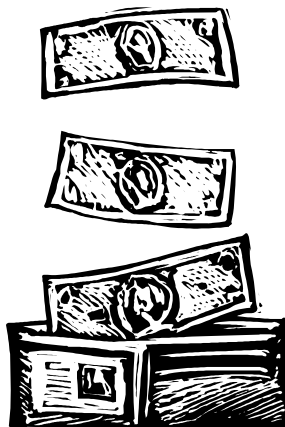
- 10-12 AOS Fall Meeting, Dauphin Island
- 14 Board Meeting 6:30pm
General Meeting "Update on Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries and the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail" presented by Dr. John Porter, 7:30pm. Government Street Baptist Church in Mobile. Bring a friend.
- 18 Field Trip to Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries to observe Fall migration of neo-tropical birds. Meet at Shell Mound Park at 9:00am. Bring a friend.

November

- 11 Board Meeting 6:30pm
General Meeting "Comprehensive Plan for the Baldwin County Park System" presented by Commissioner, David Ed Bishop. 7:30pm. Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus Centennial Hall. Bring a friend.
- 22 Field Trip to the Mobile Tensaw River Delta to observe waterfowl, wildlife, and bottomland hardwood wetlands aboard the Delta Explorer. Meet at the dock at Blakeley State Park at 8:30am. There will be a \$1.50 per person fee to enter the park and a \$17.00 per person fee for the boat. After the tour there will be a bring-your-own picnic lunch at the park and a tour of the Gatra L. Wehle Nature Center. Limit 50 people. For reservations call Tammy Christian at (251) 438-3060.

Calendars

We will be selling the Feathered Friends calendars again this year. They will be available for \$4.00 each at meetings and field trips. They make great gifts! Get one for everyone you know. As usual, the birds are beautifully painted and a gift everyone will love.



Only \$4.00 each

Newsletter Deadline

Please send your articles for the November/December issue to Delane Small by October 24.
Address:
1 Fiesta Drive
Spanish Fort, AL 36527
Email: dhs9700@bellsouth.net

Mobile Bay Audubon Wants You!

Join Us Today!

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 including:

- ◆ A 1-year subscription (6 bi-monthly issues) 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

\$15 – 1 year Student/Senior Rate

\$30 – 2 year Special Rate

My check is enclosed.

\$1,000 – Individual Life Membership

\$1,500 – Dual Life Membership

Please bill me.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/ST/Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Make check payable to National Audubon Society and Mail to: National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, P.O.Box 52529, Boulder, CO 80322-2529

ChapterCode: A01

7XCH

“You cannot do a kindness too soon, because you never know how soon it will be too late.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

