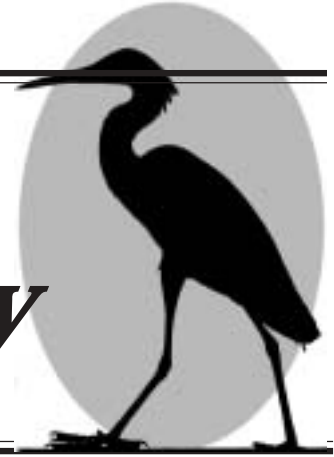


JULY, 2003

Mobile Bay Audubon Society

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY SINCE 1971



VOLUME XXII NO. 4

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After a lot of hard work by Sandra Pate, MEEERC Telecommunications Coordinator, Faulkner State Community College, the Audubon Society is now on line! Sandra did an excellent job. The site is full of information about happenings in our area as well as field trips, special projects, how to contact board members, beautiful pictures of birds submitted by members of our chapter and much more. Check it out: <http://www.mobilebayaudubon.org/>

There's a better way to find out what's going on . . .



<http://www.mobilebayaudubon.org/>

Board of Directors 2003

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Environmental Studies Center Open House

It was a great celebration on Saturday, May 3, at the Environmental Studies Center. Not since May 2001 had there been an open house at ESC, but it was more than an open house—it was a dedication of the newly renovated educational building.

In July 2001 the roof of the old building collapsed and although there were no injuries and wildlife was unharmed, programs for the summer had to be cancelled. Portable school buildings were brought in to house wildlife, offices, and classrooms. Lloyd Scott and his staff kept the center operating, although there were rumors that it would close. I never believed it and did all I could to convince one school board member of the importance of keeping the center open. Whether or not my actions

and the actions of many others worked, we'll never know, but here we are on May 3, 2003 with a brand new building and the program to teach students the importance of caring for the environment goes on.

Highlight of the dedication ceremonies was the release of three rehabilitated birds—a Barred Owl, a Red-tailed Hawk, and a Peregrine Falcon. It was exciting to see them hesitate (as if they couldn't believe they were free), then fly off into the trees.

Mobile Bay Audubon was part of the Environmental Fair under the big tent. Visitors who came by admired the beautiful bird pictures we displayed; some took a copy of our newsletter or a past issue of Audubon magazine. Our Degusa friends gave away bird feeder kits and we gave packets of bird seed. Leslie McElderry entertained many children with her origami skills. She was so patient with the little ones who tried hard to fold the paper as she did.

Edwina Mullins





Annual Picnic

May 17, 2003

Once again the annual picnic at the Lovell Sanctuary was a huge success as can be seen from these photographs. The food was good, the fellowship great.





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

Bay Minette

Mrs. W N Crosby
Lucia Partin
Terry Peavy

Chunchula

Buford Perry

Daphne

Garlene Stevens
Mike Wishinsky

Elberta

Georgia Cattan

Fairhope

Rose Lauren Belfield
Marjorie Ewing
Rosalee O'Connor

Foley

James E Mathews

Gulf Shores

Debra Evans
Sonja J Sanders

Irvington

Karin Wilson

Kalkaska, MI

E J Singer

Lillian

Hugh W Helms
James A Metz
Connie N Prout
Joe Trapp

Livingston, TX

Louis & Marjorie Lewey

Loxley

Rose Davis

Mobile

J E Davis
Robert Gard
Iva Penry
Mykhaylo Ruchko

Orange Beach

Bo Davidson
Clara Myers
Jack E Sutherland

Point Clear

Dr. A L Thompson-Graves

Saraland

Thomas E Bilbo
Teddy J Grimes
Sue Lewis

Summerdale

Hunter Kyser

Theodore

Robert a Nykvist

Transfer into Chapter

George P Goodman





Alabama's Bald Eagle Restoration:

A Success Story

The numbers tell the story—in the past 15 years since Bald Eagles began re-nesting in Alabama, there have been 209 nesting attempts with 214 young eagles successfully “fledging” or leaving these nests. This recovery of the Bald Eagle in Alabama, and indeed nationally, has been one of the most remarkable success stories in wildlife management.

Amazingly, prior to 1987 there were no known Bald Eagle nests in Alabama. None. Alabama lost its nesting Bald Eagles when they declined sharply nationwide in the 1950s and 60s. As eagle numbers recovered, a few would over-winter in our state, but these birds migrated north to nest each spring. They were not “imprinted” upon Alabama for their nesting behavior. Bald Eagles have a strong tendency to return to the vicinity where they learned to fly when they are ready to mate and raise their own young. This occurs when they are four or five years old.

In an effort to restore a nesting population of eagles in the state, a total of 91 young eagles were “hacked” and released each spring from 1985 through 1991 through the Alabama Non-game Wildlife Program. Hacking is a process that simulates natural nest conditions and provides releases with a minimum of human exposure.

There are now 35 nests across the state. What a remarkable story! The recovery of the Bald Eagle will go along side the modern wildlife management success stories of the White-tailed Deer, the Eastern Wild Turkey, the Wood Duck, and

the Eastern Bluebird. It is a demonstration of what dedicated conservationists, with adequate resources, can accomplish.

The majestic Bald Eagle is a regular visitor and attraction at Lake Guntersville State Park and the Tennessee Valley. They usually begin to arrive in November and spend the winter months in and around the park soaring the skies, fishing the reservoir and roosting in the tall pines along the mountain tops.

from *Alabama's Treasured Forests, Fall 2002*

2003 Fall Film Series

September

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

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 Conservation 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

Faulkner State Community College
Centennial Hall - Oddens Auditorium
443 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!



A big bouquet of thanks from the many schools in both Baldwin and Mobile Counties who used Audubon Adventure Kits during this school year. Monies from the annual Birdathon have provided these helpful and diverse lessons and plans to grateful recipients over the years.

Audubon Adventures is an educational resource kit for grades 3 through 6 about birds, wildlife, and habitats. Audubon Adventures helps hundred of Audubon Chapters implement successful educational outreach into local schools. Audubon Adventures today reaches 8,000 classrooms, totaling approximately 256,000 students. Audubon Adventures material are professionally designed to increase awareness and appreciation in children about the natural systems of the earth and to create in them a sense of stewardship for the natural world.

Thirty-four Audubon Adventures Kits have been requested by the following schools for the next school year:

Stapleton Elementary School,
Stapleton—3
Summerdale Elementary School,
Summerdale—3
Swift Elementary School, Bon
Secour—1
Foley Intermediate School, Foley—1
Gulf Shores Elementary School, Gulf
Shores—1
Magnolia School, Foley—1
Robertsdale Elementary School,
Robertsdale—1
Rosenton Elementary School,
Robertsdale—1
Central Christina School,
Robertsdale—3
Marietta Johnson Organic School,
Fairhope—2



Cottage Hill Baptist School, Mobile—1
Christ the King School, Daphne—2
UMS Wright Preparatory School,
Mobile—2
St. Paul’s Episcopal School, Mobile—2
Daphne Intermediate School,
Daphne—1
Silverhill Elementary School,
Silverhill—1
Fairhope Intermediate School,
Fairhope—2
Spanish Fort Elementary School,
Spanish Fort—1
St. Luke’s Episcopal School,
Mobile—2
Corpus Christi School, Mobile—1
Dauphin Island School, Dauphin
Island—2

Science topics this year included “Seeing the Forest for More Than the Trees,” “Coasts: Where Land and Sea Meet,” “Home in the Desert,” and “Freshwater Wetlands.” Four new themes in the Audubon Adventures series will be released this fall. These are: Grasslands, coniferous forests, fresh water environments and urban habitats. By examining different ecological settings, students deepen their understanding of the natural world no matter where they live. Audubon Adventures includes action-oriented content about healthy habitats, essays, puzzles, word challenges, games and recommended web sites. We welcome you teachers, students and administrators in our collective effort to enjoy our good Earth and become better stewards. We hope to see you at our Audubon meetings and on our field trips each month.

*Than Morris, Chairperson
Audubon Adventures*

A few of the teachers' comments regarding the kits' relevance and effectiveness are as follows:

"Excellent info. I teach science for two classes, so was sent two kits with 50+ copies of the student magazines. Thanks for the interesting lessons. We enjoyed them."
Connie Roan
Dauphin Island School
Dauphin Island

"The newspapers were easily incorporated into my science program. They were interesting and fun!"
Theresa Roh Hickey
Corpus Christi School
Mobile

"Kits are wonderful when studying environments, habitats and conservation. It also helps explain migration and weather patterns. I have enjoyed using the kit."
Karen Pearson
Daphne Intermediate School
Daphne

"Good addition to the curriculum!"
Jennie Sisk
Magnolia School
Foley

"Wonderful addition to our classroom!"
Sandy Downing
St. Luke's Episcopal School
Mobile

"Wonderful kits. We have truly enjoyed them!"
Vickie Kilgore
Summerdale Elementary School
Summerdale

"They are a wonderful resource in my classroom. My students enjoy the activities and the newspapers."
Susan Mitchell
Fairhope Intermediate School
Fairhope

"Wonderful!"
Gay Crane
Fairhope Intermediate School
Fairhope

"Kids really love it!"
Amanda Hall
Spanish Fort School
Spanish Fort



Birdathon 2003

A Great Success Story

Through Birdathon efforts this year, we have given \$1403.50 to our Audubon Adventures school program. Audubon Adventures is a complete curriculum enhancement program the teachers use to support the teaching of science to 4th and 5th grade students. Materials include lesson plans, hands-on inquiry activities, research materials and more. The goal of Audubon Adventures is connecting children to nature in our community. As always, Edlizabeth Williams was our star counter. She raised \$1153.50 by contacting family, friends, neighbors and industry. She says that it's easy because everyone wants to get on the

environmental bandwagon. Many thanks to everyone who donated to the 2003 Birdathon. Our generous donors include:
Mary Toulmin
Frances VanDeventer
Larrie Pike
Howard Perry, Jr.
Helen Barnett
Ottillie Halstead
Lois Brown
Graham Pitts
Margaret Sturtevent
Kay Littlefield
Mary Nah
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Edwina Mullins
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Maud Skiba
Celeste Hinds
John Porter
Barbara Miller
Tom Sterling
Sirmon & Tina Lee
Dr. Robert Kreisberg
Mary Floyd





Remembering Bachman's Warbler

Vermivora bachmanii (Audubon, 1833)

by John Borom

In July 1833, John Bachman collected two specimens and saw several others, of a "new wood warbler" a few miles from Charleston, South Carolina. In the same year the species was formally named after him, by his friend John James Audubon.

Bachman's Warbler is or was one of the smallest warblers with a total length of four to four and one half inches. The breeding male has an olive-green back and face, throat, and bright yellow underside. There is a contrasting black patch on the throat and the breast. The female lacks the black patch on the breast and throat and the crown of the head is not black.

After Bachman found it, it was not seen again for about half a century. It was next collected by Charles S. Galbraith, a dealer in decorations for women's hats and the plume trade, who obtained, at Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana, on spring migration, one in 1886, six in 1887, and 31 in 1888.

Bachman's Warbler is known to have bred in the Southeastern United States and to have spent the winter in Cuba and the Isle of Pines. Meager records indicate the birds migrated southward in late summer and returned in early spring. One group apparently moved generally along the East Coast, and another group skirted the Gulf Coast and continued up

the Mississippi Valley. There is a record of 21 of the birds being killed on March 3, 1889, when they struck the lighthouse beacon at Sombrero Key in Florida.

Historic records indicate that Bachman's Warbler nested in low, wet forested areas containing variable amounts of water, but usually with some water that was permanent. These areas were described as being forested with sweet gum, oaks, hickories, black gum, and other hardwoods; and where there was an opening in the forest canopy, the ground was covered with dense thickets of cane, palmetto, blackberry, gallberry and other shrubs and vines.

A 1924 record indicates that five stomachs of this species from Alabama contained the remains of caterpillars and a few fragments of Hymenoptera, probably ants.

A dramatic decline in abundance apparently began around 1900, and extended into the 1940's or 1950's. The cause is suspected to have been from the loss of habitat both in the United States and Cuba. Decline may be related to clearing canebreak habitat for agriculture in the Southeastern United States, overhunting for millinery trade and loss of wintering habitat in Cuba; however, reasons for rarity

are uncertain. No confirmed breeding records have been reported from the United States since the mid-1960's. On March 11, 1967, the species was designated as endangered in its entire range by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Bachman's Warbler is presumed extirpated in Alabama. The last sighting in the United States was in 1988, although there were eight unconfirmed reports of the species from Cuba between 1978 and 1988.

Bachman's Warbler is or was the rarest songbird in North America: in the past 45 years, only lone birds have been seen at widely scattered spots in the Southeast. Most authorities agree that if the species still exists it is most likely in the l'On Swamp area in Charleston and Berkeley Counties, South Carolina. The species must be very close to extinction and possibly extinct.

Population densities of many migratory songbirds have declined by 50 percent or more in recent years. One cause appears to be the accelerating destruction of the forests of the West Indies, Mexico, and Central and South America, the principle wintering grounds of many of the migrants. The fate of Bachman's Warbler will probably befall other North American summer residents if the deforestation continues.

Nocturnal Predators

by John Borom

Owls are specialized hunters, adapted to find, catch and kill prey quickly and efficiently, and they have been doing it for ages. Owl fossils found in North America date back about 60 million years. Eight species have been documented along the Alabama Gulf Coast. Unusual and effective adaptations help owls survive. Large retinas make their vision 50 to 100 times more efficient than human eyes at distinguishing small objects in dull light. Their retinas are packed with light-gathering cells (rods). The lens is capable of considerable forward and backward adjustment. This permits rapid focusing which is useful when the owl drops down on prey. Owls possess binocular vision: each eye views the same scene from a slightly different angle, and this improves depth perception. At the same time, owls have little ability to move their eyes and must rely on

turning the entire head. This capability is well developed, and some species can twist their necks over 270 degrees—almost all the way around. Owl hearing is as well developed as vision. Large widely spaced and highly developed ears are concealed behind facial feathers and are unrelated to the “horns” or “tufts” used as camouflage by some species. Ability to focus sound is enhanced by the shape of the facial disk, which acts as a reflector to focus sound waves. The ears are asymmetrical, both in size and placement, an adaptation believed to significantly improve ability to locate prey. Owls hear sounds well below the threshold of human hearing, and some species can catch prey in complete darkness by using hearing alone. The plumage, including even the large flight feathers, are extremely soft, dense and flexible making them appear heavier than they actually are. This loose texture

permits owls to fly without making the usual “swooshing” sound normally associated with bird flight, and they are able to descend on prey in a silent, mothlike glide. Both sexes are colored alike, but females are usually larger and heavier than males. Drab colors allow them to blend into the background of shaded daytime roosts as well as the darkness of night. Feathers on their legs provide insulation and protect against bites by prey. An owl grips and kills prey with its talons. Two of these strong sharp claws branch off the front toes of the foot, and two off the back toes, a capability they share with woodpeckers and parrots. On the ground, they walk rather than hop. If the prey is small enough, the owl swallows it whole, otherwise, it holds the prey and tears it apart with its hooked beak and swallows the pieces. The digestive system absorbs nutritious portions and

Barred Owl



Barn Owl



Great Horned Owl



forms indigestible matter (bones, claws, teeth, feathers, hair and arthropod chitin) into round pellets regurgitated several hours later.

Owl pellets, also called castings, can be found under daytime roosts or nighttime feeding locations. Pellets can be dissected and the hard parts separated from the hair and feathers. Close examination of the items gives insight into the owl's diet.

Owls do not build nests, preferring to take abandoned hawk or crows nests or use holes in trees or banks. They are generally very early nesters, sometimes along the Gulf Coast having young as early as January. This is a remarkable adaptation, because the birds gain a great advantage by having their young as close as possible to the annual peak of small rodent population. This insures fairly easy prey for the inexperienced young owls.

Owls usually lay three to five white and undecorated eggs. The female has the responsibility of incubation, while the male hunts and brings food to the female. After the eggs hatch, the young

are fed by both parents.

Most birds begin incubation only after all eggs are laid, however owls start incubation as soon as the female lays the first egg. Sometimes two weeks may pass between the laying and hatching of the first and last egg. Young hatched last will die if the parents cannot find enough food in the area around the nest. They cannot compete with the larger older nestlings. This ensures that surviving fledglings are strong. During the day, most owls stay in hollow trees or dark, dense stands of vegetation. They hunt mainly at night, however on cloudy days or at dusk they scan the ground from a convenient perch and silently fly over the ground looking for prey.

Owls usually kill what is easiest to find and catch, and rodents provide an abundant source of food. If it were not for the service rendered by these birds of prey, the mouse and rat populations of our state would increase to disastrous proportions. All Alabama owls are protected by state and federal regulations.

Baby Screech Owls



Backyard Birding

Birds are a joy to watch. Birds will come to your yard if you give them what they need: food, water, nesting sites and safety.

Each species of bird has its own likes and dislikes. To quickly attract a variety of birds, offer a variety of food. To keep the birds coming back year after year, plan ahead. Plant flowers and shrubs the birds can use for food or shelter. Put out a large pan of water. Plant trees that provide seeds and places to build nests. One of the best ways to attract birds is to leave dead trees standing in your yard. Woodpeckers love them, songbirds sing from the bare branches—where they are easy to see. Leave some thickets for the birds. Tangled branches are a great place to hide. Read about landscaping your yard to migrant birds. See how to create a back yard habitat that will make your property more attractive to birds. Finally, use simple plans to build a variety of bird houses.

from birding.com

Newsletter Deadline

Please send your articles for the July issue to Delane Small by August 21.

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

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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

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“Human population growth is the most pressing environmental problem facing the U.S. and the world.”

John Flicker, President of the National Audubon Society

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