

What's Happening

Happy New Year all! I hope my Winter-Spring column inspires you to add to our knowledge of our bird populations while you have a great time birding.

The great thing about birding as an obsession is that we birders have several opportunities to contribute to the greater good while involved in our passion. Thus participating in an all-day or several-days birding outing can be a completely guilt-free activity IF you go about it in the right way.

So what is the secret to “guilt-free birding”? Well, there are several opportunities available. This year's Great Backyard Bird Count is being held February 13-19. It is a joint effort of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society and is another effort to quantify over-wintering bird populations. The name is a bit misleading: you don't have to limit your observations to your backyard; you can count birds anywhere that is convenient for you. More information on the Great Backyard Bird Count can be found at <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>. Another Cornell Lab of Ornithology citizen science project is Project Feeder Watch, which starts on the second Saturday of November and continues for 21 weeks (ending in April). There is a \$15 annual fee to participate in Project Feeder Watch. More information on this project can be found at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/index.html>.

For more general day-to-day guilt-free birding, Cornell's eBird (<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>) offers an excellent opportunity. eBird is a wonderful tool that not only contributes to “citizen science” but has several features that pander to our more self-centered interests. If you're a hardcore lister, eBird will keep track of World, AOU, ABA, North America, South America, State, county or custom lists for you. Observations you submit to eBird can be viewed in several different formats, and eBird allows you to view summarized data from other contributors as well. So now I have a legitimate reason to avoid those “honey-dos” -- I'm out in the backyard collecting data for eBird! I'm not procrastinating; I'm doing my part for citizen science! In my last newsletter I mentioned that I am doing a survey of birds sighted in the Mobile Botanical Gardens. I submit those observations to eBird, allowing me an easy way to access and summarize those data.

So go out and have fun birding this 2009 and, while you're at it, make a contribution to our knowledge of our bird populations. Guilt-free birding--make it a habit for the new year.

Good birding all!

Chazz Hesselein
President, Coastal Birding Association

CBA

Coastal Birding Association



Field Trips

Winter-Spring 2009

Jan. 10 Gulf Shores for winter birds. Meet at **8:00 am** at the Hardee's on Hwy 59 in Foley. We will visit the Gulf Shores area to look for rarities found on the January 3rd Gulf Shores Christmas Bird Count.

Jan. 23-25 Alabama Ornithological Society (AOS)

Winter Meeting. This year's Winter Meeting will be held at Five Rivers on the Mobile Causeway. For information on registration and schedule of events, visit the meeting page on the AOS website: <http://www.bham.net/aos/meetings>. The guest speaker will be our very own Roger Clay, certified wildlife biologist with the Alabama Non-game Wildlife Program in the Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries.

Feb. 7 Grand Bay Savannah for sparrow tromping. Meet at **8:00 am** at the Hardee's on Hwy 188 in Bayou la Batre. We will explore Alabama's Forever Wild Grand Bay Savannah Tract for Henslow's and Le Conte's Sparrows. Be prepared for wet conditions. You will probably want to have **WATERPROOF BOOTS** of some type. We will also visit and bird Point Aux Pines to look for Seaside and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows.

Feb. 21 Magnolia Landfill, Baldwin County, for gulls. Meet at **8:00 am** at the landfill entrance parking lot on Baldwin County Road 49.

March 7 Blakely Island Mud Lakes for causeway birding and shorebirds. Meet at **8:00 am** at the Alabama Game and Fish Commission Office parking lot adjacent to Five Rivers Center on the Mobile Causeway. We will bird the general Five Rivers area and then the State Dock's Blakely Island Mud Lake property for shorebirds. You must have completed and sent in your yearly hold harmless form to enter the State Dock's property (see back of newsletter).

April 4 Fort Morgan, Baldwin County, for spring migrants. Meet at **8:00 am** at the Stable Grounds near the fort entrance. Please note there is a \$5 entrance fee to bird at the fort.

State Docks Visitation Rules

If you plan a field trip after January 1, 2009, to the Mobile causeway dikes that are managed by the Alabama State Port Authority, you **must** fill out the permit for visitation and return it by mail or fax to the Mobile office. This permit **must** be renewed for each calendar year.

Birders are able to visit the dikes at any time but they must first notify the State Docks, weekdays at (251) 441-7085 or weekend (251) 441-7777, of the details of the visit. Remember: do not leave the dike pathway for any reason and do not attempt to visit any site that is under active management. You cannot drive your car onto dikes and you must leave your car parked in a safe location off the main road without blocking any entrances. You are **required** to place a copy of the Mudlakes Visitors Pass on the windshield of your car while you are visiting the dikes.

Forms can be obtained from the AOS web site: www.bham.net/aos/blakeley/ or call Howard Horne (251) 605-9043.

CBA Membership

Coastal Birding Association is a chapter of the Alabama Ornithological Society and all CBA members must also be AOS members. To join or continue membership in CBA, send dues to the AOS treasurer yearly:

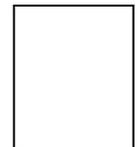
Mary Frances Stayton	2009 AOS dues *
952 Mockingbird Lane	+ 2009 CBA dues (\$5.00)
Leeds, AL 35094	_____ Total

*AOS dues: Student: \$10; Individual: \$25; Family: \$40; Sustaining: \$50
Life (individual):\$350 Life (family): \$550

Address correspondence concerning membership to: Mary Frances Stayton -- E-mail: lovingcats@alltel.net

CBA members continue to maintain and fund two water features on Dauphin Island during spring and fall migration. Your dues are dedicated to production of this newsletter, support of the water drips, and small projects on Dauphin Island and in the southwest section of Alabama. Thanks so much for your assistance and support.

Coastal Birding Association
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CBA OFFICERS

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FIELD TRIPS cont.

April 11 BRING A FRIEND FIELD TRIP to Dauphin Island for spring migrants. Meet at **8:00 am** at Shell Mound Park on the island and bring a friend to introduce to birding.

April 17-19 Alabama Ornithological Society (AOS) Spring Meeting on Dauphin Island. Check the AOS website and spring AOS newsletter for updates on registration and field trip schedules.

May 9 Splinter Hill Bog for pitcher plants and Bachman's Sparrows. Meet at **8:00 am** at the Chevron gas station located at Exit 45 off of Interstate 65 in Baldwin County. From there we will carpool to the Splinter Hill Bog to look for sparrows as well as pitcher plants and other pine savannah plant species.

For directions to locations or if you have any questions, call Howard Horne at (251) 605-9043 or Chazz Hesselein at (251) 666-3118. Field trips may be canceled due to adverse weather or other reasons, so be sure to call Howard or Chazz if in doubt.

May 30 Gaillard Island, Mobile Bay, for nesting pelicans, gulls, and terns. Meet at **7:00 am** at 7257 Bay Road. **DIRECTIONS:** From I-10 turn south onto Rangeline Road; continue south to Hamilton Boulevard (traffic light); turn left (east) onto Hamilton; go east on Hamilton through the 4-way blinking light at Dauphin Island Parkway. Hamilton Boulevard then becomes Island Road; continue on Island Road to the "T" intersection with Bay Road; turn right (south) onto Bay Road and go 0.6 mile to the vacant lot on the left with mailbox #7257. Park in the vacant lot. The launch site is the pier to the north of the lot where Howard will meet the group.

IMPORTANT: If you plan to join us on this trip, you must contact Howard Horne by phone (251) 605-9043 or email horne@earthlink.net about 2 weeks (May 16th) before the trip date to reserve a spot on the boat(s) to the island. The launch location and time of departure may change or the trip may be canceled, so please stay in touch with Howard so you won't get left behind or show up for a canceled trip.

NOTE: Due to the need for suitable weather conditions for this trip combined with our advanced scheduling, the chances of this trip happening are precarious at best. Our last two trips were canceled due to adverse weather conditions. But our luck will hopefully change this year for a trip to this wonderful nesting site.