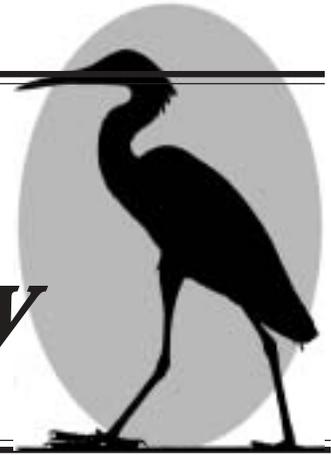


Mobile Bay Audubon Society

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VOLUME XXIV NO. 1



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Birdwatching in South Alabama

By John Borom

In recent decades, birdwatching (also known as birding) has evolved from an eccentric activity practiced by a few dedicated individuals to a continent-wide activity that involves millions of professional and amateur participants. There are many good reasons why it has become so popular. Many people find it relaxing and simple, and others enjoy the beauty and outdoor exercise that it affords. Some enjoy the challenges of bird identification and adding to their life lists, and others simply enjoy recognizing birds by their songs

and calls. Some see it as a rewarding learning experience, an opportunity to socialize with like-minded people and a way to monitor the health of the local environment. Other people watch birds to reconnect with nature. These days, a visit to any of south Alabama's premier birding locations, such as Dauphin Island, Fort Morgan, Mobile Tensaw River Delta, Gulf State Park, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Choctaw National Wildlife Refuge, Weeks Bay National



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Estuarine Research Reserve, and the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail, would doubtless uncover still more reasons why people watch birds.

We are truly blessed by the geographical and biological diversity of our area. Because of south Alabama's location on the central portion of the northern Gulf coast, many birds remain during the winter months while others migrate here from colder areas. In addition to supporting a wide range of breeding birds and year-round residents, south Alabama hosts a large number of spring and fall migrants that move between breeding and wintering grounds. In all, more than 378 species make annual appearances.

Alabama also has a long tradition of friendly birdwatching. In general, Alabama birders and bird clubs are willing to help beginners and involve anyone who is interested in their projects. Christmas bird counts, breeding bird surveys, banding neotropically migrants, field trips, lectures, workshops, and the Alabama Coastal BirdFest all provide a chance for novice, intermediate and expert birdwatchers to interact and share the splendor of birds. So, whatever your level, there is ample opportunity for you to get involved and enjoy birdwatching!

Birding is Big Business in the United States

National Audubon

Birdwatching is the fastest growing outdoor activity in America. That means big dollars and big business. In 2001 more than 1 in 5 American were birdwatchers. More than \$46 million birdwatchers spent \$32 billion in retail sales for birdwatching trips, bird seed, binoculars and more. These expenditures resulted in \$85 billion in overall nationwide impact, more than 860 thousand jobs supported across the nation, and \$13 billion in tax revenue for state and federal government. Of the \$32 billion in retail sales, birders spent \$2.2 billion on bird feed and \$628 million on nest boxes, bird houses, feeders and baths. One billion pounds of bird seed was sold nationwide. That is enough to fill a train 50 miles long!

*US Fish and Wildlife Services
Report 2001-2
Birding in the United States*



Hawaiian Bird Likely Extinct: Government Must Act Now to Prevent Dozens More Losses

News release by the American Bird Conservancy, 12/1/04

A native Hawaiian bird died in captivity on November 28, probably signaling the extinction of the species. Saving the Po'ouli, a small honeycreeper found only on the island of Maui, had been the mission of a few dedicated biologists at the Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project over the past year. Sadly, their stalwart efforts seem to have come to a sad juncture, and a lack of funding and commitment from the federal and state governments could result in the extinction of many more Hawaiian birds.

By the time the decision was made to begin captive-breeding efforts, only three birds were thought to survive on Maui. Bad weather caused delays to capture efforts, but cancellation of an expedition during one of the few available weather windows due to temporary cessation of funding seemed symbolic of the situation at such a critical time. Ultimately only one bird could be located, and though successfully caught, it has now died in a Maui breeding facility. A slim but waning hope remains that the other two known birds may yet survive; however, neither has been seen in months.

The questions being asked in the conservation community are how could the situation have been allowed to get so desperate before captive-breeding attempts were made? Why has funding been so hard to obtain recently for a species so perilously close to extinction? And how do we



ensure that the Po'ouli's plight is not repeated by other endangered species, particularly those in Hawaii?

The Po'ouli's tragic story follows a series of bird extinctions that has swept Hawaii since humans arrived on the islands. Most of the surviving native land birds are heading towards extinction. As with the Po'ouli, a combination of introduced predators, disease, and habitat clearance have caused their declines. At the same time that these species are slipping away, seemingly unnoticed, well-funded programs to protect the Bald Eagle, California Condor, and Whooping Crane - species that faced a similar, if not greater barrage of threats - are succeeding,

showing that species conservation programs can and do work if properly resourced.

"Hawaii's bird extinction crisis is a global tragedy that is largely being ignored. That the World's wealthiest nation is allowing bird extinctions to continue, largely unchecked, in its own back yard is unconscionable," said Dr. George H. Fenwick, President of American Bird Conservancy. "Fully one third of the birds on the U.S. Endangered Species List occur only in Hawaii, several of which may already be extinct. Funding for the conservation of those that remain needs to be increased by orders of magnitude if we are to avert a biological disaster in our lifetimes."

Thirty-two bird species that breed primarily on islands in the

Hawaiian chain are listed on the global "Red List" of threatened species, several of which have not been seen in decades and may already be extinct. Others survive but in desperately low numbers. Another, the Hawaiian Crow survives only in captivity. In fact, only a handful of Hawaiian birds appear not to be in decline. The surviving species could likely still be saved from extinction if the required effort is made.

At a time when the Endangered Species Act is coming under criticism, the probable extinction of the Po'ouli should serve as a wake up call to the government and the American people. American Bird Conservancy is calling for a commitment from the Bush Administration, Congress, and the environmental community to dramatically increase their efforts to prevent bird species extinctions, particularly in Hawaii.

Background Information:

The Po'ouli was first discovered in 1973 and placed on the Endangered Species List the following year. In the mid 1980s, the total population was thought to number around 100 birds, though no more than a handful have ever been seen. At one point, three birds were shot by researchers to learn more about the species' diet by examining their stomach contents. In 2002, one of the three known remaining birds was caught and released within the territory of another, in an attempt to get the two to breed. However, the translocated bird did not remain in the area. Captive breeding efforts began in 2003, when members of the Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project attempted to locate and

capture all remaining birds. Only one has been located in the year since, and this was the bird that was captured on September 9, 2004. Decline and likely extinction of the Po'ouli has been attributed to loss of forest habitat, introduced species such as feral pigs, and, quite probably, disease such as avian malaria.

The Hawaiian Islands are unique in terms of their biological diversity. Many species of plants and animals there occur nowhere else on Earth, having evolved in isolation, thousands of miles from the next nearest land. Hawaii's birds exhibit one of the world's best examples of adaptive radiation, in which many forms are derived from a common ancestor. Variation observed by Darwin in finches on the Galapagos Islands gave rise to his theory of evolution. Had Darwin studied Hawaiian birds, he would have discovered an even more marked diversity among Hawaii's honeycreepers than exists among those Galapagos finches.

The decline of Hawaii's birds is symptomatic of the gradual destruction of Hawaii's ecosystems. This destruction began with the arrival of Polynesian settlers who cleared much of the lowland forest in the archipelago. This was compounded by a suite of introduced species ranging from predatory mongooses, to diseases such as avian pox and malaria. In combination these factors have caused the extinction of more than 20 Hawaiian bird species since 1500. Despite this, a few Hawaiian landbirds still have stable populations. Among them are the Apapane and Hawaii Amakihi. Captive breeding programs involving the Zoological

Society of San Diego, The Peregrine Fund, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Hawaii Department of Forestry and Wildlife have been successful in the case of other rare Hawaiian species, including the Maui Parrotbill, Small Kauai Thrush, Pallila, and Hawaii Creeper. The Nature Conservancy has also played a key role in Hawaiian bird conservation through habitat acquisition and management.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is a U.S.-based 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to conserving wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. ABC is headquartered in Virginia, with offices in ten states and the District of Columbia. ABC has more than 300 partner organizations throughout the Americas, primarily through its leadership roles in the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, Partners in Flight, the Bird Conservation Alliance, the National Pesticide Reform Coalition, and the Alliance for Zero Extinction. ABC was recently rated one of the best-managed small charities in the U.S. by the independent group "Charity Navigator," and given their highest rating for fiscal management. For more information, see: www.abcbirds.org.

Photographs of the Po'ouli are available from the following Web sites (please consult them for copyright information):

Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project - www.mauiforestbird.org
Hawaii Dept. of Forestry and Wildlife - www.dofaw.net

Coastal Birding Association

Winter 2004-2005 Field Trips

The Coastal Birding Association has invited members of the Mobile Bay Audubon Society to join them on their upcoming field trips. Let's show our appreciation by grabbing a friend and participating in these well-planned, interesting-looking outings.

January

2 **Gulf Shores Christmas Bird Count.** [for info: Greg Jackson, (251) 987-2855]

8 **South Baldwin County and Gulf Shores** for rarities and specialties found on the Gulf Shores CBC. Meet at **8:00 am** in the parking lot just south of the Hardee's in Foley on Highway 59 near the red Family Dollar sign. [for info: Howard Horne, (251) 605-9043]

14-17 **St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge** for ducks and winter birds. Drive to Tallahassee Friday afternoon/evening. Meet Saturday morning for breakfast at **6:00 am** at the Cracker Barrel at I-10 exit #199 (US 27/Monroe Street); this is next to the motel where we will be staying (see details below). We will caravan to St. Marks after breakfast. [for info: Tom/Joan Siegwald, (251) 666-1762]

22 **Mississippi Water Treatment Facility** for ducks, rails, and winter birds. Meet at **7:15 am** in the old Shoney's parking lot (next to Arby's) in Tillman's Corner or at **8:00 am** in Mississippi at the Texaco service station north of I-10 exit #50 (turn north at exit; service station is on right at corner of Seaman Road). Mississippi birder Charley Delmas will lead. [for info: Tom/Joan Siegwald, (251) 666-1762]

28-30 **Alabama Ornithological Society** winter meeting at Guntersville State Park. For meeting information, check your winter issue of *The Yellowhammer* or the AOS website <www.bham.net/aos/>.

February

12 **Bayou la Batre, Coden, and Dauphin Island** for four *Ammodramus* sparrows (Henslow's, Le Conte's, Nelson's Sharp-tailed, and Seaside). Be prepared for walking in wet areas. Meet at **8:00 am** at the Hardee's on Highway 188 in Bayou la Batre. [for info: Howard Horne, (251) 605-9043]

19 **Fort Morgan** for gulls, terns, and very early migrants. Meet at **8:00 am** at the stable area at the fort. [for info: Tom/Joan Siegwald, (251) 666-1762]

March

5 **Dauphin Island** for late winter birds and very early migrants. Meet at **8:00 am** at the Shell Mounds. [for info: Tom/Joan Siegwald, (251) 666-1762]

Additional March field trips will be in the spring newsletter

St. Marks Motel Information

We will be staying at the Red Roof Inn at I-10 exit #199 (US 27/Monroe Street) in Tallahassee (approximately 24 miles from St. Marks). After exiting I-10 onto US 27/Monroe Street, turn right. At the first light, turn right onto Calloway Street. Make an immediate right onto Hospitality Street; the motel is on the right side of the road behind Cracker Barrel. The manager is holding 10 double rooms for us for Jan. 14, 15, and 16 at a daily rate of \$41.99 until January 1, 2005; after that, any rooms not reserved will be released to public inventory and the rate will increase to \$47.99. To make a reservation, call (850) 385-7884 and tell the reservation clerk you are making a reservation for one of the rooms being held for Coastal Birding, block #B120-0114CB. Please also let Tom/Joan Siegwald [siegwald@shc.edu or (251) 666-1762] know you have made your reservation.

Double-Crested Cormorant

By John Borom



Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) are a familiar sight around Mobile Bay and are easy to recognize, whether they are swimming, diving, loafing and drying their wings atop pilings or in trees, or flying past in loose formation. They are equally at home on the coast or inland, and coastal birds will go far up rivers and onto freshwater lakes for foraging and feeding. Unlike most water birds, cormorants cannot waterproof their feathers and must partially spread their wings to dry their flight feathers. Waterlogged feathers decrease their buoyancy, rudderlike tails, sealed nostrils and excellent underwater vision all enhance their underwater swimming and hunting abilities.

They are blackish overall with a yellowish throat and a thin book-tipped bill. The neck and tail are long and the eyes are green. The common and scientific names refer to the crests of short whitish "eyebrow" plumes of the breeding plumage.

Calendar

January 11, 2005

Board Meeting at 6:30 PM followed by general meeting at 7:30, Faulkner Community College. Film: "Celebration of Birds" by Roger T Peterson (58 mins) Come and bring a friend!

January 25, 2005

Film on Alaskan Autumn presented by Tom Sterling at Faulkner Community College at 7:30 PM. Open to the public at no charge. Come and bring a friend!

January 27, 2005

Film on Alaskan Autumn presented by Tom Sterling at the Government Street Baptist Church, 7:30 pm. Open to the public at no charge. Come and bring a friend!

February 8, 2005

Board Meeting at 6:30 followed by general meeting at 7:30, Government St Baptist Church. Film: "A Journey to the Butterflies, Visit the Famed Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary in Mexico," (29 mins) Come and bring a friend!

Newsletter Deadline

Any member is welcomed and encouraged to submit articles for the newsletter. I would be happy to include anything you think would be of interest to the membership.

Please send your articles for the January/February issue to Delane Small by December 20nd.

Address:

1 Fiesta Drive

Spanish Fort, AL 36527

Email: dhs9700@bellsouth.net



Film Week

January 24-28, 2005

Audubon Adventures is a program sponsored by the National Audubon Society as a means of connecting the children in the community to nature. It presents basic, scientifically accurate facts about birds, wildlife and their habitats. The program is used by classroom teachers, after-school program coordinators, special education instructors, language arts teachers and homeschoolers.

Film Week is a part of the Audubon Adventures program coordinated by Elizabeth Williams and focuses on a spectacular film presented by Tom Sterling. This year's film is on Alaskan autumn and will be presented in Baker High School, Clark Magnet School, Dodge Elementary, Maryvale Elementary, Vigor High School, Mobile Christian School, UMS Preparatory School, Faith Academy and Robertsdale Elementary School in Baldwin County.

There will also be two night showings offered to the general public at no charge: Tuesday, January 25 at Faulkner Community College in Fairhope at 7:30 pm and Thursday, January 27 at the Government Street Baptist Church in Mobile, also at 7:30.

These films are always worthwhile so make your plans now!

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

Daisy Earls

Citronelle

Freda M McDonald

Coden

Maite R Clyatt

Daphne

Caroline Blackman

Peggy Crittenden

Deloris Petrazio

Victoria Barber

John P Gordon

Kathryn Maurer

Dauphin Island

Joe Harper

Robert Kerzic

Fairhope

Eloise D Bryan

Charlotte Nuetzel

Catherine Slagle

Violet Dunlop

Stephanie Heron

Daisy S Moore

Normal J Phillips

James-Elsie Spivey

Mary Walliser

Foley

Doris D Hall

Steve Alexander

Grand Bay

Michael Williams

Letha Wise

Diane Seamon

Lillian

Ann Forbes

Virginia Tassell

Gordon-Louise Hawley

Loxley

Kathy Kelley

Magnolia Springs

B A Monaghan

Joseph Martin

Mobile

Candice Biby

Gerald David

Mildred Dix

Edwina Goubil

Margaret Lecoq

Sarah L Pugh

Margaret Sears

Barbara D Bolton

Anthony P Compretta

Mr.-Mrs. John Futral

Ken-Libby Hutson

Robin Isaacson

Foye Kusion

Mary Jane Sisson

Susan N Smith

Orange Beach

William Dry

Harry Garwood

Bill Miller

Marsha Owens

Point Clear

Evelyn D Smith

Robertsdale

John D Williams

Silverhill

Yuriko Hinton

Spanish Fort

Lacy Oconnor

Theodore

Richard Becker

Wilmer

Susan Williams

Transfers into Chapter

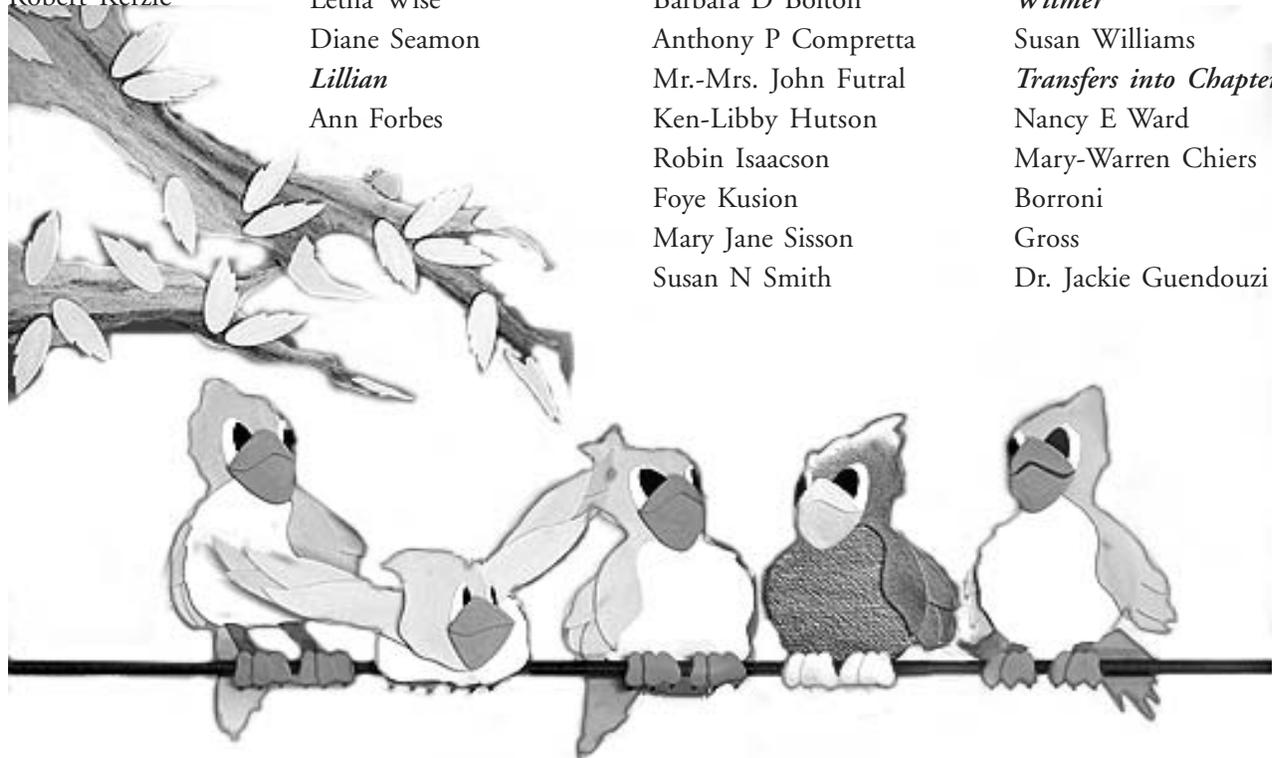
Nancy E Ward

Mary-Warren Chiers

Borroni

Gross

Dr. Jackie Guendouzi



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

“We have not inherited the world from our forefathers—we have borrowed it from our children.” Kashmiri Proverb

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