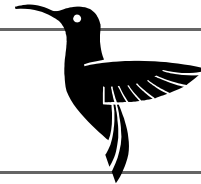


# WINGBEAT



Cullman Audubon Society  
PO Box 1444  
Cullman, AL 35056



**HAPPY  
HOLIDAYS**

Francene Van Sambeek, Editor      Volume 8, Issue 2

## DECEMBER FIELD TRIP: CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By Jimmy Wells

**Sunday, December 21, 2003**  
**6:30 AM to 12PM**  
**12:30 to 5:00PM**



Well, we've tallied off another year, and it is time for the third annual Cullman Audubon Society's **Christmas Bird Count**. Time to take a break from the hustle and bustle of the shopping season and join in a holiday tradition that began in 1900, when ornithologist **Frank Chapman** saw a need for an alternative to the "Christmas Side Hunt", a competition to see who could bring in the most quarry. The first CBC included 25 counts nationwide and 27 participants. Last year there were 1,823 Counts and over **52,000 participants** in the Western Hemisphere.

The **objective** of the CBC is simple. We spend the day **identifying and counting** as many bird as we can within a 15 mile diameter circle. This is turned into the National Audubon Society, which uses the info compiled by all the counts for a general **database** which shows trends from year to year. We have delineated our circle with the center located at the intersection of Highway 278 and Interstate 65. This circle is divided up into several segments, depending upon the number of participants. We will **meet at the Culpepper Real Estate office at 6:00 AM**. We will divide into teams and leave at 6:30. It is up to the participants in each team to cover as much ground within their circles.

The teams will take a **lunch break** at noon, meeting once again at Culpepper Real Estate. **Anyone who wishes to join a team at this time may do so**. We will continue to cover the count areas in the afternoon, and return at 5:00 PM to compile the results.

*Don't feel that you are good enough at identifying birds to be much help? That's no*



reason to pass this up. Anyone can assist. All we ask is for someone who can spot a bird. Every group will have at least one experienced birder to help identify species. **If you can count, you can be a big help.** Don't feel that you are up to trudging around on a winter's day in the chill? No excuse, 90% of the count is conducted at roadside stops. You can sit in the confines of a warm vehicle and help us count. Still not up for it? Well, do you live within the circle? Can you help by **watching your feeder during the day** and keeping a tab on what you see? We want those results, too!



Anyone wanting more information can contact Jimmy Wells at 739-0933 (home), 339-3077 (cell), 734-3894 (work) or wellsjimmy@hotmail.com.

## **TALE OF BOBCATS AND BIRDS**

By Jimmy Wells

Sunday, November 2 at 7:30 AM, Booty Richter, Neal Culpepper, Mike Payne and I met for an outing. Upon stumbling out of my vehicle in a sleep deprived fog, (I had worked as part of the production crew at a bluegrass festival the night before, and had to stay for teardown.) I poured some caffeine down my throat and joined in the discussion of where we would go. We decided that the Wheeler Wildlife Refuge area would be our destination today.

We headed to the Cave Springs portion first. On the way, we spotted the ubiquitous European Starling, Eurasian Collared Dove, Mourning Dove, American Crow and Eastern Bluebird on the power lines, and Eastern Meadowlark and Killdeer in the fields. We stopped to watch a Red-tailed Hawk that was perched on a utility pole, and as it flew away, watched an American Kestrel dive bombing it as it entered his turf.

Upon arriving at the cave, we saw a small bird flitting about in the brush that grew in the shallow water of the swamp. After several minutes of searching, we determined it was a Song Sparrow. In the trees, we spotted a Belted Kingfisher that was fearless, chattering and landing in the trees immedi-

*(Continued on page 4)*

### Inside this issue:

January Speaker	2
January Field Trip	2
October Trip Report	3
November Trip Report	3
A "Well" of a Tale	4

### Coming attractions

- *December 9:* Meeting 7PM. Holiday Social.
- *December 21:* Field Trip. 6AM: Christmas Bird Count.
- *January 13:* Meeting 7PM. Speaker: Ken Marion, Reptiles.
- *January 17:* Field Trip: Eagles at Lake Guntersville. 7AM.

## DECEMBER 9TH AUDUBON SOCIAL

The Cullman Audubon Society will be holding it Holiday Social on Tuesday, December 9th. The Social begins at 7 PM and will be held in the old Science Building on the campus of St. Bernard Prep School. Please bring your favorite finger-food and beverage items. Be prepared to mingle and tell your favorite birding experiences.



## 2003-2004 Officers/ Committee Chairs

### OFFICERS:

**President:**  
Jerry Jacob  
(H) 256-734-6775  
j8jacob@yahoo.com  
(F) 256-734-6288  
(W) 256-775-1389

**Immediate Past President:**  
David Pylant  
(W) 256-352-8242  
(H) 256-734-5716  
dpylant@corrcomm.net

**Vice-President:**  
Henry Beeler  
(W) 256-739-0455  
(H) 256-739-3438  
hmbeeler@corrcomm.net

**Secretary/Treasurer:**  
Karen Lindsey  
(W) 256-734-2363  
(H) 256-734-2363  
knlindsey@msn.com

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

**Conservation/Research:**  
David Pylant  
(W) 256-352-8242  
(H) 256-734-5716  
dpylant@corrcomm.net

**Program:**  
Henry Beeler  
(W) 256-739-0455  
(H) 256-739-3438  
hmbeeler@corrcomm.net

**Education:**  
Vince Meleski  
(W) 256-974-6166  
(H) 256-739-4589  
vmeleski@mindspring.com

**Field Trip:**  
David Pylant  
(W) 256-352-8242  
(H) 256-734-5716  
dpylant@corrcomm.net

**Publicity:**  
Marcia Jacob  
(H) 256-734-6775  
j8jacob@yahoo.com

**Electronic communications:**  
Jimmy Wells  
(W) 256-734-3894  
(H) 256-739-0933  
wellsjimmy@hotmail.com

**Newsletter:**  
Francene Van Sambeek  
(W) 256-352-8036  
(H) 256-775-6407  
francene@mindspring.com

**Christmas Bird Count:**  
Jimmy Wells  
(W) 256-734-3894  
(H) 256-739-0933  
wellsjimmy@hotmail.com

**Membership:**  
Rachel Moody  
(W) 256-737-2259  
(H) 256-734-1852

**Bird Rescue:**  
Neal Culpepper  
(H) 256-739-6431

**Earth Day:**

**Cullman Audubon Website:** [www.cullmanaudubon.com](http://www.cullmanaudubon.com)

**National Audubon Website:** [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

## JANUARY 13, 2004 MEETING: REPTILES

Ken Marion, University of Alabama at Birmingham, will talk with us at the Tuesday, January 13th meeting on **reptiles**. The meeting will start at 7PM at the Old Science Building on the campus of St. Bernard. All are invited to attend this informative talk.



## JANUARY 17<sup>TH</sup> FIELD TRIP: EAGLES



Saturday, January 17, 2004 there will be a field trip to Lake Guntersville for Eagle watching. Details as to departing time and place will be discussed at the Christmas party and will be printed on the January postcard.



## AUDUBON NEWSWIRE

**Audubon Newswire** is a biweekly emailing that is sent to those interested in Audubon activities nationwide. If you wish to receive future editions contact the Chapter Services Office through e-mail at [ltennefoss@audubon.org](mailto:ltennefoss@audubon.org) or by phone at (800) 542-2748. Snippets of **Audubon Newswire** items follow:

1. Firelands Audubon and Audubon Ohio Complete Successful Campaign to Force Clean up; Chapter Named "Watchdog of the Year" by Ohio Environmental Council Columbus, Ohio, Monday, November 3, 2003.
2. Erie Islands Named Important Bird Area for Purple Martins. Erie, Pennsylvania, Monday, November 3, 2003 - Conservationists have been keeping a secret in Presque Isle Bay - two islands that are a refuge for as many as 100,000 purple martins that roost there each year.
3. Audubon Establishes the Kalpana Chawla Fund for Environmental Stewardship: Columbia Astronaut Wished to Take Care of Fragile Planet.
4. Llano Estacada Chapter Receives National Audubon Presidential Recognition Award for its Tireless Efforts to Save Prairie Dog Colony.
5. Attention Audubon Chapters: Audubon Magazine Needs Your Help with a Story. New York, NY, October 31, 2003 - Audubon magazine will run a feature story in its next issue on the problem of bird mortality stemming from collisions with clear glass windows. This problem is emerging as a leading, preventable cause of bird deaths.
6. Audubon Supports Army Corps of Engineers' Effort to Build the First-Ever Integrated Mississippi River Restoration Plan. Minneapolis, Minnesota, Tuesday, October 28, 2003.
7. Researchers Discover New Bird Species Just as its Refuge is Lost. Cambridge, UK, October 22, 2003 - Researchers have discovered a new species of finch, but its Venezuelan river islet habitat has already been destroyed to make way for a new dam. The new species has been named the Carrizal Seed-eater, *Amaurospiza carrizalensis*, after the tiny islet where it was discovered.

**Newsletter Deadlines:** Please submit articles, photos, etc by the 20th of the odd numbered months for publication in the next newsletter. Send to Francene Van Sambeek at the address or email listed to the left. Please include "**Audubon**" in the subject line.



## Gulf Shores Field Trip Report

By David Pylant

Several members of the Cullman Audubon Society made our way to Gulf Shores on the weekend of October 18-20 to enjoy a couple of days of birding, fellowship, seafood eating, etc. The weather was beautiful and a good time was had by all.

Among the highlights of the trip was a visit to Ft. Morgan to see our good friends Bob and Martha Sargent, where they were banding birds. We learned a lot and got

to see several interesting species up close and personal.

Although we didn't spend much time looking for the more common birds, we tallied over 60 species. Several were of particular note. While at Ft Morgan we saw a Broad-winged Hawk which had been captured in the mist nets. What an impressive bird up close. Several other species of raptors were spotted there also, including a pair of Merlin. Three Swallow-tail flycatchers were perched on wires near the Fort, giving beautiful, unobstructed views. A Western Kingbird was also seen in the area.

### Species observed included:

Pied-billed Grebe	Northern Gannet	Brown Pelican	Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron	Great Egret	Cattle Egret	Snowy Egret
Turkey Vulture	Northern Harrier	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk	Broad-winged Hawk	American Kestrel	Black-bellied Plover
Killdeer	Willet	Sanderling	Dunlin
Ruddy Turnstone	Laughing Gull	Ring-billed Gull	Herring Gull
Caspian Tern	Royal Tern	Sandwich Tern	Forster's Tern
Rock Dove	Collared Dove	Mourning Dove	Ground Dove
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Belted Kingfisher	Red-headed Woodpecker	Red-bellied Wood Pecker
Downy Woodpecker	Western Kingbird	Eastern Kingbird	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Red-eyed Vireo	Blue Jay	American Crow	Brown-headed Nuthatch
Marsh Wren	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Eastern Bluebird	Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird	Brown Thrasher	Starling	Pine Warbler
Palm Warbler	Black & White Warbler	American Redstart	Northern Cardinal
Indigo Bunting	Red-winged Blackbird	Boat-tailed Grackle	Brown-headed Cow Bird
House Finch	House Sparrow		



## Sportsman/ Smith Lake Parks Field Trips

By David Pylant



On Saturday, November 15, approximately 20 Cullman Audubon Society members and visitors spent a very eventful morning at Sportsman's Lake Park in Cullman and a very uneventful one at Smith Lake Park.

At Sportsman's Lake Park our group identified 41 species of birds over a two hour period. This does not

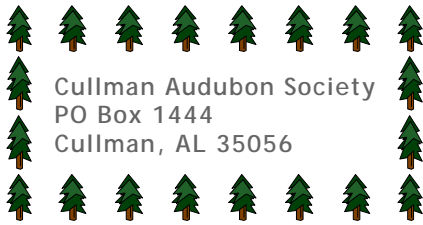
count the exotic ducks and geese which are residents there. Migratory waterfowl were not there in abundance, but a couple of flocks of Ring-necked Ducks, a beautiful pair of Hooded Mergansers and a couple pair of Gadwalls were present. The trail on the east side of the lake produced a few sparrow species, but the hottest spot was the wooded area on the north side of the lake.

Smith Lake Park was practically dead, with the exception of an accipiter (probably a Cooper's Hawk), and a couple of woodpecker species.

### Species identified at the two sites included:

Great Blue Heron	Canada Goose	Mallard	Gadwall
Ring-necked Duck	Hooded Merganser	Red-tailed Hawk	American Coot
Killdeer	Mourning Dove	Belted Kingfisher	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Downy Woodpecker	Northern Flicker	Northern Cardinal
Rufous-sided Towhee	Chipping Sparrow	Song Sparrow	White-throated Sparrow
Red-winged Blackbird	Common Grackle	Brown-headed Cowbird	American Goldfinch
House Finch	House Sparrow	Starling	Great Crested Flycatcher
Blue Jay	American Crow	Carolina Chickadee	Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch	Brown-headed Nuthatch	Brown Creeper	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird	American Robin	Gray Catbird	Brown Thrasher
Northern Mockingbird	Cedar Waxwing	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Pine Warbler





(Continued from page 1: *Tale of Bobcats and Birds*)  
ately above our heads. Also in the trees were Eastern Phoebe, Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, and Northern Flicker. I showed my trio of companions the cave entrance, and we departed for the northern shore of the river.

Crossing the river on I-65, we added Rock Pigeon and Great Egret to the list. We stopped at the old cemetery, and scoped the mudflats to the east. Double Crested Cormorants, Canadian Geese, Great Blue Herons, Greater Yellowlegs and Wilson's Snipe were seen in abundant numbers, along with more egrets and Killdeer.

The next stop was the highlight of the day. At a small diked slough, there was a large mudflat where normally a small pond lay. In the flat were egrets, both species of Yellowlegs, and more Killdeer. In the trees surrounding the flats, we spotted Northern Cardinal, Blue Jays, Common Grackle, Eastern Towhee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Carolina Chickadee. As we stood there, we saw a large white bird lumbering overhead. Everyone's initial reaction was "Great Egret", but I knew something unusual had been sighted in the area in the previous week. We added White Pelican to our list.

Soon after that excitement, we had another surprise. As our eyes began to scan the ground again, Mike suddenly called out "Look at that bobcat!" In the shadow of a willow tree overhanging the edge of the flats lay a bobcat, calmly sitting in a sphinx-like pose less than thirty yards from where we stood. It watched as we looked through binoculars, trained the scope on it, and talked aloud. No movement until I reached up to adjust the focus on the spotting scope, when it leapt up and ran alongside the edge of the flats. After it had reached a distance of about fifty yards, it dropped to a walking pace, and

sauntered along the edge, coming to rest about eighty yards from us. After pausing a few minutes, it walked across the middle of the mudflats, where it would pause, glance around, then take a few more steps. It finally disappeared into the brush on the opposite side from where he was first spotted. We reveled in our luck, as none of us had seen a bobcat in the wild more than a few times.



The bobcat, to our delight, made a return appearance, walking slowly back out into the flats, pausing every few minutes to slap at the ground with its paws, and occasionally jumping forward. When Booty looked through binoculars, he realized the bobcat had returned with its prey. Scoping in, I saw it playing with a Cotton Rat. It toyed with it, apparently wounding it enough while in the brush to prevent it from being able to escape. It moved about from one side of the rat to another, swiping at it with its paw, much as a housecat playing with a toy. It made me realize how close the domestic cat is to the wild. Occasionally the doomed rat would make a leap at the bobcat in defense, but the bobcat ruled the situation, and there was no escape. The rat would occasionally make a short dash, but the bobcat would walk over and stop it. At one point, the bobcat reached down and snatched the rat up in its jaws and shook it about, then released it to toy with it some more. As time went on, the rat ventured back to the edge of the woods, but the bobcat seemed unperturbed by this, as if it knew it was the master of the situation.

We left our wildlife drama and headed to the Swan Creek Wildlife Management area west of Wheeler. In the backwaters of the Tennessee River, a large flock of waterfowl were seen. The first arrivals of the massive flocks of ducks that winter in the

area were spotted here. We saw a single Mallard, and large groups of American Widgeon, Gadwall, and Ring-necked Duck. In the midst of these, one oddly colored duck stood out, and after much discussion, we determined it to be a Northern Shoveler. The color of its head wasn't exactly what it should be, but all the rest fit, and the beak shape was unmistakable. While standing there, we saw a flock of six White Pelicans fly overhead. Also at this stop we added Pied-billed Grebe to our list for the day. Driving to the other side of the water, we found a slough where many American Coots paddled about, and a female Northern Harrier worked the fields nearby.

Our final stop was an area known as Beulah Bay, just upriver from the Brown's Ferry Nuclear Power Plant. Nothing new was added to the list here, and the large flats seemed to be devoid of shorebirds except for a few snipe and the ever present Killdeer. In the water, Great Egrets and Great Blue Heron foraged, and undetermined gulls floated and circled far in the distance. On the opposite shore, two more Harriers worked the edge of the woods, gliding effortlessly through the overhanging limbs.

We tabulated the count, and determined that we had seen 41 species. I told everyone we would reach 42, as we had not seen a Turkey Vulture yet, and the weather was perfect for them to be soaring along the highway on our way home. On the interstate on the way home, as we were about to climb Lacon Mountain, Mike called out "Jimmy, there's your Turkey Vulture." Right where I suspected we would see one taking advantage of the thermals rising along the terrain. A good day, and home by noon.

