



The Pine Warbler

Pine Woods Audubon Society

January-February 2013

Volume 2012/2013

2012-2013 Officers

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Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month (September through May) in the Education Building at the Hattiesburg Zoo. Meetings begin at 7:00 pm and are open to the public.

Pine Woods Audubon Society is a chapter of National Audubon Society, Inc.

January/February Meetings—Joshua Hodge

January 3—Timberdoodle: Secret Life of the American Woodcock (Adam Butler)

With its cryptic camouflage, nocturnal lifestyle, and tendency to live in the thickest of cover, the American Woodcock is a bird with which most Mississippians are unfamiliar. Yet, our state is a primary wintering area for this species, and its unusual habits are certain to interest all who take the time to learn more about its enigmatic life. So, whether you call them woodcock, timberdoodles, mudbats, or snipe, come join us to discover more about the natural history of this peculiar little bird.

February 7—Birding Southern Africa (Rynetta Coetzee)

Does the cold weather have you dreaming of warmer climes? Join us for a visual safari that is sure to delight. Rynetta Coetzee, native of South Africa now living in Jackson, will talk about birding in the region of Southern Africa which includes South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia, Southern Mozambique and a part of Zimbabwe. The region hosts well over 1,000 species, and her presentation will include photos of many of these species and the habitat where they live. (Only two species are found in both South Africa and Mississippi. Can you name them?)

January/February Field Trips—Diane Lafferty

January 1—Annual Crow Baby Stroll. Stroll will take place at Chain Park (we don't have access to sewage lagoons on this day). Meet at Mid-town Market at 8:30am. Potluck lunch at Ron & Lin's house at 11:45am.

January 4—Jackson County Christmas Bird Count (Ocean Springs). Let Diane know if you are planning to go. We will leave Hattiesburg (Mid-town Market) at 5:15am so that we can get there for sunrise.

January 19—Sparrow trip to PRCC Nursery in McNeill. Leave from Mid-town Market at 7:45am.

February 16—Window Watch hosted by Jim & Sherry Dryden (see article inside).

February 15-18—Annual Great Backyard Bird Count—count in your own backyard.

February 18—Annual President's Day Gull Run (see article inside)

March 7—Wildlife Day at Crosby Arboretum (Picayune). Leave at 7am, setup booth at Crosby at 8am, present program to students 9am—12noon.



There's Just Something 'bout An Island—Ron Blackwell

An article Ron wrote just after our PWAS field trip to Dauphin Island this October.

Regular readers of this column will know that moving seems to be in my blood. Lin and I have scoured the continent during the past year, finding new places to see, revisiting old favorites and reconnecting with scattered friends and family. And I don't see us slowing down much in the near future. Most of this year's travel has featured long reaches, packed itineraries, and a definite hurried, forward leaning. I'm not sure what's chasing me, but I can feel it breathing down my back in the still of the night sometimes. Yep, you could say that I'm restless. I guess I always have been.

But when we crossed over the Dauphin Island Causeway this past Friday morning, I could feel the tension bleed out of me once again as my shoulders relaxed. I turned toward Lin just in time to see her give her own happy sigh. There's something about an island that says slow down, relax. Where do you think you have to go in such a hurry? You are HERE!

Of course, you can't just loaf on this island, not while there are birds to see! We spotted our first Reddish Egret galloping thigh-deep in surf from our perch high on the bridge—just where we left him last spring. A long phalanx of Brown Pelicans soared over us before we could descend to the sandy roadway, and two Kingfishers slashed across our path, rattling a welcome.

Or was that a warning? We Hattiesburgians were running late, and this fall migration had already been labeled very early, even before Isaac had turned up and spoiled the party. The slug of a hurricane mauled Dauphin Island's beaches and dunes. And we heard that the west end of the Island was still closed to foot and beach traffic while the bulldozers played with their mountains of sand. Maybe this weekend would be a restful time after all.

There was not much traffic at all on the Island. It looked like the sleepy little hamlet that it is when there are not hordes of birders chasing waves of birds and beach-goers chasing sunburns. We noticed that the Island Bakery was closed for the week. We checked in to the Gulf Breeze Motel and wandered over to the Island's tiny airport and the marsh that surrounds it. Our scouting efforts there proved pretty bleak for bird-watching, but I could feel a long Gulf-breezy nap back at the motel calling my name.

I never got that nap. We ran into some of our group who had been on the island for the week. They gave us our expected helping of you should have been here yesterday. We followed the tiny crowd down-island to Shell Mound Park where we actually found a few birds, including a spiffy Red-breasted Nuthatch. Diane Lafferty, our current shore-bird expert, announced that we were being allowed to cross the construction lines the next day in order to conduct an Audubon-sponsored and BP-funded shore-bird survey. Apparently, shorebirds get up very early. No sleeping in for me! I had a rough night, waking every hour to stare at the clock. I roused Lin from her dreams so that she could drive me through the construction site to the West End. She went back to finish my night's sleep and I waited for the other shore birders to arrive.

As we worked our way to the shoreline, we were surprised when we found an adult Scissor-tailed Flycatcher way out on the barren beach. The bird put on a nice show for us before swooping down island toward the Airport. We found birds out on the flats and on the shore. Piping Plovers, Semipalmated Plovers, Sanderlings, and Red Knots seemed to be the most popular shorebirds of the day. We walked all the way to the Katrina Cut and then back down the other side of the island. This gave us no new birds at all. The water toward Fort Morgan was flat and calm. Some of us dabbled with beachcombing after the birds played out. As usual, the brisk jaunt outbound became a slow slog through the sand coming back.

I caught a ride back down island, and was excited to see our car still parked at the motel. This was my chance for that nap, after all! I was doing my best to creep into the room without waking my wife when she threw open the door and announced, "There are at least six Scissor-tailed Flycatchers at the Airport! And Larry Basden is reporting new birds being seen on Shell Mound this morning!" She suddenly stopped talking and gave me a concerned look. I realized that I must have been frowning. I took one last look at my napping bed, and said, "Let's go, I'll sleep when I'm dead! Did you say at least six?!"



Welcome, New Members!—Joshua Hodge

Here are the new members who have joined since the last issue of The Pine Warbler. If you know any of these people, please take a few minutes to welcome them, to tell them about PWAS, and to invite them to join us at a meeting, field trip, or other activity.

George Whitfield—Hattiesburg

Schaeffer Smith—Hattiesburg

Jim & Sherry Dryden—Hattiesburg

Jean Haspeslagh—Hattiesburg

Carl Winstead—Sumrall

Christine Merritt—Columbia

Patricia Cruse—Laurel

Bill W. Tubb—Hattiesburg

Edward Thrash—Seminary

Emily Routh—Mt. Olive

Terry & Tricia Folks—Moselle

Dave Ferry & Meri-Beth Koch—Purvis



Introduction to Bird Watching Class

We will be presenting a basic birding class, “Introduction to Bird Watching”, to the general public as an outreach effort for the Chapter. The class will meet at the Oak Grove Library at 10:30am on Saturdays (January 12, January 26, February 2, and February 9). The final class will be on Saturday, February 16 at the PWAS Window Watch (part of the Great Backyard Bird Count). The class will be very basic. PWAS members may find the material too basic but may know someone who is interested. The class is free, but registration is required. To register, call Joshua Hodge at 601-765-5674 or complete the registration form on our website: <http://www.pinewoodsaudubon.com/class/>.



Reminders



Hattiesburg Christmas Bird Count

The Hattiesburg Christmas Bird Count will be held Saturday, December 29. If you wish to participate as either a field counter or a backyard feeder counter, please contact this year’s compiler—Larry Basden—by email at larryb@basdenfamily.com or by telephone at 601-544-1784.

Annual Window Watch

The annual window watch is our Chapter event during the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). For 2013 Jim & Sherry Dryden have graciously agreed to host the event. The Watch runs from 9am until 11:59am on the Saturday within the GBBC (February 16). Jim & Sherry live at 205 Hickory Hill Drive (this is off of Classic Drive above the Hattiesburg Country Club). Additional details will be distributed closer to the date of the event.

Annual President’s Day Gull Run

This annual event began with a Joshua Hodge idea—why not use a bank holiday to bird the Mississippi coast shoreline? We have been trying to accomplish that feat for several years but have never completed the entire state shoreline. But, it is sure fun trying. Join us on February 18 as we once again put our best efforts forward. We will leave Midtown Market at 6am and go from the LA border toward the AL border. Weather can be very fickle at this time of year so pay close attention to the forecast (we have been in short-sleeved shirts one year and bundled up in layers and still freezing in the onshore wind the next year.).

We're on the Web!

www.pinewoodsaudubon.com

The Pine Warbler

Pine Woods Audubon Society
544 West 4th Street
Hattiesburg, MS 39401

Address Service Requested

Bird Sightings & Field Trips

Dauphin Island Field Trip

A very successful fall migration trip. Total species count was 129. Highlight species included Flycatchers: Swallow-tailed and Great Crested (or Ash-throated, ID was not positive), Red-breasted Nuthatches, Red Knots, and a few Warbler species.

Sightings

High numbers of Swallow-tailed Flycatchers at Dauphin Island Airport (as many as 15 at the same time) - Dauphin Island Field Trip

Baltimore Oriole at backyard feeder—Larry Smith

Did you know that ?

- In addition to its website, PWAS also has a Facebook page

<http://www.pinewoodsaudubon.com/index.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/PineWoodsAudubon>

- The entire 18-volume encyclopedia—Birds of North America—is available in the reference section of the Cook Library (USM).

BIRD PHOTO QUIZ

Directions

- Identify which species is pictured at right.
 - The correct answer will be a species listed in the current version of the Mississippi Ornithology Society's checklist.
 - Each month a winner will be selected at the meeting.
-

Visit the PWAS website for a higher-resolution version of the photos.



January

(Photo Taken November 2012—Jackson County, MS)



February

(Photo Taken February 2012—Harrison County, MS)

CONSERVATION NOTES

We are including our first conservation section in this issue. We hope this will become a regular newsletter feature. Our goal for this section is to keep you informed about our conservation projects and conservation issues of national concern, to provide you with information on how to incorporate more environmentally friendly decisions into your everyday life, and to inspire you to make your own yard more attractive to birds and other wildlife by illustrating simple projects you can do at home.

We would like to hear what you think about this new section. If you make any of the projects, we would appreciate any photos of your creations and notes about your experiences. [Email us](#) by clicking on our names below, and follow us on [Facebook](#) for occasional tips and project updates.

-[Joshua Hodge](#)

-[Lin Harper](#)

Conservation Committee

American Kestrel Partnership

The American Kestrel is our smallest and most colorful falcon. The male and female are colored differently, making it easy to differentiate between the sexes. It occurs across nearly all of North America. Kestrels are common in Mississippi, especially during the winter, but there are signs that they are in peril.

According to Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and Christmas Bird Count (CBC) data, the American Kestrel is declining across much of its range, but BBS and CBC data do not provide information about why they are declining. Because American Kestrels are colorful, easy to identify, widespread, and attracted to nest boxes, they are an ideal candidate for citizen science projects. There are already many nest box programs around the country, but there has not been a standardized protocol for collecting data, making it difficult to compare results across this species' extensive range.

Enter the [Peregrine Fund's](#) American Kestrel Partnership. The goals of the AKP are to facilitate coordination between existing programs and to foster new nest box efforts by recruiting new citizen scientists to install nest boxes, monitor them, and submit the data to their centralized database.

During the month of January, we will be building and installing nest boxes in order to contribute to this nation-wide project. We have set a modest goal of installing six nest boxes this year. There are three ways that you can contribute to the chapter's program:

1. Identify potential nest box locations,
2. Volunteer to monitor a nest box weekly for about ten minutes during nesting season, or
3. Make a donation for the purchase of nest box materials.

In addition to contributing to the chapter's efforts, a fourth way to help the project would be to spread the word about the project to other groups, such as Boy Scout troops, garden clubs, and local schools, in hopes that they may install and monitor nest boxes of their own. If you know of others that may be interested in starting their own project and would like assistance getting started, we would be happy to assist them in any way that we can.

To suggest potential nest box locations, to volunteer for monitoring a nest box, or to connect us with others who are interested in beginning their own projects, send us an [email](#) with "Kestrel Project" in the subject line.

To learn more about the project, download resources, like informational handouts and nest box designs, and connect with other nest box monitors, visit the [American Kestrel Partnership's](#) website by clicking on the logo below.



american
kestrel
partnership

a project of The Peregrine Fund

REDUCE REUSE RECYCLE | TIP #1

Reuse bottles as oil lamps.

Set the mood at your next outdoor gathering, and save a bottle from the landfill by reusing it as a lamp. You can cluster them on tables or line a patio or walkway. The photos show a basic bottle, but you can jazz it up by using colored bottles, filling the bottom with decorative rocks, or adding other decorative touches. The only limitation is your imagination (and the flammability of your materials).

Materials:

- **Empty glass bottle.** A short, wide bottle works best for this project.
- **Round fiberglass wick.** In most stores, you will not find the fiberglass wicks with the kerosene lamp accessories; look in the garden centers where outdoor torches are stocked.
- **Flat washer.** Find a washer with an inside diameter slightly smaller than the diameter of wick that you are using and an outside diameter that is larger than the mouth of the bottle.
- **Lamp oil.**

Instructions:

Step 1: Clean the bottle and remove the label, if desired, by soaking in a baking soda solution.

Step 2: Slide the wick into the washer.

Step 3: Insert wick into bottle and adjust the washer so that it rests on the lip of the bottle.

Step 4: Trim the wick so that it extends about 1/2" above the washer. Do not leave the wick extending more than 3/4" above the washer. Set aside the washer and wick.

Step 5: Fill the bottle with lamp oil, place the lamp in the desired location, and light it after the oil has fully saturated the wick. Enjoy.

Caution: This lamp is not safe for indoor use.



Figure 1: Materials needed.



Figure 2: Inserting and trimming the wick.



Figure 3: The finished product.