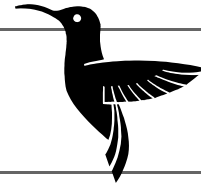


WINGBEAT



Cullman Audubon Society
PO Box 1444
Cullman, AL 35056



**WELCOME
SPRING!**

Francene Van Sambeek, Editor

Volume 8, Issue 3

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT By Jimmy Wells

On Sunday, December 21, 2003 our chapter held another successful Christmas Bird Count. 13 people participated in the field, and four people recorded species from their feeders at their homes. We accumulated a total of **77 species** and counted a total of **8969 identifiable birds**.

Once again, we were honored to have the help of Rick West of Tallahassee, Florida. Other participants included regular counters David Pylant, Booty Richter, Mike Payne, Vince Meleski, Neal Culpepper, Robert and Karen Lindsey, and Jimmy Wells. New participants were Mariman Pope, Francene Van Sambeek, Harry Roach, and our youngest participant, four year old Eli Lindsey, the son of Robert and Karen. Eli participated in the afternoon session and was instrumental in helping spot our only sightings of some species. Most were on the money, but I am having trouble finding Triangle-billed Hawk on any of my bird lists. Glad to see him here. Another new face to our group was Dr. Harry Roach. Harry is a retired OBGYN from Cincinnati, and this was the first CBC in which he has participated since his college days. Welcome to Cullman and please join us for more outings.

Feeder-watchers included Charlie Thompson, Loran and Caila Lamont, and Tim Chambers.

The **77 species** sighted blew last year's record of 71 out of the water. Number of birds sighted was down by just over 3000 birds, but most of this drop can be attributed to differences in the numbers of large flocks of birds that were seen this year versus last year. For instance, last year's count had

4411 Red-winged Blackbirds, this year, "only" 607. Last year had 2624 European Starlings, this year "only" 1039. Some numbers were down; some were up. **Cedar Waxwings** went from a dismal and unusually low single bird last year to 499 this year. Luck of the draw, it seems.

Some firsts, too. Eastern Screech Owl, Northern Bobwhite, American Woodcock, and Winter Wren were common species not seen in any of our previous counts. My contribution to this list was spotted at Smith Lake Park. I was ready to leave and head to another spot, but Mariman wanted to take another glance. As I looked back, we both saw a large bird flying over the water, heading out of the area that was in the Count Circle. A glance at the bird had me struggling to grab my binoculars. Focusing them, I watched as a **Bald Eagle** soared across the water. First one I have ever seen at the park, although I have seen them on rare occasions nearby.

The only bird qualifying for a truly unusual bird was seen by

(Continued on page 4)

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Coming attractions

- *February 10:* Meeting 7PM. Dave Pylant.
- *February 15:* Field Trip. 7AM. Lake Guntersville.
- *March 9:* Meeting 7PM. Speaker: Bankhead expert.
- *March:* Field Trip: DeSoto Wildflower walk. 7AM.



DID YA KNOW??

February has been designated National Bird Feeding Month!!



FEBRUARY 15TH FIELD TRIP: GUNTERSVILLE

The Cullman Audubon Society's February field trip will be on Sunday, February 15, 2004. We will be going to the downtown Guntersville waterfront area as well as **Guntersville State Park**. A wide variety of **waterfowl** can be observed easily along the waterfront, along with some unusual species. Recently a **Glaucous Gull**, **a group of Long-tailed Ducks (Old Squaw)**, and a **Red-necked Grebe** have been seen on a regular basis. After that we'll head over the mountain to the Park to spot **Bald Eagles** and other birds.

We'll meet in the **St Bernard Parking Lot at 7:00 AM**. If you would like, meet us at the parking lot across from the Rib Shack on the Arab side of the causeway at 8:00 AM.



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OPEN

Cullman Audubon Website: www.cullmanaudubon.com

National Audubon Website: www.audubon.org

FEBRUARY 10TH MEETING: WATER BIRDS

On Tuesday, February 10th, Mr. David Pylant will be the featured speaker for the Cullman Audubon Society. Mr. Pylant be speaking on **common water birds of North Alabama**. A slide show and brief discussion about water birds that can be found during the winter in the waters of North Alabama will be featured. Species to be covered include grebes and loons, waterfowl, cranes and rails, sandpipers, plovers, gulls and terns, wading birds, kingfishers, and a few others.



The meeting begins at 7 PM and will be held in the old Science Building on the campus of St. Bernard Prep School.

MARCH 9TH MEETING: BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST

For the March 9th meeting of the Cullman Audubon Society, our speaker will be an archaeologist familiar with the Bankhead Forest. Look for more details on next month's postcard. 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.

MARCH FIELD TRIP: DESOTO WILDFLOWER WALK

Details as to departing time and place will be discussed at the February meeting and will be printed on the March postcard.

'Audubon At Home' Will Create Healthier Greenspaces

Source: Audubon Newswire

Tuesday, December 2, 2003 - Audubon Ohio is pleased to announce the launch of **Audubon At Home**, a new National Audubon conservation initiative, throughout the state of Ohio. Funded through a federal grant from the Natural Resource Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, **Audubon At Home** will engage people at home, in Audubon Chapters, and in local communities, improving the quality of habitat and the environmental health of backyards and community greenspaces. The premise of Audubon At Home is that actions we take in our everyday lives can add up to make an important difference in conservation, the environment, and in the quality of our everyday lives. Our back yards are one place to start. By reducing the use of pesticides and fertilizer, yards and communities will be safer for children and pets, and the quality of the water in our lakes, streams, and reservoirs will improve. Using native plant species, and **providing bird-friendly habitat** in our lawns and landscaping saves money and time, and creates homes for wildlife that can provide hours of viewing enjoyment. As part of its commitment to community-based conservation, Audubon seeks to share the guiding principles of the Audubon at Home program with people in urban, suburban, and rural areas all over the country. To learn more about the **National Audubon Society's nationwide Audubon at Home** program, please visit: <http://www.audubon.org>. To learn more about the program in Ohio, please contact Casey Tucker at 614-224-3303 x15 or email ctucker@audubon.org.

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.



January Field Trip Report

By David Pylant

The Cullman Audubon Society made its annual field trip to Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge on January 17. In attendance were: David Pylant, Neal Culpepper, Booty Richter, Mike Payne, Robert and Karen Lindsey, Sue Melvin, Jo Whitley, and our good friend from Huntsville, Tom Brindley. The weather proved cooperative as the rain held off until the afternoon.

We started at the viewing platform near Mooresville, hoping to see vast quantities of Sandhill Cranes, Snow Geese, and White-fronted Geese. No cooperation from the birds, however. Undaunted, we pressed on with our trip, touring the Limestone Bay area, along the north side of the river west toward Decatur. This route proved to be very productive as usual. After lunch at the Greenbrier we stopped off at the Visitor Center to return the key and see what was around the viewing building. Low and behold, around 125 Sandhill Cranes were in the fields north of the building. Glad we stopped by.

In all we observed 70 different species on the trip. These included:

Pied-billed Grebe	Great Blue Heron	Great Egret	White-fronted Goose
Snow Goose	Ross' Goose	Canada Goose	Wood Duck
American Black Duck	Mallard	Northern Pintail	Northern Shoveler
Gadwall	American Widgeon	Canvasback	Ring-necked Duck
Lesser Scaup	Bufflehead	Ruddy Duck	Turkey Vulture
Black Vulture	Red-tailed Hawk	American Kestrel	American Coot
Sandhill Crane	Killdeer	Greater Yellowlegs	Common Snipe
Ring-billed Gull	Mourning Dove	Rock Pigeon	Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Down Woodpecker	Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker	Blue Jay	American Crow	Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse	White-breasted Nuthatch	Carolina Wren	Winter Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Eastern Bluebird	American Robin
Northern Mockingbird	Brown Thrasher	American Pipet	Cedar Waxwing
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Northern Cardinal	Chipping Sparrow	Field Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow	Fox Sparrow	Song Sparrow	Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow	Red-winged Blackbird	Eastern Meadowlark	Dark-eyed Junco
Common Grackle	Brown-headed Cowbird	American Goldfinch	House Finch
Starling	House Sparrow		



7TH ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRDCOUNT FEBRUARY 13-16, 2004

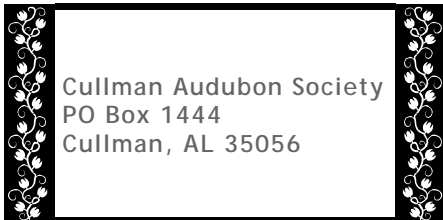
Source: Audubon Newswire Volume 2, Number 1 January 20, 2004

From February 13-16, 2004, bird enthusiasts are invited to take part in the **Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)**, a project developed and managed by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited storeowners and NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service), and with participation from Bird Studies Canada for the first time. During the event, everyone who enjoys birds will be able to submit their observations through **BirdSource**, www.birdsource.org; these data will help scientists determine the status of birds continent wide. At the same time, the project will teach participants how to turn their backyards into real, **useful habitat** for birds. "Improving backyards is an important way to create greenways for birds between parks and wild areas," said Frank Gill, Audubon's Director of Science. "Yards allow for the cultivation of native plants and provide essential **sanctuary to migratory** and resident birds. Participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count gives people a first-hand view of how important bird-friendly backyards are to many bird species." **Visit www.audubon.org for the full story.**



AUDUBON ADVISORY: December 19, 2003 (Vol. 2003, Issue 25)
Here are just a few highlights from the 108th US Congress activities for 2003.

1. **ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SAFE FROM DRILLING FOR 2003:** Attempts by pro-drilling special interests to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling failed in the U.S. Senate by three votes!
2. **STATEWIDE CONSERVATION PROGRAMS:** For fiscal year 2004, the U.S. Congress increased its support for State Wildlife Grant programs by \$10 million!
3. **MIGRATORY BIRD PROTECTION:** Congress allotted \$4 million to go directly to supporting partnership programs that conserve and enhance habitat of Neotropical migratory birds.
4. **EPA AND ARMY CORP DROP PLANS TO REMOVE EVEN MORE PROTECTIONS FROM WETLANDS.**
5. **NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES** The National Wildlife Refuge System -- which celebrated its 100th Anniversary this year -- received a \$24 million increase over last year for refuge operation and maintenance
6. **EVERGLADES RESTORATION** Audubon and our partners succeeded in convincing Congress to add legislative language to the Interior and Energy and Water spending bills that ensures that the State of Florida complies with state and federal water quality standards.
7. For more info: Audubon Advisory Audubon Public Policy Division 1150 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Suite 600 Washington, D. C. 20036 1-800-659-2622 audubonaction@audubon.org .



(CBC, Continued from page 1)

our two intrepid travelers, Vince Meleski and Rick West. They were covering the North-east section, which included Sportsman's Lake Park. After traveling to it twice to find the gate inexplicably locked, in the afternoon they decided that it was too important a place to not count, and scaled the fence. After a conversation with the caretaker, they were allowed to continue. (The Christmas Lights program held this year had an expensive lighting system in place at the park, and the gate was locked to protect it.) It was a good thing they took the initiative to enter, for they spotted a **Green Heron** at the park. This misguided bird forgot to migrate south, and thus will gain us a highlight in the annual report issued by National Audubon.

My thanks to all that participated, especially Rick West, for taking the time to help this bunch of relative rookies, and Neal for allowing us to meet at his office.

The results will be available online soon. BirdSource is having problems with the new software they have installed and are still working out the bugs. I keep getting emails promising that the compilers will be able to report their findings soon. To view previous year's results, visit <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc>. It

currently has the results of all Christmas Bird Counts from 1900 through 2002.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Number seen</u>
Pied-billed Grebe	2
Great Blue Heron	23
Green Heron	1
Canada Goose	49
Wood Duck	5
Mallard	85
Gadwall	162
Ring-necked Duck	45
Hooded Merganser	9
Black Vulture	12
Turkey Vulture	192
Bald Eagle	1
Northern Harrier	4
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5
Cooper's Hawk	12
Red-shouldered Hawk	14
Red-tailed Hawk	52
American Kestrel	36
Northern Bobwhite	5
American Coot	13
Killdeer	83
Common Snipe	3
American Woodcock	1
gull species	2
Rock Pigeon	122
Eurasian Collared Dove	12
Mourning Dove	319
Eastern Screech Owl	1
Barred Owl	1
Belted Kingfisher	23
Red-headed Woodpecker	3
Red-bellied Woodpecker	44
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	8
Downy Woodpecker	25
Hairy Woodpecker	5
Northern Flicker	23
Pileated Woodpecker	4
Eastern Phoebe	6
Blue Jay	145
American Crow	362
Carolina Chickadee	58

Tufted Titmouse	100
White-breasted Nuthatch	25
Brown-headed Nuthatch	14
Brown Creeper	2
Carolina Wren	22
Winter Wren	2
Golden-crowned Kinglet	5
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5
Eastern Bluebird	211
Hermit Thrush	9
American Robin	495
Northern Mockingbird	87
Brown Thrasher	14
Cedar Waxwing	499
Loggerhead Shrike	15
Yellow-rumped Warbler	24
Pine Warbler	8
Northern Cardinal	200
Eastern Towhee	39
Chipping Sparrow	136
Field Sparrow	277
Savannah Sparrow	61
Fox Sparrow	3
Song Sparrow	54
Swamp Sparrow	16
White-throated Sparrow	146
Dark-eyed Junco	70
Red-winged Blackbird	607
Eastern Meadowlark	200
Common Grackle	2249
Brown-headed Cowbird	21
Purple Finch	13
American Goldfinch	214
House Finch	63
House Sparrow	48
European Starling	1039
Total number of Species	77
Total number of Birds	8,969
Number of groups	5
Number of group-hours	46
Number of miles traveled by car	463
Number of miles traveled on foot	20