



# Audubon MISSISSIPPI

WINTER 2010

*The Newsletter from the Mississippi State Office of The National Audubon Society*

## Save the Dates!

**SPAC Davis House Christmas Tour:** December 4-5

**Christmas Bird Counts:** December 14 - January 5

**Great Backyard Bird Count:** February 18-21

**Audubon Mississippi Chapter Retreat:** March

**SPAC Holly Springs Pilgrimage Finley House:** April 8-10

**Pascagoula River Nature Festival:** April 9-16

**SPAC Audubon Naturalist Course:** Thursdays beginning April 14

**SPAC Earth Day Celebration & Volunteer Event:** April 23

**Tara Spring Birding Weekend:** April 29-May 1

**PRAC Edible Gulf Coast Dinner: "Spring Feast"** April

**SPAC Native Plant Sale:** May 14

**Tara Wildlife Summer Camp:** May, July, August

**SPAC National Trails Volunteer Day:** June 4

**SPAC Summer Camp:** June 6-9, 13-17, & 27-30

**PRAC Summer Camp:** June 13-17 & June 20-24

**PRAC Teacher Naturalist Course:** July

**SPAC Hummingbird Migration Celebration:** September 9-11

**Mississippi River Nature Weekend Tara Wildlife:** August

## CONSERVATION

# Mississippi Birds in Decline

## Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*)

### Book Review

*"Mockingbird Song, Ecological Landscapes of the South"* by Jack Temple Kirby

**W**here did our Bobwhite Quail go? That's a common question around Mississippi and throughout the South. It's easy to point a finger at hawks, fire ants, coyotes, hunting, big agriculture, pesticides, fire suppression, urbanization, etc. Jack Kirby's *Mockingbird Song* is a great resource to start understanding why our landscapes and wildlife populations are what they are today.

*Mockingbird Song* is a provocative piece of environmental history that explores human-nature relationships in the South. Although this book is only one author's perspective, history, and lots of it, must be considered to begin to understand how and why our natural landscapes have changed so dramatically. From Native Americans to European impact and into post modern times, nature has been impacted by humans to the extent that technology allowed.

Ecology involves systematic relationships, none more important than animals and their habitats. Whatever caused the quail's decline undoubtedly influenced other grassland-dependent birds such as Meadowlarks,



Grasshopper Sparrows, Field Sparrows and Loggerhead Shrikes, all of which followed a similar fate as the quail. Factors at play here are greater than hunting or predators. More plausible explanations involve the landscape-scale disturbances occurring over time that reduced availability of food and cover and diminished the ecosystem niches occupied by certain species.

Since human actions undoubtedly impacted grassland bird populations, understanding the history of our landscapes helps us with restoration strategies. Kirby's book doesn't proclaim an answer to our bird declines, but his historical review provides eye-opening inferences too numerous to (Go to page 11)



# Audubon

## MISSISSIPPI

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### MISSION STATEMENT

Audubon's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

Audubon Mississippi is published to report on the activities of the Mississippi State Office of The National Audubon Society, a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation founded in 1905 and supported by 500,000 members in nearly 500 chapters throughout the Americas.

### NOTE FROM THE STATE BOARD



*Audubon's 2010 Callison Award winner Margaret Copeland (left) and Sheryl Bowen, State Board Chair.*

**H**undreds of people across the state contribute to the work of Audubon Mississippi. For some, their generous financial support helps us keep important conservation and education programs operating. Others give their time to help us engage more youngsters and adults in protecting our great natural heritage. Still others help us stage important events such as the annual Hummingbird Migration Celebration each September at Strawberry Plains Audubon Center in Holly Springs. If they are like me, their work with Audubon inspires them to take action on their own lands to protect our birds, our waters, and our woodlots.

In Mississippi and across the country, few people put as much heart and soul into the Audubon cause as Margaret Copeland of Starkville. Earlier this year, Margaret, a fellow member of Audubon Mississippi's Board of Advisors, received high praise for her decades of commitment: the National Audubon Society's 2010 Charles H. Callison Volunteer Award.

Only two awards are given by Audubon each year – one to an Audubon staff member or group and another to a volunteer or group of volunteers. Nominees need to have achieved significant success in environmental policy, creativity, coalition-building, or education and outreach.

There's not a more deserving recipient than Margaret – in Mississippi or anywhere. Margaret is a role model for stewardship and a quintessential Audubon doer. She was a major force in organizing Friends of Noxubee Refuge and has contributed more than 11,000 hours over a 25-year period to conservation of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker at the refuge, where she also created a native plant garden and bird feeding areas. When not leading field trips, teaching bird identification classes or helping kids participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count, Margaret is busy serving as Oktibbeha Audubon Chapter newsletter editor and board member for both Audubon Mississippi and Strawberry Plains Audubon Center.

Margaret has made a difference for nature. Her accomplishments made her very deserving of this national award and her generous and unassuming spirit make her a pleasure to work with.

She inspires us all to action. I ask you to join Margaret – and hundreds of others who make the work of Audubon Mississippi possible.

*Sheryl Bowen - State Board Chair*

### To our loyal supporters:

**I**f you are receiving a hard copy of this year-end newsletter, you have been identified as a Supporter of Audubon Mississippi and we Thank You! As we have reported to you before, we are striving to reduce our costs for producing and mailing hard copies of our state newsletter, as a means of being fiscally responsible with your contributions. Our "Paperless Campaign" strives to maintain communication with Audubon supporters about the great work we do while demonstrating conservation of resources. We will continue to produce an annual hard copy newsletter, but many of you already receive updates and news through our e-newsletters distributed by the Strawberry Plains and Pascagoula River Audubon Centers which save resources and actually increase our ability to stay in touch with members and supporters of Audubon. If you wish to join the "Paperless Campaign," contact Mary Lynn Riley at [mriley@audubon.org](mailto:mriley@audubon.org) THANKS!!!

# Donors Support Audubon Conservation & Education Programs

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Mozart Mark Dedatus

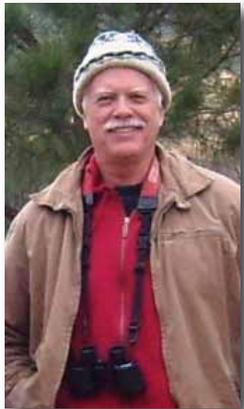


## Foundations

Delta Kappa Gamma Educational Foundation  
 Gildea Foundation, Inc.  
 Merrill Lynch and Co. Foundation, Inc. Matching Gifts  
 Purvis Grange Foundation  
 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

## Lucy and John James Audubon Society Members

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Tom Heineke, our newest State Board Member, came on board Sept. 2010. He and his wife Jane have a farm outside of Holly Springs, MS and they donated funds for a new chimney swift tower at Strawberry Plains last spring.



## Audubon Mississippi Education Endowment

“As one scientist put it, we can now assume that just as children need adequate nutrition and sleep, they may very well need contact with nature,” Richard Louv, author of “Last Child in the Woods.” Our education programs strive to change attitudes and promote environmental stewardship in a society that has grown up indoors.

Please help during this **25% match opportunity** for gifts made to the Audubon Mississippi Education Endowment Fund which is managed by the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi. Fund distributions will support important educational work.

Write Audubon MS Education Endowment Fund on checks made payable to the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi and mail to Audubon MS, 285 Plains Road, Holly Springs, MS 38635. To pay by credit card, go to [www.cfnm.org](http://www.cfnm.org). The Foundation will generate your gift/tax letter. Appreciated stocks, property and other assets are also eligible for the 25% match. Call 662-252-1155 for more information.

## Hummingbird Celebration Sponsors



A2Z Sign & Print Shop	Ramesses' Shadow Tattoos
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Eagle Optics	Tyson Drug Company, Inc.
Greer & White Insurance	Waste Connections Walnut, MS
Holly Springs Rotary Club	WEVL Radio
Hunter Douglas	

## Local Birder Wins 2nd Place in Great Backyard Bird Count Photo Contest



**S**haron Milligan, long-time member of the Mississippi Coast Audubon Society and a Pascagoula River Audubon Center volunteer, was recently named the 2nd place winner in the 2010 Great Backyard Bird Count Photo Contest. Sharon's image of a "Godwit with Ripples" was one of 7,000 entries submitted during the February event. "Sharon so richly deserves this award. It reflects what we have all known about her talent ever since her binoculars and camera started jostling for her attention," said Alison Henry, long-time friend and fellow birder.

Needless to say, everyone that knows Sharon is proud of her and the great attention she brings to birds and other wildlife she loves to watch and promote.

If you share Sharon's interest in bird watching or photography, you too can be part of the team that is helping Audubon and its partners track birds across America during the annual Great Backyard Bird Count.

The 14th annual Great Backyard Bird Count is scheduled to take place February 18-21, 2011, but it is not too early to get ready by beginning to watch and feed birds in your backyard. Follow in Sharon's footsteps by visiting the Great Backyard Bird Count website ([www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc)) and learning about how you can become a Citizen Scientist and help Audubon and its partners track bird populations across North America.

### AUDUBON KIDS IN ACTION

**E**veryone knows that a good cupcake is hard to pass up, especially as offered by a pretty young lady trying to support a cause. Well, our "new" friend Ayden Tolman did just that recently through her "Ayden's Bake Sale for Birds." Inspired by her grandmother and internationally-known Gulf Coast Artist, Lori K. Gordon, Ayden decided to help Audubon with its oil spill response by sponsoring a bake sale, as part of the Art for the Gulf event this summer. We are of course grateful for the \$71 raised by Ayden, as all levels of support are valued. What is more valued is the "inspiration" that we all gain from her effort. As with other young people that help Audubon, she cared enough to act, and in so doing make a difference.



**T**he Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant recently granted two Pascagoula River Audubon Center Junior Naturalists, Robert Glenn and Cierra Martin, \$1,500 scholarships to participate in an Ocean Science and Leadership Expedition in Cordova, Alaska. They joined eight other students at the Prince William Sound Science Center for a program on leadership development, environmental ethics, marine science, marine debris and oil spills. Audubon Mississippi congratulates these extraordinary teens.

## Harvey Haggard, Longtime Strawberry Plains Volunteer Passes



Harvey Haggard  
2/26/1928 - 5/27/2010

In May, we lost an incredible volunteer and dear friend, Harvey Haggard. Harvey's caring and gentle disposition made him a natural educator. Harvey was an Entomologist and was always happy to share his knowledge through teaching and the creation of beautiful insect displays for our Visitor Center. Mostly, he was a great friend who will be greatly missed. Our thoughts remain with his family, especially Edie, Harvey's wife.



Reid Bishop & Len Carpenter

When Audubon's Mississippi River Field Institute began organizing its first Mississippi River Naturalist course in Vicksburg, **Len Carpenter** was one of the first people to sign up. She didn't stop there; she helped recruit

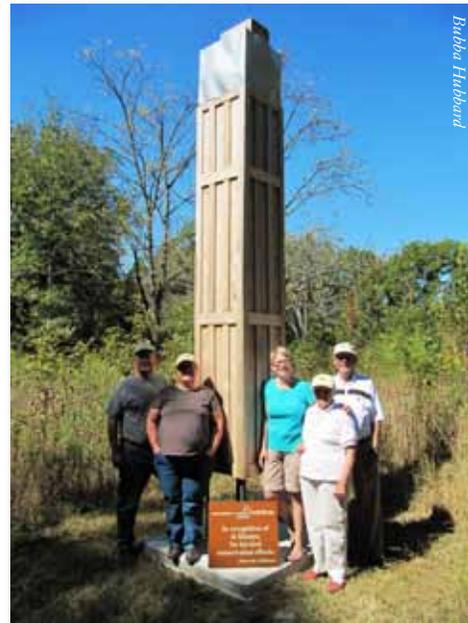
others for the year long naturalist training course that focuses on the ecology of the Mississippi River. Audubon offers similar courses on the coast and in northern Mississippi. In Vicksburg, participants meet weekly for seminars and field trips highlighting different aspects of river ecology and geology. Len lives across the river from Vicksburg near Tallulah, La., where she and her husband, John, have farmed since 1972. Len has a genuine love of all things natural and she plans to keep working with Audubon. Thanks Len, for all that you do.

What can we say about **George Hanson**, our PRAC Executive Chef! If something comes up around the Center and we need help, George will drop everything and come running. From the beginning of our existence, he has extended his helping hand without hesitation.



George Hanson

Whether it is cutting the grass (which we don't like to do), cooking for 30 people, or giving lectures on the American Alligator, George has helped us over and over again. Ok, we will admit, he can cook a mean batch of shrimp, and the next day educate 30 fifth graders in stride. It's been long overdue and we wanted to acknowledge his commitment and dedication to the Pascagoula River Audubon Center. Thanks George!



Bobby Hubbard

Al Klomps and wife Louise (right) with their children around chimney swift tower donated to Strawberry Plains.

After **Al Klomps** retired as a plant manager in Holly Springs, this electrical engineer dedicated his skills and money to build all types of bird houses for Strawberry Plains. Now at age 84, most of his time is spent caring for his wife who needs him most. However, circumstances haven't held Al back.

Since 2003, Al has developed and managed a 60-unit bluebird trail at Kirkwood Golf Course. With the trail outside his back door, his wife is nearby. Al's diligent maintenance of the houses led to 300 bluebirds fledged this year, the most in any year yet.

Al's generosity and commitment make it easy to consider him part of the Audubon family. Al's children acknowledged his dedication by donating funds and materials for a new chimney swift tower in Al's honor last spring, just in time to add a few more fledged swifts to his successful year.

## Kristin Lamberson: TogetherGreen Fellow!



*Kristin Lamberson*

The TogetherGreen Fellows Grant that was awarded to Kristin Lamberson at Strawberry Plains Audubon Center (SPAC) is supporting work to enhance garden demonstration areas. The grant financed a new chimney swift tower (one of three built by volunteer Ray Emmons in spring 2010). The Fellows Grant also paid for a beautiful rain garden that features unique and beautifully sculpted rain chains created by local artist Keith Aden. The rain chains fantastically direct storm water from the car port roof into the garden. This area captivated onlookers during the rainstorm that took place during the 2010 Hummingbird Migration Celebration! The last segment of the Fellows funded project will be the creation of educational interpretive signs to be installed throughout garden/wildlife demonstration areas located on the main SPAC campus.

## Audubon “RAINgers” Program Underway

The Audubon “RAIN”gers program is well under way in the Moss Point School district. The Pascagoula River Audubon Center (PRAC) received a grant from Disney’s Make a Change Foundation to install rain water gardens at all the schools in the district. The grant was an internet-based contest voted on by kids from the entire country. This program will also be featured in “Audubon Adventures,” one of The National Audubon Society’s educational outreach programs available for all Audubon Nature Centers and Chapters throughout the U.S.

Mozart Mark Dedeaux, PRAC Education Coordinator, and school district “Lift” (gifted) teachers have started the initial phases of the program with great excitement and community support. Mozart met with teachers, students, and parents to discuss the project and explain the ecological impacts of storm water run off and how rainwater gardens can improve water quality within the Pascagoula River Watershed. Students were introduced to glossary terms that were established in preliminary classroom activities and followed up with field trips to PRAC.

Early this fall, students, teachers, volunteers, and school workers got busy digging gardens at seven different schools throughout the district. Students are also learning lessons about the patience of gardening and basic planting techniques. During additional field trips to PRAC, students collected seeds and harvested plants to use in their gardens. With a tremendous amount of planning and work, the gardens will hopefully be finished by the end of November 2010.



*Mozart and Students prepare Rain Garden*

## Art In Nature For Kids At Strawberry Plains

Strawberry Plains Audubon Center (SPAC) has received a grant from the Mississippi Arts Commission and The National Endowment for the Arts to host an Art in Nature Camp for children next summer! The National Audubon Society’s history is steeped in traditions of art as well as nature. What better way to see and understand the world than to study it and recreate it through your own imagination. We are blessed with many artists in Mississippi, especially in and around Holly Springs. Many of them were raised here and understand Mississippi’s strong history and connection to the land. They draw from our natural surroundings and their memories of being close to nature growing up.

A number of our most talented artists will be helping us at camp as we attract a more diverse group of kids to nature through various mediums like interpretive dance/storytelling, clay pottery making, explorative art and watercolor painting. We hope to appeal not only to young people who are primarily interested in the outdoors but those who may be drawn in because of their interest in learning more about art.

SPAC’s Art- in -Nature and Ecology Camps will be offered in June 2011. Visit [strawberryplains.audubon.org](http://strawberryplains.audubon.org) for more information!

## Mississippi River Field Institute Supports Audubon's Oil Spill Study



*Reid Bishop secures a sample of sand*

**R**eid Bishop, Director of the Mississippi River Field Institute, employed his extensive background in biochemistry to help prepare Audubon's new report on this year's Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

Bishop came to Audubon in June 2009, after spending more than a decade as a college instructor and researcher in biochemistry. For Audubon's oil spill report, he coordinated an effort to collect and analyze samples of beach sand from sites across coastal Louisiana, where the most oil from the BP disaster came ashore. The samples, now being analyzed for oil and chemical dispersants with help from Millsaps

College in Jackson, were taken from sites where Audubon scientists surveyed bird populations nearly six months after the spill began.

Detailed analyses of the sand samples will be available as part of Audubon's effort to monitor habitat quality in coastal Louisiana over the long term. To read Audubon's six-month assessment of the oil spill, go to <http://gulfoilspill.audubon.org/oil-and-birds-too-close-comfort>.

## Audubon's Coastal Bird Survey

**T**he Audubon Coastal Bird Survey (ACBS) program, developed by Dr. Mark LaSalle of the Pascagoula River Audubon Center, is a volunteer-driven Citizen Science effort that engages birders in the monitoring of coastal habitats and wildlife, in response to the gulf oil spill. As with all Citizen Science programs, data collected by volunteers will generate a wealth of data on population trends that can help establish baselines, track populations and support conservation goals for Audubon and its partners. Data on common birds is important to establishing population trends that can direct conservation actions at selected sites or for broader regions of the country.

The impetus for the development of this program is based on the efforts of two Louisiana State University ornithology students who sought an opportunity to engage amateur birders to assist in the documentation of oil impacts to coastal bird populations associated with the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill event of spring 2010.



*CBS Volunteers scan the beach for shorebirds*



*VRC Director, Jillian Rubio works with volunteers*

## Volunteer Response Center Opens In Moss Point

**T**he operational headquarters for Audubon's Gulf Oil Response and Volunteer Response Center (VRC), located in Moss Point, is connecting with people from across the nation who have offered to be a part of Audubon's restoration efforts.

The VRC serves as the hub for all scheduling and deployment of volunteers assisting in Audubon's response to the oil spill disaster. The main focus of the volunteer work at the facility is personally calling the over 30,000 people who signed up on Audubon's website and offered to help. "I think one of the most powerful things that Audubon has done is communicating with all these people," said volunteer Sara Kissick. "I reached out to about five different environmental organizations right after the spill, and Audubon is the only one who responded to me. Adding that human element, something as simple as a phone call, is very meaningful."

## Coldwater Prescribed Burn Association

**S**trawberry Plains Audubon Center hosted the first three meetings of the Coldwater Prescribed Burn Association, the first group of this type in the southeastern U.S. The purpose of the association is to raise awareness of the benefits of fire and increase the use of prescribed fire as a management tool. Members will receive the training and experience needed to safely conduct burns on their property while reducing individual liability. Prescribed fire is a necessary tool for the restoration and management of early successional habitat to benefit an entire suite of declining grassland bird species.



*Audubon Ecologist Chad Pope assisting landowner manage habitat with fire.*

## Institute Works With Landowners, Foresters To Promote Wildlife Habitat

**A**udubon is beginning a new project to enhance populations of birds and other non-game wildlife on private lands through the use of model forestry practices.

Project partners include Anderson Tully Co., a forest-products operation based in Memphis and one of the largest private landowners in the lower Mississippi River region. The project is supported by a grant from the Walton Family Foundation.

Anderson Tully will develop and implement habitat and timber inventories and a model timber management plan that incorporates science-based methods for promoting habitat for various songbirds, other non-game species and game species. Initially, the project will focus on 10,000 acres that comprise the Catfish Point Hunting Club in Bolivar County, MS and Desha County, AR.

These products, along with a novel piece of forest-inventory software, will be made available to other private landowners and foresters during workshops in the hopes of promoting broader applications of these practices.

Since 80 percent of the forests along the lower Mississippi River are privately owned, work with private landowners is essential for establishing forestry practices on the scale necessary to support viable populations of migratory birds and other non-game wildlife.

### Community Grant Received



**S**inging River Electric Power Association of Lucedale recently awarded a Community Grant of \$2,500 to the Pascagoula River Audubon Center. The funds purchased a digital video

recorder as part of a video surveillance system of bird nesting sites throughout the grounds.

The current set up includes cameras at a dripper, multiple chimney swift towers, a martin gourd, feeders, bayou spots and bird nests. By early 2011, we should have cameras available for real time viewing via the internet and video on our website.

### New Bat Houses Residents!

**T**wo triple-chamber bat houses were mounted in 2008 on a pole near the old sharecropper house on the grounds of Strawberry Plains Audubon Center. Bats have been seen flying at dusk around the property for years but no one knew where they lived. During the 2010 Hummingbird Migration Celebration, Rob Mies, Director of the Organization for Bat Conservation, checked the houses. To his surprise, he saw many bats. At dusk, staff and volunteers watched over 50 bats fly out of one of the houses. We now plan to erect several more houses. Recent observations showed that the bats prefer the chambers with mud dauber nests, maybe for added insulation during cool nights. For more visit: [www.batconservation.org](http://www.batconservation.org)



## Field Institute Begins Junior Naturalist Camp & Expands Adult Seminars

**T**he Mississippi River Field Institute is offering youth camps on the ecology of the Mississippi River, with sessions planned for next May, July and August.

During the first Audubon Mississippi River Junior Naturalist Camp last August, participants were exposed to a wide range of natural history topics at Tara Wildlife near Vicksburg. Participants ranged from ages 9 to 16 years; some were accompanied by their parents. The first camp was supported by a donation from DRC Chirality Inc., a Jackson-based nonprofit that promotes science education for youth.

Tara's 17,000 acres of forests bordering the Mississippi River allowed for field experiences and studies of native habitats, wildlife, water quality and river geology during last August's three-day session. Campers were also treated to two canoe trips exploring four different wetland habitats, thanks to the expert guides of the Clarksdale-based Quapaw Canoe Co.

Additional overnight camps are being planned for the weeks of May 23, July 25, and Aug. 1. Three- and five-day camps are possible. The Institute is now offering several naturalist training opportunities. In addition to the youth camps, there is an ongoing training course for adults in Vicksburg, which includes weekly seminars and field trips. Audubon is also offering semester-long courses in conjunction with Delta State University in Cleveland. Registration for the next course is Jan. 7; the course begins Jan. 13 and will be held every Thursday beginning at 5 p.m.



*Bruce Reid*

*John Ruskey of Quapaw Canoe Co and Reid Bishop lead students during Jr. naturalist camp*

Those completing the adult course in Vicksburg will receive a certification from Audubon and are expected to volunteer for conservation projects. Students taking the Delta State

course are offered college credit, and teachers receive continuing education credit. For more information contact Reid Bishop at 601-661-6189 or [rbishop@audubon.org](mailto:rbishop@audubon.org).

## Pascagoula River All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory



*Mozart Mark Dedeaux*

**P**ascagoula River Audubon Center is poised to launch the Pascagoula River All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory in 2011. Modeled after the Great Smoky Mountains National

Park Inventory, the long-term goal is to inventory and document all forms of organisms in the river basin using teams of scientists and dedicated volunteers. Indeed, this program is much about engaging citizens as it is about the rich diversity of life of the Pascagoula River. Widely recognized as one of the last, large free-flowing river systems in the lower 48 states, the Pascagoula is a perfect place to discover and celebrate nature as it should be – free.

This is Citizen Science at its best, as much of the fieldwork and collection of organisms will be supported by volunteers. Periodic sampling events held across the basin and throughout the year will bring together technical experts, volunteers and the general public for intense and focused surveys of key locations across the basin. These events combine sampling and collecting with education about the kinds of organisms found and documented. This long-term program will be a key to linking citizens with this unique river system while also building a valuable database on the biodiversity of the region. This program will also support the greater global effort called "Encyclopedia of Life," the brainchild of the world-renowned naturalist Edward O. Wilson of Harvard University.

Key collaborative partners include the MS Museum of Natural History, Pascagoula River Basin Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, MS Wildlife Federation, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality and MS Department of Marine Resources. Key supporting partners include Mississippi State University, University of Southern Mississippi, University of Mississippi and Gulf Coast Community College.

## Hummingbird Migration Celebration Great Success at Strawberry Plains

**T**he National Audubon Society's largest nature festival, held annually on the weekend after Labor Day in Holly Springs, celebrated nature and sustainable living with around 8,000 guests and 140 volunteers.

"In a society that's become more sedentary and indoors-oriented, it was a breath of fresh air for people of all ages to get outdoors and experience the wonders of nature," said Bubba Hubbard, Director of Strawberry Plains. What an amazing venue for such an event with habitat restoration demonstrations that span 2,600 acres. While watching hummingbirds dart between wildflowers, many guests admired the beautiful native plant gardens and scenery during guided nature walks and wagon rides.

This event is well on its way to becoming a model for sustainable outdoor festivals. "These people just got a heavy dose of low impact living," said Suzanne Langley, Director of Seine Marketing Communications, Inc. Suzanne coordinated presentations and demonstrations throughout the event on sustainable living as it relates to shopping, eating, cleaning and recycling for the health of our environment. 4-H groups from Germantown, TN and Boy Scout Troup #457 led the charge to recycle all the event refuse.

Amazingly, after 11 consecutive years of the festival, 72% of the visitors this year were attending for the first time and they came from at least nine states, plus England and Australia. Our survey showed that guests were from Mississippi (41%), Memphis, TN metro area (37%, includes parts of Mississippi), Tennessee (16%, other than Memphis) and 6% from other states and countries. "It was fantastic and we enjoyed every piece of it," said Lin Harper, Audubon MS State Board Member from Hattiesburg. "We ate lunch in the rain, got completely soaked and totally enjoyed ourselves!"



*Mavis Negromi*

With only a staff of seven, the event would not have been possible without the hard work of volunteers. They came from all walks of life, from students to college professors and business persons. Among the many speakers and exhibitors were Douglas Tallamy, author of "Bringing Nature Home, How You Can to Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants" and Greg Butcher, the National Audubon Society's Director of Conservation.

Bob Sargent's hummingbird banding crew had a great weekend, banding 259 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. "There were so many hummers we had to cease the capture process a dozen times during the festival. Never have I seen so many Ruby-throated hummingbirds at this beautiful location," said Bob Sargent.



*Curt Hart*

### New National Audubon President Visits Mississippi



*Yarnold and PRAC board member Millie Page*

David Yarnold spent the first six weeks of his new career as President and CEO of The National Audubon Society on the road visiting the places and people of Audubon. His U.S. tour included a day visiting the Pascagoula River Audubon Center (PRAC) and the recently the new Audubon Volunteer Response Center (VRC). He spent time at the beach talking with new Audubon Coastal Bird Survey volunteers, boating the Pascagoula River, and enjoying a shrimp boil at PRAC. As Chris Canfield, Audubon's new Vice President for Gulf of Mexico Conservation and Restoration and Kevin Pierson, Audubon's Director of the Lower Mississippi River Flyway, both observed, David was introduced to one of the most diverse group of supporters and volunteers anywhere in Audubon. We wish to thank

David for truly listening to these important people and reporting back about the value of what he learned from them and a commitment to follow their advise: a fine start to an exciting new era for Audubon. Welcome aboard and bon chance David!!!

(continued from page 1 ) discuss here, so for now, just a few points of interest:

- Chickasaws, Mississippi's first farmers, used fire extensively.
- The South's human population was 80% native in 1685; by 1790 it was 3%.
- Plows and slave labor enlarged cultivated landscapes and increased siltation by the early 18th century when the term "water pollution" appeared in English North America.
- Plantations, seldom pretentious or manicured and with large fields and vegetable gardens, were changed by herbicides, petroleum-based pesticides, anhydrous ammonia and huge tractors.
- The cumulative environmental effect of converting garden plots to cotton monoculture seems quiet impossible to estimate; agriculture is the greatest disturbance to nature.
- Human impacts to nature are motivated largely by security and convenience.
- Sheep, cattle and hogs played a big part in transforming southern landscapes.
- Forest arson was common in the 20th century for excitement, in retaliation for posting land, and to create spots for farming, grazing and hunting.
- Piney landscapes were transformed by the early 1960s as the South became the nation's premiere paper-maker. Paper companies used hunting leases to suppress fire.
- Deer populations increased as Mississippians created substantial towns, larger crop fields and used fire to create edge mosaics with more grasses and succulent deer browse.
- Chemicals allowed the endless American lawn to place nature in grave peril.
- Massive clear-cutting removed forest canopy, destabilized watersheds and increased spring flooding.
- The South is home to some of the dirtiest industries, naturally along rivers.
- Chemists isolated hydrocarbon chains for the synthetic industry and plastics.
- Within 15 years after WWII, human populations in the rural South dissolved as subsistence hunting and farming succumbed to machinery and chemicals.
- Industrial chicken and pork production degraded water courses, land and air.
- Due to power plants, the area from western KY to north AL has the worst air in the nation with 6 micrograms per cubic meter of particulate matter compared to 0-1 microgram on average in the western U.S.
- Loblolly pine plantations grotesquely simplified nature.
- Transplanted exotic species thrive, from nutria to roundup-resistant bentgrass.
- Shade-producing ornamentals flourish in suburbs where extensive agriculture prohibited native trees from growing for eons.

As we urbanize and technologies advance, it would be in our best interest to work with nature, not against it. Our urge to conquer nature has subsided, but we still crave convenience. I do regret that our impacts to southern landscapes reduced grassland bird populations much more than chiggers.



**W**e have come to the conclusion that any plant with the word "weed" included in its common name (Jewelweed, Ironweed, Butterflyweed, Milkweed) can be translated to mean that this is a great plant that you want in your yard! Pokeweed is no exception to our new weed-in-name-therefore-must-be-a- great-plant rule. The plant is beautiful. The brilliance of colors on Pokeweed are staggering: crayola red stems and deep indigo berries that hang from hot magenta fruiting stalks.

The fruit of this plant is ripe during fall bird migration. It is eaten by many species of birds, including robins, bluebirds, catbirds, towhees and cardinals to name just a few. Birds are also the main distributor and propagating agent of this plant...they eat the fruit, it digests and then is eliminated...ready for germination where it lands in the soil! It can become a bit invasive, but you just pull out unwanted seedlings in the spring. In the cultivated landscape Pokeweed makes for a wonderful specimen plant as well as a serious show stopper when planted en masse. For a few days in the month of August, some of our staff witnessed a magnificent plant mosaic. The pallet of plants included Ironweed, Pokeweed and Joe-pye Weed (hmmm, notice all have "weed" in their name). The bright purple flowers of Ironweed mingled with the fuzzy soft pink blooms of Joe-pye Weed which rubbed elbows with the crazy colors of the Pokeweed. The intimate intertwining and layering of these plants brilliantly played with the variety of each others colors, shapes and textures. Plus, there were insects galore pollinating the flowers, including huge swallowtail butterflies- it was an awesome mouth dropping scene!

Other wildlife also uses Pokeweed. It is the host plant to a variety of caterpillars. We have watched downy woodpeckers travel up and down the stems in fall searching for insects. In the spring, we witnessed both birds and wasps gathering the dried dead stalk material to add to their nesting medium.

Allow Pokeweed a place at your place! It might become one of your favorite plants, certainly your favorite "weed!"

## Lisa Wesson Joins Audubon

**L**isa Wesson, Office Manager for the Pascagoula River Audubon Center, started volunteering at the center in 2008, and she was hired in May of 2010. She has selflessly worked to run the Center, including office work, administrative tasks, event planning and general operations. To say the least, she has been a lifesaver for the existing staff. She put her volunteer time in based on pure love and dedication to the mission of the Center and now she is a part of the team.



She is originally from the Anniston, AL area and moved to the Mississippi Gulf Coast in 2004 with her husband Mark and children, Samantha and Evan. Their family also includes five cats: 19 year-old Bob, Sammie, Bitty, Gus and Jasmine. They call Ocean Springs, MS, home. Lisa has a great love for all types of animals which led her to volunteer at the Center. She loves her church (St Paul United Methodist Church), the beach, bayous, University of Alabama football, Atlanta Braves baseball and Huntingdon College basketball.



Our office in historic downtown Vicksburg is home to Mississippi's only Audubon Nature Store. Purchases of quality nature products there support our conservation and education programs in Vicksburg. Visit us at 1208 Washington Street, Mondays through Fridays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information call 601-661-6189.

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