

# News from the Island



NEWSLETTER OF THE DAUPHIN ISLAND BIRD SANCTUARIES, INC.

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## President's Message

*Greg Harber*

As I write this I am returning from Mississippi on a Birmingham Audubon Society trip to Tara, a wildlife preserve situated north of Vicksburg on the banks of the mighty Mississippi River. Even though it is August our weather for the weekend was relatively cool, owing to a passing front cloaked in clouds. The featured birds of our three-day jaunt were Wood Stork, thousands of herons and egrets, and roughly 50 Roseate Spoonbills sighted in the oxbows and farm ponds that frame the river.

The group recorded 86 species, and a common thread connected many of them: in August, many species are going every which way but loose! Those homely Wood Storks, born with a face only a mother could love but ever so graceful in flight, were not our southeastern breeding birds but rather visitors from Mexico which regularly migrate north in the late summer to feed in the small pools exposed by the river as it recedes from the floodplain forests. Mississippi Kites were plentiful as they fed on insects above the agricultural fields and forests growing between the levee and the main channel of the river. It's a long way to South America and they need to add fuel for the southward journey.

Gaily colored Painted Buntings breed at Tara and the brilliant male we saw this morning will be departing soon for South Florida and beyond. He too needs to fuel the migratory fire in his belly if he is to survive the migration and return in the spring, a journey entirely dependent on his ability to find suitable habitat every step of the way.

The mighty Mississippi serves as a major migration pathway for countless millions of shorebirds as well. Least, Pectoral, Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers probed and prodded the muddy shores in search of their own preferred source of fuel as well. Identifying them in the distance from atop of the grassy levee provided lively debate among the more intense birders in the group. Looking down on them offered a unique perspective and tended to compress their height, adding to the challenge. In the end

I think everyone was satisfied with the labels we applied.

Slightly less than a bagillion Northern Rough-winged Swallows were perched on every available wire strung above the landscape, and in bare trees growing along the river's edge. A smattering of Least and Black Terns loitering on the sandbars, a few lingering Purple Martins and myriad Ruby-throated Hummingbirds swarming the feeders reminded us that migration is a phenomenon that spans a broad spectrum of species.

The urge to migrate is inbred in all of these birds, and is borne of the fruit of countless generations that have migrated before them. The timing of migration is one of nature's great masterworks, as regular as clockwork, regulated by changing hormone levels and the ever-shortening days as summer fades into fall. Just as critical to their migration are the many stopover points located along the route, places like Dauphin Island, the Fort Morgan peninsula and the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. Ensuring the future health and vitality of these important sites helps to ensure the continued success of future populations of migratory birds. Additionally, we must never lose sight of the fact that even small parcels of suitable habitat, where water, shelter and fuel are found, are important as well and can tip the scales between life and death.

You might wonder why I have emphasized the need for suitable food stores to fuel the migratory journey. It's simple, really, and I'll return to this is a moment.

As you may recall, Malkolm Boothroyd and his parents, Ken and Wendy, were the featured speakers at our International Migratory Bird Day event this spring. They were on the return leg of a 12,000-mile fossil fuel free bike trek across the North American continent. Their goal was three-fold: to see as many birds as they could during this Big Year adventure, to underscore the conservation needs of these birds, and to inspire us by their example to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

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I was especially pleased that during their 5-day stay on the island Malkolm added 14 species – all of them neotropical migrants – to his Big Year list. Given that their visit occurred so late in their journey (species #475-488, of 548 species total) this is an impressive validation of Dauphin Island's importance as a stopover site where migratory birds rest and refuel before continuing their journey. My thanks to the many people who attended the IMBD celebration and made donations to our conservation campaign (we raised over \$10,000 thanks to a 1:1 match from a generous benefactor). Thanks also to those who hosted Malkolm and his family as they "rested and refueled" during their stay on the island.

Now, back to the issue of fuel for the journey. This summer all Americans became painfully aware of the importance of fuel in our lives. High fuel costs forced many individuals and businesses to curtail their driving and carefully scrutinize and alter their budgets. Alternative fuel research and development are now front burner topics for discussion as the debate con-

cerning our country's future energy needs progresses. Regardless of which approach we pursue, it is obvious that we can no longer rely so heavily on fossil fuels to meet our demands. Alternative fuels from renewable resources will have to play a larger role in our economy.

As the policy debate continues, plans are made and implemented, and the necessary infrastructure is built, we must exercise due diligence to ensure that our rich natural resources are not sacrificed on the altar in our headlong rush to pursue new energy sources. We must remain mindful of the fact that all life depends on these natural resources and that our very lives are intertwined with their fate. I remain confident that American ingenuity and resourcefulness will ensure that our future energy needs are met, and that the birds and the bees, and the flowers and the trees will have their needs met too. I encourage you to follow Malkolm's lead and embrace the challenges that lie ahead of us.

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As mentioned in the President's Message, Malkolm Boothroyd and his parents, Ken and Wendy, delivered a splendid program about their Bird Year journey at our International Migratory Bird Day event in April. Raising awareness and funds for bird conservation programs was one of the goals of their fantastic 13,133-mile bike trek across America. Malkolm's goal was to raise \$12,000 by asking for pledges based upon the number of species he observed during his Bird Year effort, either for projects he had selected or for the donor's favorite bird conservation organization.

I think my favorite part of their presentation was hearing the tale of nearly being caught in the middle of a drug deal in Florida and, since it was almost nightfall, having to set up camp in a nearby cemetery! My favorite part of the evening was the overwhelmingly generous response of those who made donations to DIBS based upon Malkolm's species count. To sweeten the pot and extend the challenge, an anonymous benefactor pledged that evening to match 1:1 all funds – up to \$5,000 – raised by May 31!

As you can see from the list below, many of you rose to the occasion and we have exceeded our goal! I would like to extend my thanks to the Birmingham Audubon Society for allowing us to include their members in our appeal. I am grateful to all of you for your support of our efforts.

Sincerely,  
Greg Harber

PS. Malkolm far exceeded his fundraising goal; the total now stands at \$23,768! It is obvious that their Bird Year journey reached and inspired a lot of people. Read all about it at <http://birdyear.com/>. Malkolm's donation to our campaign comes to us through the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, which coordinated his successful fundraising effort. Thanks buddy!

Eugene E. Addor	Carrie & David Dortch	Terry Hartley
Bianca J. Allen	Scot Dunca	Charles Hesselein
Lela Anne Brewer	Betsy Eagar	Edith U. Hunt
Loretta G. Brown	Loal Estes	Cynthia Lewis
Eugenia Carey	Charlotte Fanz	Mary & John Porter
Dale & Tom Carruthers	Mrs. John W. Fanz, Jr.	Linda & Dick Reynolds
Alice Christenson	Phillip Fuselier	Joan & Tom Siegwald
Dwight Cooley	Jessica Germany	Mary Frances Stayton
Margaret Copeland	Jeanette & Jimmie Hancock	Larry F. Warren
Douglass Rushton Corey	Gregory J. Harber	New Mexico Wilderness Alliance

## *Pelican Island – A Challenge!*



Pelican Island - 1903



Several years ago we became mesmerized with thoughts about the future of Pelican Island, often called Sand Island (more about that later). Starting with information provided by State Lands, Division, ADCNR, we tracked down the current owners of the island. It turned out that the island is in the estate of Margaret Webb Fitzpatrick, daughter of James Henry Webb, the original purchaser of Pelican Island. The estate now has ten heirs spanning three generations, across the US. We entered into discussions with one of the heirs, designated by the executor of the estate and pursued the possibility of acquiring the Island to protect the nesting habitat of terns and skimmers. Since there was no threat to the Island, we were dissuaded from the pursuit of title by the complexity of navigating through the disparate needs and desires of the heirs. So, we dropped it... until... Katrina!

Before Katrina, the cut between Pelican Island and the Public Beach on the main island was narrowing, to the point where after Katrina it was possible to walk onto Pelican Island at low tide. Thus the habitat, formerly isolated, was now threatened by easy access for beach goers, feral cats and stray dogs. Gustav and Ike have further compounded this problem, as shown in the pictures below taken from the fishing pier after Ike. According to Dr. Scott Douglas, a well known and respected coastal engineer, Pelican Island has joined Dauphin Island before during recorded history, some 300 years ago and then again some 150 years ago.



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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 February 1, 2008 and September 30, 2008.. If we have omitted your name from this list, please contact our treasurer, Mary Porter at 251/861-2120 or maryflintporter@gmail.com

**Special Gifts:**

Birmingham Audubon Society  
 Eugenia Carey  
 Dauphin Island Woman's Club  
 Mark Mayeau  
 Lori Oswald & Hans Paul  
 Mobile Bay Audubon Society

Harriett H. Wright

Gift Memberships:

For: Gail L. Goodness

From: Doug Wittmer

**Honorariums:**

For: Will Duncan (Happy Birthday)

From: Scot Duncan

For: Jessica Germany

From: Edith Hunt

For: John & Mary Poarter

From: Jack & Clara (Topsy) Granata

For: Mary F. Porter (Happy Mother's Day)

From: The Greg Waldrip Family

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

From: The Greg Waldrip Family

For: John F. Porter, Jr. (Happy Father's Day)

From: The Paul Porter Family &

The Greg Waldrip Family

For: Elberta Reid

From: Douglass Rushton Corey

For: John Stowers

From: Highlands Plateau Audubon Society

For: Harriett H. Wright

From: Garden Unit St. Mary's Church

For: Harriett H. Wright (Happy Birthday)

From: Jeanette & Jimmie Hancock

**Memorials:**

For: Dr. George Folkerts

From: Elberta G. Reid

For: Mary Agnes Brooks Holliman

From: Jeanette & Jimmie Hancock &

Harriett H. Wright

For: A.E. Johnson, Jr. (Debi Jackson's Father)

From: Dick & Linda Reynolds

For: Harwell (Bitsy) Moose

From: Bianca J. Allen &

Mary Frances Stayton

For: Robert R. Reid

From: Margaret Copeland

**AOS Spring Meeting Contributors:**

Lela Anne Brewer

Jinksie & Denson Burnum

Fara & Fred Carney

Dwight Cooley

Joan White-Spunner & John Dixon

Linda Fagan

Charlotte Fanz

Jean E. Golden

Becky Goodwin

Sue & Charles Hutchison

Sandra Kendall

Cheryl & Ranny Kittinger

Steve & Pam Lasley

Cindy Lewis

Leslee Reed

Julie Ruston

Maureen Shaffer

Joan & Tom Siegwald

Shirley Wayland

Harriett H. Wright

**Memberships:**

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak Level**

**New Members:**

Robert A. Stewart

**Renewed Members:**

Patsy & James Causey

Alice & Chris Christenson

Amy & Irvin Christian

Wilmer & Caroline Cody

Jeff W. Collier

Lucy & Temd Deason

Karin & Michael Krumpelt

Sandra C. Lyons

Ann M. McLaurin

Jo & Merrill McPhearson

Joan & Tom Siegwald

Mike & Cay Rogers

**Indigo Bunting Level:**

**New Members:**

Lida Hill

**Renewed Members:**

Carol & Randy Alford

Gussie Arnett

Robin McDonald & Deborah Bennett

Marsyl & LaMont Dees

Betsy Eagar

Ben C. Garmon

Anne F. Heard

Mrs. John L. Hinton, Sr.

Linda Holman

Sharon Hudgins

David Mehlman

Libba & Floyd Sherrod

**Cardinal Level:**

**New Members:**

Patricia Baker

Walter J. Hughes

Charlotte Lambert

**Renewed Members:**

Paul & Ann Burkholder, Jr.

David C. Chaffin, M.D.

James & Joy Cook

John & Teddy Dismukes

Marjolein Gerritsen

Barbara & William F. Gilley

Emmel Golden

Clara L. "Topsy" Granata

Michael Jordan

Paul Kittle

Ann L. Miller

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Catherine & Ralph Neal

Carol Standish

Ivan & Lawrence Trotter

Ethel Owen

Martha & Frank Stevenson

Elizabeth Williams

Jan Shaw

Coralie & John Toomey

Elizabeth Wolfe

### **Silent Auction Fundraiser**

Thanks to the generosity of several of our members and a number of artists who donated their work we had a very profitable Silent Auction at the spring AOS meeting held at Mary's Place, April 19, 2008. The works had been on display on our website for some time before the meeting and were displayed around the meeting room at Mary's. Shown below are the art objects and related information:

<b>Art Work</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Artist</b>	<b>Purchased By.</b>	<b>Donor Name</b>
Great Egret	limited edition print	J. J. Audubon	Eugenia Carey	Don Self
Green Heron	limited edition print	Basil Ede	Shirley Farrell	Jeffrey Floyd
Decorated gourd		Ethel Owen	Shirley Farrell	Ethel Owen
Royal Tern	pastel	Darlene Hansen	Shirley Farrell	Darlene Hansen
Northern Parula	photograph	Rolland Swain	E Green	Rolland Swain
Red-eyed Vireo	photograph	Rolland Swain	Barbara Byrd	Rolland Swain
Hooded Warbler	original acrylic	Donald Cavin	Eugenia Carey	Donald Cavin
Wood Duck	original acrylic	Mary Roll	Sandra Kendall	Mary Roll
Great Blue Herons	original painting	Mary Thompson	Eugenia Carey	Mary Thompson
Dueling Snowies	photograph	Malkolm Boothroyd	Linda Fagan	Malkolm Boothroyd
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	photograph	Malkolm Boothroyd	Leslee Reed	Malkolm Boothroyd

All in all it was a very successful project, not only raising funds (\$1,600) for our habitat conservation efforts but in raising community awareness of the plight of neotropical migratory birds and their loss of stop-over habitat. Our thanks again to all the donors and buyers!

~ 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

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With this renewal of the threat to the nesting habitat and the proliferation of beach goers to the "used to be" island it became essential to seek a long term solution to these problems. The DI Park and Beach Board has been doing some limited clean up. The Town has expressed concern over all aspects of the issue. Both have been looking to our negotiations with the Fitzpatrick heirs to find a solution.

Since the island is presumed to be private property our first step, as an interim, has been to seek permission from the heirs for some immediate action. It is our good fortune that the executor of the estate has identified all the heirs, spanning three generations, and provided us with their mailing addressees and in many instances, their email addresses. We will seek permission for the DIP&BB to use part of the island as an extension of the public beach and to post the balance as private property and critical ecological habitat.

As a follow up we will then work to acquire full title for the entire island as critical bird habitat. It is our understanding that some of the heirs would be interested in a tax deductible donation with the added relief from ownership responsibilities and we will pursue that on an individual basis. There may be some who would seek compensation for their interest in spite of the advantages they would receive from a donation, e.g. relief from ownership responsibilities and annual tax property tax payments which we are preparing to address.

More later as this exciting opportunity unfolds...



**Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Inc.**  
P. O. Box 1295  
Dauphin Island, Alabama 36528  
251.861.2120/phone  
251.861.2204/fax  
dibird@centurytel.net

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

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

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
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**PLEASE CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION DATE**