

NEWS FROM THE ISLAND



Newsletter of the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Inc.

Volume No. 13 No. 1

March 2006

President's Message

Greg Harber

The last Sunday of February I drove to Perry Lakes Park, located along the banks of the Cahaba River near Marion. The reason for my visit was three-fold: to offer advice to a friend who is trying to build local support for the park, to assess the status of the Bald Eagle nest situated there and lastly, to check on the progress of the birding tower being built by three architecture students in Auburn University's Rural Studio Program.

A fourth reason, and probably the most personal for me, was that I was in dire need of a sanity check after a week of miserable weather and a jumbled work schedule. The beautiful sunny skies and pleasant temperatures were just what the doctor ordered, a day for hitting the road and letting the mind wander without restraints.

My route took me southwest from Birmingham toward Tuscaloosa on I-59/20 and then south on AL 5 to Marion. The views along the interstate are as impersonal as they come, but once on the two-lane AL 5 I began to feel more in tune with the landscape as I began to recognize the more familiar features. Given the sheer beauty of the day, and knowing that spring migration is right around the corner, I began to imagine which species of birds would be establishing themselves in the various habitats in a few short weeks. Just the thought of hearing their varied and sometimes melodious vocalizations lifted my spirits.

The song of the Prothonotary Warbler will undoubtedly soon be heard in that swamp on the east side of the road, near West Blocton. And just as surely Indigo Buntings and Eastern Meadowlarks will be heard staking their claims in the open fields along the way. Recent clear cuts and stands of even-age pine tree plantations are veritable deserts when it comes to bird life, so trying to imagine hearing anything calling from those locales was difficult.

Once at the park, situated behind the Marion State Fish Hatchery, my friend Thomas and I were thrilled at the sight of an adult Bald Eagle perched above two eaglets in the nest. In due time the other adult flew in from over the hatchery ponds, with a small, unseen prey item in its talons. Needless to say, the heads of the eaglets immediately popped into view in response to the sudden appearance of food!

The birding tower, rising above the tree canopy at the oxbow lake, is nearing completion. Once opened later in the spring this tower will be a place you'll want to visit, as it is not often that a birder has the chance to view vultures, kites and eagles soaring past at eye level. And how often will one have the chance to hear Yellow-throated and Parula Warblers singing below you in the canopy? Did I mention how easy it was to imagine hearing their songs, with spring unfurling its earliest signposts on the forest floor below? This unique experience will be a gift from Coley, Natalie and Paul to all residents of Alabama, and I am so grateful to them for their generosity and determination.

Naturally, infused with the sights and sounds of the day, my mind turned to our beloved Dauphin Island. Where else would one want to be in the spring? Certainly there are days in spring when the birds are scarce but I cannot envision any other place I'd rather be on a beautiful day in April. A leisurely chat with a dear friend, an easy stroll beneath the spreading limbs of a legendary live oak tree, a flash of neotropical color in the canopy... the stuff of idyllic daydreams.

Enticing, perhaps? Why not indulge yourself and come celebrate the return of spring at the International Migratory Bird Day Festival on Dauphin Island? The weekend of April 7-9 we'll be doing just that, enjoying the stuff of idyllic dreams and celebrating the return of the migrants that brighten our days. Lying somewhere around your house is the IMBD festival brochure you received in the mail. Do yourself a favor: find it, fill out the registration form and mail it back. And be sure to bring a friend with you.

In closing I want to bring to your attention in this newsletter the list of donors who made contributions to the Birmingham Audubon Society's Dauphin Island Land Conservation Campaign in memory of Bob Reid. The sheer number of names on the list is a testament to Bob and the place he holds in our hearts, for all his many contributions to the endeavors we all hold so close and in which Bob believed so passionately. We shall miss him dearly. Farewell, my friend, may the stuff of idyllic dreams be yours to enjoy forevermore.

IMBD FESTIVAL (April 6—April 9, 2006)

Join Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries as we celebrate International Migratory Bird Day! Together, we can defend our title as the Birdiest Town in America!

Each spring millions of Neotropical migrants cross the Gulf of Mexico on their way to breeding grounds in North America. Many will find their way to Dauphin Island's sun-speckled shores and maritime forests. Join us as we celebrate their return!

FESTIVAL AGENDA

Thursday Noon: Birdiest Coastal City Competition begins at 12:00 noon. Teams of 2-4 people have 72-hours to record as many species as possible. All birds must be seen from within Dauphin Island Town Limits. Count Period ends noon Sunday.

Friday Night: Chamber of Commerce Hall
6:30 P.M. Open Bar and Music #
7:00 P.M. Wine and Cheese Social*#

Saturday:

Birding all day; competitive and guided bird tours
10:00 A.M.—2:00 P.M.—Cadillac Square Park,
Bienville Blvd.

- Children's workshops and activities#
 - Business and Industry Partners—Booths & Displays
 - Bird-friendly Native Plant information
- Sales and Information Tent, Grant Street opposite The Goat Trees Reserve
 - Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries—Tee shirts, prints, books, etc.
 - International Migratory Bird Day Material

Saturday Night: Chamber of Commerce Hall
6:00 P.M. Open Bar and Music #
7:00 P.M.—Dick Russell's BBQ Buffet Dinner*#

Sunday:

- Bird count period ends at noon!
- Sale & Information Tent, Grant St. across from the The Goat Trees Reserve
- 1:00 P.M. Comilation for weekend at The Goat Trees Reserve
- 1:30 P.M. Official results for Birdiest Coastal City Entry, The Goat Tree Reserve

A Wine and Cheese Social opens the weekend's festivities on Friday night. Bring your friends and celebrate with us at the Chamber of Commerce Hall as we sample a selection of cheese and fine wines for every palette.

Saturday will feature a variety of activities for everyone. Guided bird tours will visit several island hotspots: Shell Mounds Park, Goat Trees Reserve and the Audubon Sanctuary. Cadillac Square Park will host our children's activities, sales tent, partners and vendors. Bring your children and grandchildren and spend the day with us. Dick Russell's will cater Saturday night's BBQ Buffet Dinner.



* Pre-registration required, complete registration form on back page and mail.

Music provided by Thomas Edwards

America's Birdiest City/County Birdathon - 2006

This is a correction to the item in the December Newsletter. "da Rules of da Game" have changed to a more liberal birding time. The window is now 72 hours between April 1 and May 31, and teams may use the entire 72 hour window for counting species! So the our window for the America's Birdiest Small Coastal City Birdathon is from noon Thursday, April 6 to noon Sunday, April 9, 2006. Let's go out and beat last year's record and retain our title as America's Birdiest Coastal Town.

Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries gratefully acknowledges the following contributions in memory of Robert R. Reid, Jr. to the Birmingham Audubon Society in support land conservation efforts on Dauphin Island.

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First Field Guide to Birds – Scott Weidensaul

National Audubon Society/Scholastic Inc.

John Porter

This is the book I wish I had when I first started bird watching! I might have made a quicker transition to being a birder if I had. As you expect from Scott Weidensaul this is an engaging, informative and entertaining introduction to birds. The pocket sized volume is divided into four sections, all generously supplemented with pictures, sketches and maps.

Part 1

The World of Birds, covers the basics of anatomy and structure, taxonomy, species variety, migration, nesting and reproduction with many interesting insights about bird characteristics. I never realized that Dunlin were speedy flyers until I read that they once caught up with and passed a plane going 100 mph!

Part 2

How to look at Birds, starts with what to do when you first see a bird, how big is it? Does it have any distinguishing patterns? (field marks) Does it have a distinctive shape? Is the bill distinctive? How about the wings and tail... are they different? Does the bird sing? Is the location an important aspect of identifying the bird?

Part 3,

The Field Guide presents detailed information on 50 common species and summary information on 125 additional species using size and shape icons to classify according to wading birds, swimming birds, shore birds etc.. Range and habitat descriptors are included, maps for the 50 common species.

Part 4

The Reference Section includes a glossary of terms used by ornithologists, naturalist and birders, pictures of the state bird of each state (two of which are chickens, one being Rhode Island. Can you guess the other?) and numerous research sources, print, CD, tape and internet. While the entire book is written as a challenge to younger naturalists the reference section is mostly related to the younger crowd.

We will have these for sale Cadillac Square for International Migratory Bird Day, Saturday, April 8, 2006, for \$10.00. Be sure to get one for yourself and your young friends.

The Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Inc. would like to thank the following individuals, organizations, and companies for their financial support of our conservation efforts by becoming members, renewing their memberships, or making special, honorariums, and memorial gifts. This list represents contributions received between January 1, 2006 and February 28, 2006. If we have omitted your name from this list, please contact our treasurer, Mary Waldrip at 205/969-1636 or waldripm@bellsouth.net

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Susan & John Swan

Another Tree Planting Event

There was an added benefit to Greg and Howard's trip to Veracruz for the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory work shop last October. They brought back a gift! Rodrigo Migoya and Ninos y Crias sent a check for \$500 to DIBS for replanting trees lost from Hurricane Katrina. Our first reaction, since the Yucatan had just endured Hurricanes Stan and Wilma, was to graciously return the money so they could use it for their own needs. They, however, were adamant in their determination that we should use the gift as intended. In the meantime we were approached for a planting project by Nick Weaver a scout with Troop 5 here on the island who wanted to do it for his Eagle Scout public service project. At the November Board meeting the Board authorized the use of our



Yucatan gift to purchase plants, mulch, and fertilizer for the scout project. Replacing the live oaks planted after Ivan but lost from Katrina was the goal, as well as extending the areas covered. Nick ran into an unexpected problem; many of the nurseries had also suffered losses from Katrina. He found live oaks in Semmes at Dodd's Tree Farm and Bottle Brush at Shore Acres where we took the last five they had. Altogether he planted 12 live oaks, several in the Shell Mound Park, with the balance going into the median on Bienville Blvd. These replaced some of the lost trees and extended the coverage to Salt Creek. Nick and his fellow scouts finished the planting in January and all the plants survived two Mardi Gras parades and are doing well. Look for them next time you're down this way.

IMBD Festival Registration Form

Checks covering the registration cost of \$25.00 per person should be made payable to **Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries** and mailed, with this completed registration form, to:

Mary F. Waldrip, Treasurer
3036 Asbury Park Place
Birmingham, AL 35243
Phone: 205-969-1636
E-mail: waldripm@bellsouth.net

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: (____) _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: (____) _____

For your convenience, the following is a partial listing of island accommodations and information:

Lodging - Gulf Breeze Motel:

(800) 286-0296

Dauphin House Bed & Breakfast

(251) 861-3514.

Rentals - Boardwalk Realty, Inc:

(877) 861-3992

Dauphin Island Real Estate:

(888) 707-6444

Tyson Real Estate: (251) 861- 8312

Picket Real Estate: (800) 861-3646

Island Realty Corp.: (877) 219-7392

Angel Realty (888) 473-5534.

Dining - Barnacle Bill's, Island Steamer / Pelican Pub, and the Lighthouse Bakery.

Supplies - Ship-and-Shore Supplies.

Websites - www.gulfinfo.com and www.coastalbirding.org



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dibirder@earthlink.net

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A non-profit Organization dedicated to the Preservation of the Dauphin Island Audubon Sanctuary and other ecologically valuable Habitat on Dauphin Island

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