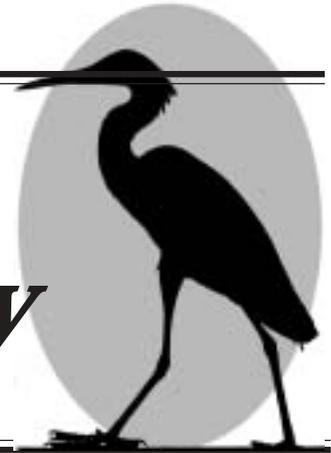


Mobile Bay Audubon Society

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY SINCE 1971



VOLUME XXII NO. 3

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Annual picnic

Lovell Sanctuary @ Lovell Farm, Loxley
Saturday, May 17th, 4:00 PM 'till

Spring has sprung! Birds are migrating and once again it's time for the Audubon Annual Picnic at the Lovell's Farm!

The menu will be fried catfish, slaw and beans plus whatever our members bring to add to the bounty. Members are also asked to bring lawn chairs.

To help in the planning of the goodies, the Lovells would appreciate members who are planning to attend to give them a quick call and let them know. It will be very beneficial in planning the amount of food as well as tables, etc. Judy's

number is (251) 964-6512 and Nadine Lovell can be reached at (251) 964-5387.

The Lovell Farm has many resident birds as well as the birds that we will be able to see as they pass through. Judy has spotted some Upland Sandpipers, Orchard Orioles, Common Yellowthroats, White-crowned Sparrows, Great Crested Flycatchers and many more. She says that around dusk we should be able to spot a nice variety.

Bring your chair and a friend and come with a hearty appetite.



Directions to the Lovell Farm can be found on page 8.

Board of Directors 2003

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Edith McClinton 170 N Lafayette Street Mobile, AL 36604	432-4898

Bluebirds Compete With Chickadees



In January a brilliant male Bluebird, *Sialia sialis*, perched outside my window on a leafless peach tree and sang soft musical melodies, warbling almost relentlessly, head tilted to the side in the characteristic posture of his species. Even though nesting houses were provided in our front yard and in a neighbor's field, I insisted on putting up still another nest box, this one on my clothes line pole.

Two days later Mr. BB was checking it out, poking his head in and out, sitting on top of it, flying back and forth to the peach tree. A few days later a female joined him, also disappearing into the box, then coming out to perch on the clothes line.

This activity occurred early morning, then the pair disappeared for much of the day. While they were absent a Carolina Chickadee, *Parus carolinensis*, decided the box might be to his liking and began the same scenario of poking in and out.

Next day the Chickadee arrived before the Bluebirds left on their morning trek. Mr. BB confronted the Chickadee and chased him (or her) into the woods. While he was all riled

up and in a confrontational mood he bombarded a squirrel that was minding his own business on the platform feeder. I believe the Bluebird actually nipped fur from the pesky rodent.

Since Chickadees are also cavity nesters we put up still another box, in hopes the Chickadees would find it suitable. Last year the dead tree that housed several families of Woodpeckers and Chickadees fell victim of a saw – necessary because nearby power lines were threatened.

There are several Bluebirds nesting in our neighborhood and they all seem more colorful this year. Seeing them in February before trees and plants have their spring bloom is especially pleasing to my eyes.

When the television news is all about war, death and destruction, I turn off the telly, put aside the newspaper and enjoy the antics of my feathered friends. I even gave up the clothes line until nesting season is over.

Celeste Hinds



Eastern Bluebird

by John Borom

The natural nesting place of Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) is in tree cavities. Over the years, land has been cleared for housing and industrial developments, shopping malls, cropland and highways. Wooden fence posts that once provided nesting cavities have now been replaced with metal posts. With “progress”, the supply of natural nesting cavities for Eastern Bluebirds and other native cavity nesters has been greatly reduced.

Modern forestry practices that favor the removal of aged and diseased trees, have contributed to population declines. Competition for nest sites from introduced European Starlings and House Sparrows, particularly where suitable holes are scarce has worsened the situation. The harmful effects from the use of pesticides to control fire ants is also a problem.

Eastern Bluebird populations declined in recent years to as low as 17 percent of their previous numbers in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s. Currently, Eastern Bluebird populations are increasing in some regions as the number of natural nesting sites has been augmented with artificial nesting boxes. Bluebirding is a great environmental, hands-on project that people of all ages can enjoy.

Birdathon

The following is copied from Elizabeth’s letter to her sponsors:
Dear Family, Friends, Neighbors, and Faithful Birdathon Sponsors:

I decided this year not to talk with Confucius about the Birdathon for I could just hear him say, “You’ve gotta stop this foolishness of counting birds. You can’t hear! You can’t see! And you can’t walk! You are just too old!”

In spite of Confucius’ negative comments and in spite of the weatherman’s heavy rain prediction, we (my birding cohorts, Edith McClinton, Lois Cassity and Edith’s daughter, Genny, as our driver) took off for the Island determined to count species to raise funds to place the wildlife magazine, *Audubon Adventures*, into classrooms in Mobile and Baldwin Counties and to have fun.

And fun we had! The weather cooperated, overcast but no rain. Because the tide was quite high, we were surprised to pick up many shore birds including 3 busy Ruddy Turnstones turning over stones, 2 wading Oystercatchers, Skimmers, Black-necks Stilts, Willets and several Rails. Gulls, Terns, Herons, a Pied-billed Grebe, a few warblers with their ventriloquial talent making it hard to catch a glimpse of them, 1 Summer Tanager, 1 Baltimore Oriole, 1 Hummer, a scattering of Swallows, and the usual backyard visitors, (Titmouse, Finches, Wrens, Chickadees, Cardinals, etc.) raised our count to 79. We were pleased and doing it for a worthy cause, in spite of the *gnats*, kept us going ‘n counting, going ‘n counting.

At the Audubon Sanctuary, the resident alligator put on a show for us. On the boardwalk out to the lake, Genny and I were privileged to hear and see 2 Towhees chatting to each other—a delightful pair.

Many of you have continued to be one of my sponsors. As always, 5¢, 10¢, 25¢, \$1.00 per species—any amount is appreciated, no gift too small and no gift too large. Your donation is *tax deductible*. Make checks payable to the Mobile Bay Audubon Society and mail to me.

Thank you from your faithful *Birdathon* rep.

Elizabeth Williams
3616 Pepper Ridge Drive
Mobile, AL 36693
643-7527





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.

Ottolie Halstead, Membership Chairman

Baker, LA

Ray Ramsay

Bay Minette

E McPherson

Sharilyn Romanick

Bon Secour

Jennifer Davis

Chunchula

Tona Dukes

Daphne

Roderick G Drummond

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Donald R Labbee

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Jennifer Sisk

Gulf Shores

Dan Chichester

Jayne L Rickert

Cheryl Searcy

Jackson, MO

Dennis D Sprandel

Lillian

Waler Lawson

Little River

Robert Lynch

Magnolia Springs

Jane Kemp

Mobile

Margaret Barnes

Ian J Blackburn

Dr. & Mrs. C. Brown

Cheryl Cain

Brenda Catlin

Rachel Dixon

Sandy Downing

Royer Downing

M W Gray

Jerri Hester

Theresa Hickey

Kathy Kvietys

Cindy McDonald

Ainsley McWeely

Margo Nabors

Mary Nash

George Ragazzo

Robert Rasch

Debbie Reynolds

Tim Rice

Joan Richardson

Dr. Laura Shorter

Joanne Shreves

David Walsh

Felice White

Montrose

Kathy Hunter Gordon

Robertsdale

Barbara Bingert

Stephen Cloud

Marvin Hayes

Wanita Kaiser

Saraland

Dr. Thomas Bilbo

R. Kinard

Ralph Sones

Silverhill

Kelly Agee

Donna Richardson

Spanish Fort

Maddy Otoole

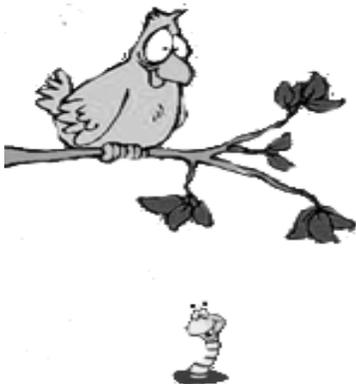
Summerdale

Kim Davis

Vickie Kilgore

Theodore

Kati Weis



WELCOME





2003 Summer Film Series

Special 13-Part Series
on Natural History

June

- 4 - Ocean Drifters - National Geographic
- 11 - Creatures of the Shallow Seas - National Geographic
- 18 - Jewels of the Caribbean Sea - National Geographic
- 25 - Adrift on the Gulf Stream - NOVA

July

- 2 - America's Endangered Species - National Geographic
- 9 - In the Company of Whales - Discovery
- 16 - Private Lives of Dolphins - NOVA
- 23 - Kingdom of the Seahorse - NOVA
- 30 - Lost World of the Medusa - Nature

August

- 6 - Conserving America - The Wetlands - PBS
- 13 - Conserving America - Challenge of the Coast - PBS
- 20 - Conserving America - The Rivers - PBS
- 27 - Conserving America - Champions of Wildlife - PBS



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!*





Follow Me to Eufaula

By Celeste Hinds

February 28 was a cold day at Eufaula – not like the bitter days earlier in the month, but cold enough for insulated undergarments. After driving the country roads from Fairhope to Eufaula we checked into the Lake Front State Park Lodge, then birded areas around the park.

Fins, Feathers and Flowers was the title of this weekend birders' retreat where we logged sixty-two species in less than twenty-four hours.

Linda Reynolds, Lake Guntersville State Park Naturalist was the weekend leader and kept the group organized, offering several options for birding by boat or on foot. After an apple cider social, Friday night's program was a slide presentation by accomplished wildlife photographer Quincy Banks. Banks' slides captured the essence of the refuge, sharing many of his fantastic slides

and tips for photographing birds.

Frank Duke, Manager of the Eufaula Refuge spoke about the history of the refuge and some of the management responsibilities.

On Saturday after a hearty buffet breakfast our group opted for the trip across the river into Georgia to bird the Bradley Unit of the huge Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge. Dick Reynolds was leader of the group and his expertise was valuable in spotting and identifying many species. This unit is closed to the public and our caravan stopped for gates to be unlocked.

At the entrance to the unit a flock of wild turkeys was feeding in a corn field. Many ducks including Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked, Lesser Scaup and Common Goldeneye were spotted. Much of the

spotting required scopes. My favorite ducks of the entire trip were Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers and Ruddy Ducks.

Osprey, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawks were visible. Our boxed lunch was consumed while we watched a Bald Eagle munching on his mid-day meal. American Anhinga were in the trees, one so near we could almost reach out and touch him.

Shorebirds and waders galore were feeding in the shallow areas. In the woods near the Bradley Unit were many passerines.

After birding the Bradley Unit until early afternoon we parted with the group and returned to the Alabama side of the refuge where we birded the nearby areas in Houston and Upland Units of the Refuge. Here we saw waders and Wood Ducks plus ducks observed earlier in the day. Scopes

Calendar

May

- 3 Kid's Fishing Fun Day. Safe Harbor R.V. Park. 8:00 a.m.-1:30p.m. A project of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation and ADCNR. For information call the reserve at 928-9792.
- 13 Board Meeting. 6:30 p.m.
General Meeting. **"The Natural History of the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta"** presented by **Eric Soehren**, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division. 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 17 Audubon Annual Picnic, Saturday, May 17, 4:00 p.m. 'till . . . Lovell Sanctuary @ Lovell Farm, Loxley
Directions: On County Road 49 turn off in front of Loxley School onto Black Griffin Road. Go to the end of the road that deadends and you will see the sanctuary on the right. Judy will put signs out on the road.
RSVP: Judy (251)964-6512 Nadine (251)964-5387

June

- 13 Field trip to Gaillard Island in Mobile Bay to observe nesting Brown Pelicans as well as gulls and terns. Meet at Beachcomber Dry Dock and Marine Supply at Dog River in Mobile County. Going south take the first left after you cross the Dog River Bridge. There will be a \$15 per person fee. Limit 20 people. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. For reservations call John Borom at 990-0423.

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Big Win for the Arctic Refuge Comes After Setback in the House

The disappointing House vote in favor of drilling in the Arctic Refuge on April 10 overshadowed a major conservation victory for the refuge that came the very next day. On Friday, April 11, the Congress adopted the conference report on the Budget Resolution which was clear of any instruction to the authorizing committees to drill in the Arctic Refuge. Quite simply, this means that the pro-drilling members of Congress conceded defeat on this back-door attempt to sneak a drilling provision into the budget.\

After the House passed their version of the Budget Resolution which contained a hidden revision for drilling in the Arctic Refuge, the Senate rejected a proposal to add Arctic drilling to the budget on March 19 with a vote of 52-48. The Resolution then went to conference, and when the measure emerged, the conference committee had acceded to the Senate position of no drilling in the refuge. The fact that this drilling provision did not pass the Senate with a simple majority is a clear indication that drilling proponents

cannot get the 60 votes needed to authorize arctic drilling on the Senate floor. (60 votes would be needed to authorization to break the filibuster that some Senators have vowed to use to block Arctic drilling.)

It remains to be seen what threats the refuge will face in the Senate Energy Committee, but this victory in the Congressional Budget Resolution was a major defeat to those who want to open the wildlife reserve to oil drilling. The inability of drilling propo-

Continued on page 9



Snowy Egret

by John Borom

The Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*) is a medium-sized, graceful, delicate, long-legged wading bird with entirely white plumage. It is about 20 inches tall with a wingspan of about 38 inches, and it is certainly a beautiful bird.

Adults have a thin black bill, yellow facial skin, black legs, and yellow feet. In breeding season long lacy plumes are present on the head, neck, and back. Immature birds are similar to adults but lack plumes and have a yellow stripe up the back of their legs.

Snowy Egrets are common permanent residents unlikely to be missed if one looks in ponds, coastal marshes, swamps and river edges. These agile birds often feed by sprinting rapidly through shallow water, chasing schools of minnows and shrimp. This habit makes them easy to identify without seeing their bills and feet. They also constantly

shuffle their yellow feet and stir up mud to scare out prey.

Prior to the protection of our native species, Snowy Egrets were extensively hunted for their plumes. During the mid-1800's it was very fashionable for women to have bird feathers on their hats and clothing. Many adults were killed on the nest and the young left to die. Their slaughter spawned the conservation movement in the United States, including the establishment of the National Audubon Society. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and other laws made it illegal to harm many of our native birds and other laws pulled this species back from very reduced numbers. Today the Snowy Egret is not listed needing special conservation attention in any portion of its southeastern range.

The photograph of the Snowy Egret was taken near the Dauphin Island Airport on April 19, 2003.

Continued from page 8

nents to deliver a majority in the Senate means that the environmental community is well-positioned to handle any future threats to the Arctic Refuge that come in this Congress.

Support is still needed! Everyone is encouraged to see where their Representative and Senators stand on the issue and then take the time to contact them and let them know how you feel on the issue. Together we will make sure that this great arctic wilderness is not destroyed for six months worth of oil.

US World Wildlife Fund – Arctic National Wildlife Refuge





Spring Migration

Spring migration is the “superbowl” for birders . Amazingly, these tiny birds have flown thousand of miles to reach the coast after spending the North American winter in Mexico, Central America or South America where the days remain warm and food is plentiful during our cold season. And luckily for those of us fortunate enough to live on the coast, migrating birds pass through our area. Birding is excellent all along the coast and there are numerous special birding events.

The Great Louisiana BirdFest

Nancy Hora and I, as well as John Borom and his wife Carolyn, attended The Great Louisiana BirdFest, an annual event of the Northlake Nature Center in Mandeville, Louisiana. The Birdfest consists of around 18 different field trips over a four day period. The trips visit varied habitats including seashore, swamps, wetlands, pine savanna, and hardwoods. The birders meet at the Castine Center, where they are picked up by bus and driven to the site they have selected. Excellent guides accompany each group and often meals, snacks or wine and cheese are served. On Friday nights of the

Birdfest they have a benefit featuring South Louisiana food (and those Cajuns know how to cook), silent auction and a Cajun band. Following is a list of some of the birds we sighted on our trips (Nancy and Delane; John chose some different trips):

- Yellow Rumped Warbler
- Black-crowned Night Heron
- Little Blue Heron
- Green Heron
- Tri-colored Heron
- Yellow-crowned Night Heron
- Osprey
- Mississippi Kite
- Red tailed Hawk
- Red shouldered Hawk
- Black Vulture
- Turkey Vulture
- Anhinga
- Brown-headed Nuthatch
- White Ibis
- Eastern Bluebird
- Great Crested Flycatcher
- Gray Catbird
- Carolina Chickadee
- Mottled Duck
- Snowy Egret
- Great Egret
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
- Broad-winged Hawk
- Wild Turkey
- Summer Tanager
- Painted Bunting

Everything about the trip was wonderful. The 50 or so members of the Northlake Nature Center do an excellent job of arranging varied and interesting trips and coordinating all the activities. Next year maybe more of our members will be able to go.

Dauphin Island

The weekend following the Birdfest, April 20, we went to Dauphin Island where birds were abundant. Dauphin Island was the site of the annual AOS meeting and there were birders from all over the US and a few foreign countries. Following is a list of sightings there:

- Tennessee Warbler
- Great crested Flycatcher
- Solitary Sandpiper
- Prothonotary Warbler
- Chuck-will’s Widow
- Summer Tanager
- Indigo Bunting
- Downy Woodpecker
- Wood Thrust
- Grey-cheeked Thrush
- American Redstart
- Black & white Warbler
- Worm-eating Warbler
- Reddish Egret
- Blue Grosbeak

Delane Small



Yellow-crowned Night Heron

by John Borom

Adult Yellow-crowned Night Herons (*Nyctanassa violacea*) are beautiful birds. The generic name is derived from a combination of two Greek words, *Nyctos* (night) and *anassa* (a lady) and the specific name is the Latin word for "violet-colored."

Night herons are stockier in appearance than most other herons. They are about 21 inches tall and have a 44 inch wingspan. They have a yellow crown, of course, and a black head with a white cheek patch, large reddish orange eyes, and a thick black bill shaped like a spear point. The body is a powder blue and each feather of the folded wings is lined with white, and the legs and feet are yellow. During the breeding season long white occipital plumes are present.



Juvenile birds are slaty-brown streaked finely with buff and white. The eyes are yellowish to amber. Adult plumage is gradually acquired over a period of two years.

On the Gulf Coast, breeding season begins in late March, peaks in mid-April to early May, and extends to the middle of July. Breeding habitat is wetland areas, including swamps, marshes, bottomland forests, and river systems. The nest is commonly built in a tree 30-40 feet above the ground over water. The platform-style nest is built of sticks and other plant material and looks as if the eggs might fall through the bottom.

The female usually lays four or five dull bluish eggs, and both adults take turns incubating them for 21-25 days. The young remain near the nest for 25 days after hatching. Both adults care for the nestlings.

The diet is primarily crustaceans, especially crabs and

crayfish, but also includes snails, mussels, small mammals, lizards and snakes. This species forages at night and roosts during the day.

The photograph of the Yellow-crowned Night Heron and nest was taken near Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge during the Great Louisiana BirdFest on April 11, 2003.

Newsletter Deadline

Please send your articles for the July issue to Delane Small by June 20.

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

From *Singing in the Wilderness* © 1935

by Donald Culross Peattie

Man feels himself an infinity above those creatures who stand, zoologically, only one step below him, but every human being looks up to the birds. They suit the fancy of us all. What they feel they can voice, as we try to; they court and nest, they battle with the elements, they are torn by two opposing impulses, a love of home and a passion for far places. Only with birds do we share so much emotion.

