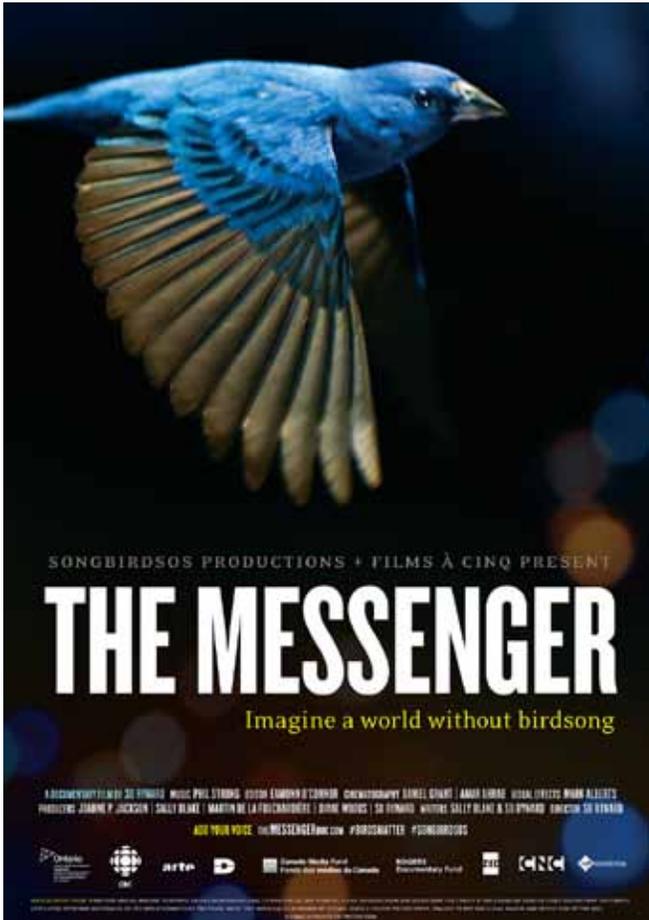


Flicker Flashes

Published by
Birmingham Audubon

For conservation and greater knowledge
of birds, their habitat, and natural world



March Nature Program The Messenger

A film by Su Tynard
March 16 at 7 p.m.
Birmingham Botanical Gardens

Birmingham Audubon has a long history of screening award-winning environmental and nature films for public audiences. This year's March Nature Program continues that tradition with "The Messenger," a film exploring the many perils – urbanization, pollution, habitat loss – that threaten songbird species during their seasonal migrations. Among other timely questions, the film asks what humans stand to lose, both aesthetically and ecologically, when the skies go silent.

As always, this monthly program is free and open to the public; you can also come early for refreshments and conversation at 6:30 p.m. To learn more about the film, and to watch the trailer, visit www.songbirdsos.com

*Photo: Join us for The Messenger, 16 March, 7 p.m.,
at Birmingham Botanical Gardens*

2017 Field Trips: Looking Ahead

Your field trips committee strives to select field trips that feature the full spectrum of Alabama's bird life. We have scheduled a wide variety of birding sites at destinations and at times when birding will be ideally suited to finding species of interest. The schedule for the remaining 2017 field trips through summer will be:

April 1: Moss Rock Preserve

April 15: Brushy Creek Lake, Bankhead National Forest

May 6: Monte Sano State Park

June 24: Forever Wild State Cattle Ranch,
Hale County

July 29: Prattville, Autaugaville, Lowndesboro

August 5: Greensboro area catfish farms

August 12: Gainesville, Aliceville, Livingston

March Half-day Field Trip East Lake Park and Zion Prairie

Birmingham, Alabama

Saturday, March 11, 2017, 7 a. m. - noon

Black-crowned night-herons, great blue herons, and a smattering of winter waterfowl are sure to be on the agenda when we visit East Lake Park and nearby Zion Prairie — north-east of the Birmingham airport — for our March half-day field trip. East Lake Park, one of Birmingham's oldest, largest, and most visited city parks, is a site on the Alabama Birding Trails and a popular birding destination due to the abundance of birds that are easily viewed from the trail that encircles the lake, or from the gazebo located in the middle of it. In addition to the water birds, resident and wintering songbirds are sure to be found in the branches of the old hackberry trees and shrubs growing along the banks of Village Creek, which flows adjacent to the park. A short distance to the north is an area that local birder Scot Duncan has dubbed "Zion Prairie" for the short grass habitat found there, along the outskirts of the airport property. Here, we can expect to find numerous sparrows, eastern meadowlarks, and, if we're lucky, raptors such as

American kestrel, red-tailed hawk, peregrine falcon and merlin.

Plans: Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the parking lot on the east side of East Lake Park. The address is 200 84th Street N, Birmingham, Alabama 35203. Come dressed for the weather, which can be changeable this time of year as winter yields to springtime. Wear good walking shoes, and expect to walk a bit as we traverse the park's grounds and the roads at Zion Prairie.

Trip leaders: Susan Barrow (205-253-8667) and Matt Hunter (205-915-8186)



Black crowned night heron - Photo by Coleman

March Full-day Field Trip Perry Lakes Park (Marion) and Spencer Farm (Marion Junction)

Saturday, March 25, 2017, 7 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Late March heralds the return of many of our early spring migrants, so it is appropriate that we turn our sights south to greet them. Northern parulas, purple martins, and Louisiana waterthrushes are sure to be in residence when we visit Perry Lakes Park and take in the views of cypress trees draped with Spanish moss. Perhaps we'll be able to "hoot up" a barred owl or two. Underfoot in the boggy soils, atamasco lilies will no doubt add a splash of white to the sun-dappled forest floor, while the brick-red blossoms of red buckeye tempt passing ruby-throated hummingbirds.

Following lunch at the park pavilion, we'll travel south to Marion Junction to visit Spencer Farm, provided the necessary arrangements can be made. Their Facebook page tells the delightful story behind the farm's owners and their mission: The Spencer family has been working towards a happier and healthier lifestyle on their family homestead for over a decade. They've been able to supply not only themselves, but friends, family, and local businesses with chemical-free veg-

etables, handmade products, and wholesome meat, eggs and honey produced right there in the Black Belt. They started the Selma area's first ever Community Supported Agriculture Program beginning in 2015. To learn more about Spencer Farm CSA you'll have to join us for the trip!

Plans: Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Hoover McDonald's, located on US Hwy 31 across from the Galleria. The address is 1731 Montgomery Hwy, Hoover, AL, 35244. We will carpool and caravan from there, with a brief stop at the Wendy's on AL Hwy 5 in Brent, should anyone wish to meet us there about 8:00 a.m.

Bring a lunch: We'll dine under the shelter at Perry Lakes Park, listening to male northern parulas staking their territorial claims. Wear good walking shoes and expect to walk a bit as we traverse the park's grounds and visit the farm.

Trip leader: Greg Harber (205-807-8055)

All Birmingham Audubon field trips are free and open to the public.

Additional trip information may be found at our website: birminghamaudubon.org and on our Facebook page.

Birmingham Audubon Teaches Nature Mysteries of Bird Migration

Presented by Anne G. Miller, guest speaker

Sunday, March 19, 2017, 2 p.m.

Alabama Wildlife Center at Oak Mountain

Every day of every month of every year, birds crisscross the skies above the North American continent, on the wing to destinations known only to them. Their migrations are guided by environmental cues and their innate abilities, honed by generations of ancestors before them. In this program, Anne Miller, will take us on a migratory journey as fascinating and as ancient as birds themselves, as she delves into the secrets and mysteries of bird migration.

Remember to come early to enjoy refreshments in the Observation Room (and the birds at the feeders) at the



Mixed flock, lesser scaups – Photo by Bob Farley

Alabama Wildlife Center, and then, when it's time for the program, we'll proceed to the auditorium for the program. Weather permitting, after the program we'll take a bird walk within the park to search for early spring migrants and lingering winter visitors.

Remaining ATN seminars:

Alabama Birding Trails – Joe Watts, Guest Speaker, Sunday, April 30, 2017, 2:00 p.m. Alabama Wildlife Center Alabama State Parks: Your

Gateway to Outdoor Recreation – Emily Vanderford, Guest Speaker Sunday, May 21, 2017, 2:00 p.m. Oak Mountain Interpretive Center

Birmingham Audubon and the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art Present: “Phillip Henry Gosse and The Birds of Jamaica”

901 College Street, Auburn, Alabama

Thursday, April 13, 5-8 p.m.



“*Quiscalus crassirostris*,” now *Q. niger*, the Greater Antillean Grackle, from Gosse's 1849 monograph *The Birds of Jamaica*.

Join Birmingham Audubon and Auburn University's Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art for an evening celebration of early Alabama naturalist Phillip Henry Gosse, with special guests Dr. Gary Mullen and Dr. Taylor Littleton, authors of *Phillip Henry Gosse: Science and Art in Letters from Alabama and Entomologia Alabamensis* (University of Alabama Press). This free, public event begins with a book signing at 5 p.m., followed by a 6 p.m. talk by Dr. Mullen and Dr. Littleton on Gosse's influential later monograph, *The Birds of Jamaica*. A reception, with additional opportunities for book signing and conversation, begins at 7:15. Visitors are encouraged to come early for a chance to browse the museum's exceptional holdings in American art – including the Louise Hauss & David Brent Miller Audubon Collection, featuring the prints of our organization's namesake, the great Franco-American artist-naturalist, John James Audubon. For more information on this special event, contact Birmingham Audubon Membership & Volunteer Coordinator, Chris Sykes: chrissykes@birminghamaudubon.org

Chris Oberholster's Conservation Roundup for March 2017

Promoting the protection of natural habitat for birds and other elements of biodiversity is a central part of the Birmingham Audubon mission – and one of the reasons our organization played a leadership role in the 1992 establishment of Forever Wild, Alabama's public lands acquisition program for conservation and outdoor recreation, as well as in its renewal for another twenty years in 2012.

Some recent highlights on the habitat protection front by the Forever Wild Program include two significant acquisitions along the Cahaba River.

This past October, Forever Wild acquired another parcel with frontage along the Cahaba River and Shades Creek in south Shelby County. This brings the Forever Wild ownership there to over 1,200 acres adjacent to an existing 315 acre park owned by Shelby County, and plans are underway by the county and the state to develop jointly recreational trails and canoe launches on the combined 1,500 acres. This past December, the Forever Wild Program also bought another 1,500 acres along the lower



Cahaba River chalk bluffs on the Old Cahawba Prairies Forever Wild Property. Photo by Chris Oberholster

Cahaba River near Selma. The new land adjoins the 3,000 acre Old Cahawba Prairies Forever Wild property, and the Old Cahawba Archeological Park, managed by the Alabama Historical Commission.

In recent months, there have also been some exciting developments regarding the use of some of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill penalty funds for acquisition of lands to protect habitat and expand compatible outdoor recreation opportunities. A particularly exciting project along these

lines was the announcement in November of \$36 million from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation's Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund to acquire the Gulf Highlands tract, approximately 113 acres of undeveloped beach and dune habitat on the Fort Morgan Peninsula in Baldwin County that is home to several endangered, rare and declining species, including the Alabama Beach Mouse, three species of endangered sea turtles, Piping Plover, and many more.



*Walter F. Coxe in the field.
Photo: Birmingham Audubon archives*

Birmingham Audubon Announces 2017 Walter F. Coxe Research Grant Recipients

The Walter F. Coxe Research Grant program pays tribute to one of Birmingham Audubon's early leaders, the influential conservationist Walter Coxe, by providing financial support for research projects focused

on conservation in Alabama and the Southeast. Since the awards began, over thirty peer-reviewed scientific papers have resulted from projects supported by the program, a substantial addition to our knowledge of the region's flora and fauna. This year, applicants from both in-and out-of-state universities submitted proposals, six of which were chosen for awards: Auburn University's Lydia Moore will use Walter F. Coxe funding to study habitat use by bats in longleaf pine forest; the University of Alabama's Neil Gilbert will survey the

Alabama Black Belt region to study the relationships between birds and grassland habitats; Zachary Nickerson, also of the University of Alabama, will look at the role of freshwater mussels in nutrient cycling in stream environments; Jacksonville State's Daniel Wicker will examine the population demographics of a threatened snail species in the Cahaba River; the University of Mississippi's Stephanie Burgess will investigate the influence of land use on the population genetics of slimy salamanders in the Bankhead National Forest; and Grover Brown, a 2016 Walter F. Coxe recipient and graduate student at the University of Southern Mississippi, will focus on the population ecology and genetics of the razorback musk turtle in southwestern Alabama. Congratulations to all our winners – we look forward to reading the results of their exciting research soon!

Name that Bird: Winter Song Edition



This month's mystery bird: A little touch of gold against the winter's gray. Photo: Matt Hunter (used with permission)

The high-pitched songs of this month's bird have a melodious quality, like a reedy flute in a Beethoven symphony. Visually, both males and females wear a little bit of golden eyeshadow – a nice touch that has

nothing to do with their name – as well as prominent patches of white or tan on their throats, above their eyes (on the supercilium), and in a stripe that runs along the top of the crown. (We say “white or tan” because two color morphs are common across the range – an interesting feature of this species’ population genetics.) Look for these winter-only birds in small groups, either rummaging through the leaf litter or flying low through scrub. While they’re not shy, you’ll probably need binoculars to get a good look at key field marks. . . So, can you name that bird? Answer in next month’s “Flicker Flashes.”

Last month's (February) “Name That Bird” was (drumroll) . . . Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*). It's “commonly confused doppelgänger” is the Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*).

BAMW Young Naturalist Guest Director Named



2017 Young Naturalist Guest Director Meredith Fitzpatrick, shown with her favorite hiking buddies. Photo courtesy Meredith Fitzpatrick

We're pleased to announce that Meredith Fitzpatrick has been named Young Naturalist Guest Director for the 2017 Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop (BAMW). A Birmingham native, Meredith grew up immersed in the out-

doors. Once in college, she parlayed her love of fresh air and nature into a place on the soccer team and a degree in Biology; while at Birmingham-Southern College, she conducted a variety of research projects on topics including longleaf pine ecosystems (with Dr. Scot Duncan), red-backed salamander preferences (with Dr. Megan Gibbons), and coral reef ecology (with Dr. Andy Gannon). Her work with these outstanding mentors inspired her to pursue a Master of Arts in Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where she concentrated in biology instruction. During graduate school, Meredith also pursued a career teaching seventh-grade Life Science, a position she's held for the last thirteen years. Throughout, she has organized and facilitated an annual “Science Day” for her seventh graders at Oak Mountain State Park, an event that provides opportunities to learn about field biology through activities like orienteering and ecological discovery. She has also taught and developed curriculum for twelfth-grade Environmental Science, and coached several basketball and volleyball teams. Today, Meredith lives in northern Shelby County with husband Trey and their two daughters, Shannon and Avery.



*Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop celebrates its fortieth anniversary this May.
Photo of past Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop courtesy Bob Farley*

The Fortieth Annual Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop

Thursday, May 11, to Sunday, May 14, 2017

At Alpine Camp, Mentone, Alabama

Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop, one of the South's oldest and largest events dedicated to the study of natural history, is turning forty this year! We hope you'll consider joining us in May as we celebrate this historic milestone with another great year of classes exploring the ecology, wildlife, and culture of beautiful northeastern Alabama. Together with our faculty, you'll enjoy a broad overview of the region's natural and cultural history, with classes on forest ecology, stream biology, beginning and advanced bird identification, animal tracking, insect identification, paleontology, Native American culture, early Alabama architecture, caving, and much more. The University of Mississippi's Dr. Scott Rush will give this year's keynote address, discussing his ongoing analysis of the late Bob Sargent's long-term bird-banding data, and the University of Alabama's Dr. John Abbott and Kendra Abbott will offer an intensive pre-workshop nature photography course. All classes and talks are held either on the campus of Mentone's historic Alpine Camp or in one of several natural areas located around Mentone and nearby

Fort Payne. Students and faculty stay in the rustic cabins or lodges at Alpine Camp or at nearby DeSoto State Park, both surrounded by the beautiful Appalachian landscape. While you're at it, consider making Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop a family tradition with our Young Naturalist Program, an outdoor-education curriculum for children ages five to twelve. All Young Naturalist activities are taught and supervised by our adult academic faculty, with assistance from an invited Guest Director and Birmingham Audubon Outreach Director Dr. Ansel Payne. Generations of Young Naturalists have now enjoyed this program's hands-on activities and extensive science- and nature-based opportunities. For more information on this program, including pricing and registration, visit birminghamaudubon.org/bamw. We hope to see you "up on the mountain" this spring!

Have memories of previous Mountain Workshops? We'd love to see hear/read/see them. Email your old photos or stories to: andycoleman@birminghamaudubon.org

Join and Support Birmingham Audubon

Are birds, wildlife and our natural habitat of interest to you?

If so, we invite you to be a part of a community that enjoys, values and protects birds and our natural world.

Founded in 1946, the Birmingham Audubon Society is Alabama's leading non-profit organization engaging people in the enjoyment and conservation of birds, their habitats and the natural world. With your support, we involve people through recreational birding, by extending their horizons with education programs, and by engaging them in conservation actions such as planting trees, counting birds, and working with local, state, and national policy makers.

There are many ways you can support Birmingham Audubon

Please join us and make a difference for birds and your quality of life, right here in Alabama!

Membership

Take the first step and become a Member of Birmingham Audubon. Get connected with our *Flicker Flashes* newsletter. See birds by participating in one of our free field trips, and learn something at one of our free monthly programs.

Make a Donation

We rely on your support and are proud to work on your behalf to restore wildlife habitat, conserve areas that are important to birds, and inspire appreciation and understanding of our natural world. Your generous donation, above and beyond the basic membership dues, is an important source of funding which allows Birmingham Audubon to facilitate our vital mission of connecting people with birds and the places they live.

Your memberships and donations support:

- **Free monthly programs on nature and science topics**
- **Free field trips led by expert birders to great birding cultural locations**
- **Annual banquet with nationally recognized speaker**
- **Discounted registration for Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop**
- **Members-only birding classes**
- **Graduate student research grants**
- **Adult and student education opportunities and initiatives**
- **Alabama Birding Trails**
- **Local, state and national conservation initiatives**
- **Members-only Lending Library**

Birmingham Audubon Society Membership Application

Join Renew **Annual Membership: \$ 20.00**

Donation to support the programs & projects of Birmingham Audubon: \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

Please make check payable to:

Birmingham Audubon Society

Please charge my credit card

Visa **MasterCard**

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Birmingham Audubon Society is an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Your donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Please keep my donation anonymous

Yes No

I want to receive communications electronically

Yes No

I want to be contacted to learn about volunteer activities

Yes No

If you are interested in joining National Audubon Society, visit: www.audubon.org

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Birmingham Audubon Society

3720 Fourth Avenue S, Second Floor

Birmingham, AL 35222

Phone: 205-719-3678

www.birminghamaudubon.org

Birmingham Audubon Society
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Office Address and Mailing Address:
Birmingham Audubon
3720 Fourth Avenue S, Second Floor
Birmingham, AL 35222
Phone: 205-719-3678



Email: info@birminghamaudubon.org
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**Birmingham Audubon is a staffed chapter of National Audubon Society with offices located at:
3720 Fourth Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35222.
Phone number: 205-719-3678**

Suzanne Langley, Executive Director:
suzannelangley@birminghamaudubon.org

Andy Coleman, Ph.D., Program Director:
andycoleman@birminghamaudubon.org

Ansel Payne, Ph.D., Outreach Director:
anselpayne@birminghamaudubon.org

Chris Oberholster, Partnership and Policy Director:
chrisoberholster@birminghamaudubon.org

Chris Sykes, Membership & Volunteer Coordinator:
chrissykes@birminghamaudubon.org

