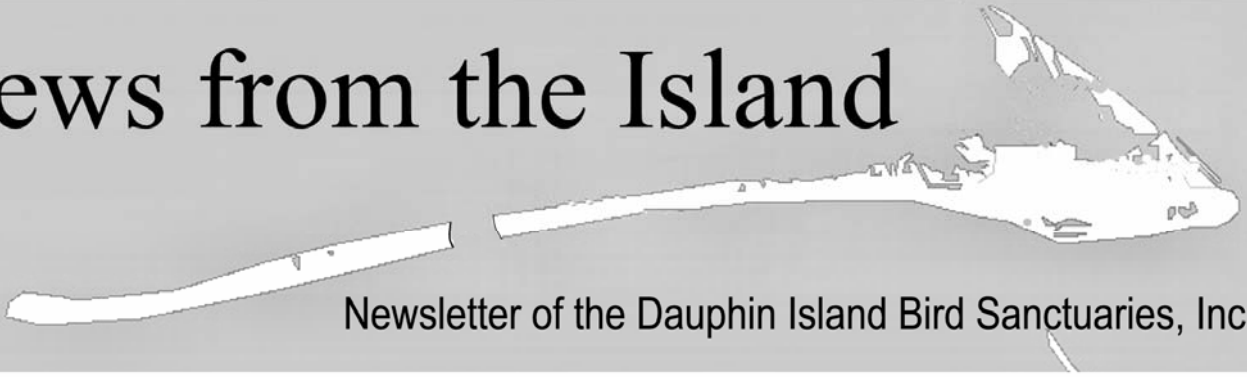


# News from the Island



Newsletter of the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Inc.

Vol. 14 No. 2

September 2007

## *President's Message*

It was hardly the proper place to take a bath, but given the shortage of water this summer I guess I couldn't fault him for his choice. And he certainly turned this way and that to make sure that he had covered all the right spots too, splashing the water all over his tiny body. If Gran Harber had been there she would have declared him clean, after checking behind his ears, of course. Problem was, he didn't have ears – at least not the external ones where dirt goes to hide.

“He” was not some neighborhood child in the park wading pool, but an adult male American Redstart I saw this morning while conducting my bird survey of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Last night's rains had left enough water on the leaves and he had discovered that this leafy perch was the perfect place to clean himself. Once that was done, he took a moment to preen and carefully re-position his feathers. A short time later this stunning beauty rejoined the coterie of chickadees and titmice wending their way through the vegetation cloaking the hill behind the bog garden.

Many years ago my dear friend Bob Reid started doing bird surveys at the gardens and he asked me to help cover every other week during the migration periods. The data we collected on simple paper forms would be sent to the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, an organization unfamiliar to me at the time. (I'll come back to GCBO later in this article). Of all the things Bob asked me to do, this is the one I am most glad he asked of me. This morning's brief interlude was one of many magical moments I have experienced in doing these surveys.

Not long ago the National Audubon Society released a report documenting the decline of even some of our once most common bird species. As one might expect various factors were listed as

causes, and at the top of the list was loss of habitat. Given our organization's mission, dwindling habitat is a top concern of ours and many other conservation organizations.

The Audubon report begins by citing the fact that much of the data analyzed in the report was generated by citizen scientists, people like you and me, who participate in Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys and Breeding Bird Atlas projects. Without this data scientists could never have documented drastic population declines in Eastern Meadowlarks, Northern Bobwhites, Loggerhead Shrikes and other species. I enjoy these counts tremendously, as they get me out into the field with my friends, watching birds and enjoying each other's company. Contributing to scientific studies is not in the forefront of my mind, but careful documentation of our time and effort ensures that the data is useful.

You might ask, “So what if scientists are able to use this data?” Well, for one thing, it confirms the suspicions of many veteran bird watchers who have long believed that our songbirds are in serious decline. Secondly, the impacts of the loss of habitat lend credence to our mission to preserve and protect habitat on Dauphin Island for migratory birds, and people too. And lastly, with data such as this we are able to more effectively lobby our elected officials and government agencies on the need to prevent further habitat destruction and protect the best of the remaining habitat.

Now, back to GCBO. Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries is a site partner in the GCBO network of sites located around the rim of the Gulf of Mexico. Indeed, our sister site is located in Celestun, located on the northwest coast of the Yucatan peninsula. It too is a special place, not unlike Dauphin Island in its remoteness and as a haven for birds.

*( Continued on Page 3 )*

## Memorials, Honorariums and Special Gifts for March 11, - August 31, 2007

### Special Gifts

Alabama Coastal Heritage Trust  
 Bianca J. Allen  
 Birmingham Audubon Society  
 Mr. & Mrs. P. D. Culberson  
 Mary Beth Culp  
 Dauphin Island Woman's Club  
 Lida Hill  
 Annabel Markle  
 Lori Oswald & Hans Paul  
 Philip D. Partridge  
 Joan & Tom Siegwald

### Donations from Spring AOS Meeting

Gussie Arnett  
 Mac Braid  
 Lela Anne Brewer  
 Carey & Lynne Cooper  
 Martha Dagg  
 Charlotte Fanz  
 Chazz Hesselein  
 Chuck & Sue Hutchison  
 Sandra F. Kendall  
 Ranny & Cheryl Kittinger  
 Bobbie Meade  
 Mary Lou Miller  
 Curtis & Gladys Miyosaka  
 Tom & Joan Siegwald  
 Harriett W. Wright

### Celebrations:

#### **For: Marriage of Jennie & John Stowers**

From: CBA Birding Friends  
 Rodney & Becky Byard  
 Linda & Dick Reynolds

#### **For: Birth of Harrison Allen Hudgins** (Grandson of Sharon Hudgins)

From: Bianca J. Allen  
 Linda & Dick Reynolds

### Memorials:

#### **For: Russell Bailey, Jr.**

From: Bobbie Bailey

#### **For: Betsy Mason Barrett**

From: Joan King

#### **For: Mary Burks**

From: Larry Warren

#### **For: Virginia Golden,**

From: Her Family

#### **For: Ada Cahoon (Aunt of Bianca J. Allen),**

From: Bianca J. Allen  
 The Tuesday Bird Group  
 Charlotte Fanz  
 Mary & John Porter  
 Elberta Reid  
 Mary Frances Slayton

#### **For: Jim Meade**

From: Sandra Kendall  
 Barbara Vanderkay

#### **For: Rose Parsi** (Mother of Cathy Taylor)

From: Bianca J. Allen  
 Catherine Hodges

#### **For: Miriam Rich**

From: Catherine Hodges  
 Helen Kittinger

#### **For: Bernard Senter** (Father of Ed Senter)

From: Edith U. Hunt  
 Mary & John Porter  
 Harriett H. Wright

#### **For: Al Wilson** (Father of Mike Wilson),

From: Sandra Kendall

### Honorariums:

#### **For: Bianca J. Allen**

From: Charlotte Fanz  
 Mary Frances Slayton

#### **For: Gussie Arnett,**

From: Mary L. Hines

#### **For: John F. Porter, Jr.** (Happy Birthday)

From: Gayle & Sandy Barnett

#### **For: Elberta Reid**

From: Bianca J. Allen

## New and Renewed Members for March 11 - August 31, 2007

### **Family Life Members:**

Jennie & John Stowers

### **Rose-breasted Grosbeak Level:**

#### **Renewed Members:**

Sandra C. Lyons  
 Jo & Merrill McPhearson  
 Frank & Stella McPhillips  
 Mary Lou Miller  
 Pelham Rowan  
 Tom & Joan Siegwald

### **Indigo Bunting Level:**

#### **New Members:**

Nathan & Margaret Miller  
 Anita P. Overton  
 Pam Yarborough

#### **Renewed Members:**

Emery E. Baya  
 Robin McDonald & Deborah Bennett  
 Charlotte Fanz  
 Ruth Anne Foote  
 Sylvia Fullerton  
 Kathy & Jack Howard  
 Claire Krusko  
 Mr. & Mrs. G. C. Newcomer

### **Cardinal Level:**

#### **New Members:**

Linda Dix  
 Celeste Hinds  
 Kathryn M. Keaton  
 William Reddoch

#### **Renewed Members:**

Doris & Jack Ames  
 Bobbie Bailey  
 Laura Bounds  
 Bobby Doris Cheronos  
 Lucy & Bob Duncan  
 Blanche S Emerson  
 Emmel Golden  
 Darlene & Ron Hansen  
 Livia & Tuck Hayward  
 Jim & Sharon Hiatt  
 Edith U. Hunt  
 Edith S. McClinton  
 Darlene Sirmon  
 Susanne Wadsworth  
 James & Shirley Wayland  
 Bill & Lynn Wildberger

( Presidents Message)

One of the commitments GCBO encourages its site partners to undertake is conducting bird surveys, especially during migration. Although we all know Dauphin Island is one of the best places in the United States to observe migratory birds, we have been deficient in meeting this goal. The good news is that GCBO, through its partnership with the eBird Network run by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, has made submitting the data an easy online process. No more mailing paper forms at the end of the season as Bob and I once did.

Bill Eley and John Arvin at the GCBO stated the obvious at a workshop, "You are already visiting these prime birding sites, all we want is for you to take a moment of your time to submit your data to us." I often read on the AL-birds listserve reports that begin with the line, "I ran down to Dauphin Island today to see what dropped into the Shell Mounds... and here is what I saw." You, dear birder, are the perfect candidate to submit your data to the eBird/GCBO site and I need your help.

The migration season is here; please consider contributing your own sightings to the eBird/GCBO site. Visit <http://ebird.org/content/gcbo/>. There you will find that the Shell Mounds is already listed as one of the sites in Alabama, but there is no data from there to be found. I am asking you to help build the database for the Shell Mounds by contributing the data from your trips to the island.

Given that most of you cover the park quite extensively when birding there, register your survey as an "area survey" when entering your data. Shell Mounds Park is 11 acres in size.

Visit any other favorite birding places while on the island? At the eBird/GCBO site you can create a new profile for any place you wish, as Bob did with the Birmingham Botanical Gardens (it's the northernmost of all the network sites). The eBird web page is very user friendly, simply click the SUBMIT YOUR DATA tab at the top of the page, and be sure to utilize the other features at the site.

Once you submit your observations you can rest assured that John Arvin, the GCBO research coordinator, and Susan Heath, the Avian Conservation Biologist, will put your data to good use as they assemble data from all of the site partners to create a more complete snapshot of bird migration around the Gulf.

My last suggestion for you is this: when you do the surveys, every now and then be sure to tuck away in your mind a treasured memory of those special yet infrequent encounters, when your world suddenly consists of only you and the birds and everything else has faded away. Later, when you need it most, unfurl it and that memory will transport you back to that special place in time. And, you can take comfort in knowing that you are helping to preserve our birds for future generations.

*Greg Harber, President*

9/17

~ Membership Application ~  
Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Inc.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Levels:  
 Cardinal, \$25  
 Indigo Bunting \$50  
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak, \$100  
 Snowy Egret, \$250  
 Great Egret, \$500  
 Life Member, \$1,000  
 Family Life Member, \$1,250

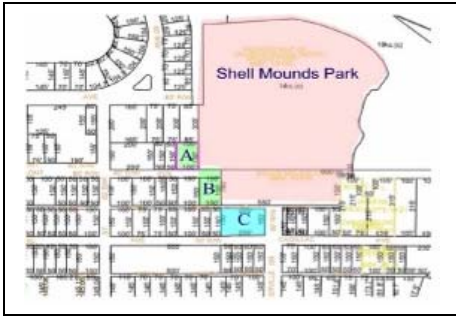
My check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed  
**Please make check payable to: DIBS, Inc.**

**Mail this form and check to:**  
Mary F. Porter, DIBS Treasurer  
P.O. Box 1295  
Dauphin Island, AL 36528-1295

**Attention:**

The annual general membership meeting of the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Inc. will be held at 3:00 pm, Friday Oct. 12 2007 at 1404 Cadillac Ave., Dauphin Island, AL 36528 for the purpose of electing members of the Executive Board.

## An Emergency Rescue!!!



Just before the April 22 Board meeting, the imminent sale of the four lots at 800 Cadillac Ave, (C) just to the west of the entrance of the Shell Mounds, was announced by the University of South Alabama. Almost universally believed to be part of the Park, they were in fact owned by the Mobile County Foundation for Public Higher Education and had been donated to the University for scholarship funds. The sale was subject to bids due by May 1. The Board authorized the acquisition of an appraisal for the lots and entry into bid process. The appraisal came in at

\$50,000 per lot, \$200,000, far more than we had available in our Land Acquisition Fund. Preservation of this valuable property was critical not only as habitat for the migrants accustomed to forage here for food but also for the countless birders who frequent the area during spring and fall migration. Development threatened! And then John Stowers came to the rescue. Based on our appraisal, he submitted the winning bid! After purchasing the property he gave DIBS a ten year lease with the option to purchase at his cost. What a generous act of conservation!

Shortly thereafter, at the June 21 meeting of the Forever Wild Board, Bob Tate nominated the property for Forever Wild purchase. State Lands will do the preliminary ranking prior to the September FW Board meeting for the them to consider acquisition of the site.

Hopefully FW will make the right decision and make the purchase from John, but... we must be prepared for the possibility that they have other properties nominated with a higher priority. We then must raise the funds for the pay-off. Ten years is a long time... but we will need to work much faster than that. We already have a match pledge of \$25k and a donation of \$5k from the Alabama Coastal Heritage Trust so we are on the way. Should the Forever Wild deal go through we will use any funds donated for the Shell Mounds for acquiring additional property in the Steiner Block.

*John Porter, Executive Director*



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dibird@centurytel.net  
<http://coastalbirding.org>

*A non-profit Organization dedicated to the preservation of migratory bird habitat and other ecologically valuable natural resources on Dauphin Island*

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

***PLEASE CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION***