

Okatibbee Creek Audubon Society

September-October 2003

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Strawberry Plains Happenings



Word Puzzle



It's a Bird! It's a Plane! It's...



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If you're reading this online or by e-mail and know of someone who'd like to get the newsletter electronically to save postage. sthead@mississippi.net

To bring refreshments to the October 13,
2003, meeting:
Alan Broussard

Sightings

By **Alan Broussard**: 09/27/03 Vermillion Flycatcher, 16 miles south of Kaplan, LA, just off LA Hwy 82.

By **Lauren Thead**, all the following:

8/29 Osprey, two immature Bald Eagles, Black-and-white Warbler.
Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge.

9/14 Twelve White Ibis, about 50 Blue-winged Teal. NNWR.

9/18 Barred Owl. Four miles north of Meridian, MS.

9/18 Two Osprey, Spotted Sandpiper, about 5 Yellow Warblers, 2 American Redstarts. Okatibbee Lake, Collinsville, MS.

9/26 Two Green-winged Teal, Greater Yellowlegs. NNWR.

9/27 Two Common Nighthawks, 2 Yellow-crowned Night-Herons. Magnolia Drive, Macon, MS.

9/28 Eight Wood Storks feeding in pond. Magnolia Drive, Macon, MS.

10/1 Tennessee Warbler. NNWR.

10/5 Gray Catbird, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, American Redstart, singing Indigo Bunting. Four miles north of Meridian, MS.

These by **Howard Malone:**

September 2003 Townsend's Solitaire. Tarryall Creek, Colorado.

Same period of time: 5 Mountain Chickadees called up almost within almost touching range, Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Tarryall Creek, CO.

From Strawberry Plains....

Don't forget these events coming up:

Exotic Weed Pull. Come help us rip out exotic or invasive plants, and get lunch and a free T-shirt!

We've scheduled three days for targeting pesky species such as Japanese stilt grass, Japanese honeysuckle, privet and kudzu. The dates are November 8, 2003, and January 18 and March 6, 2004. For more information contact Chad Pope at 662-252-1155, or c pope@audubon.org.

Winter Bird Count, Strawberry Plains Audubon Center. January 17, 2004.

Great Backyard Bird Count. February 13-16, 2004.

Remember, articles, bird sightings and items of interest are requested for the newsletter!

Do Birds Play?

By Howard Malone

We humans, with our superior intellect and consciousness, are able to design games of play for entertainment and exercise. From early childhood we fill our leisure time with games of all sort, from hide-and-seek to modern day paint ball combat; all versions of play.

Birds, on the other hand, are considered to be concerned with only the basics of survival: food, shelter and propagation of the species. Most of their activities are related to the above principals. But can their little brains be capable of more complex ideas? Consider my recent experience.

While visiting with Mark and family (he counted birds with us last year) recently, the ladies hit the malls while Mark and I did a little leaf peeping and bird watching. Our travels led us up Tarryall creek, past the location of the start of the infamous Hayman burn. As we drove slowly up the winding road, enjoying the colorful Aspen trees quaking in the breeze and watching for an occasional bird, Mark noted a hawk circling above a grassy ridge. Screeching to a halt in the middle of the road, we grabbed binos and identification books.

Then we noted that the hawk (it turned out to be a Red-shouldered Hawk) was not just making lazy circles that we see hawks doing in Mississippi, particularly with a mate. This lone hawk was **PLAYING!** It was using the orographic lift of the wind flowing up the slope as the vehicle for its antics. It would turn into the wind and slowly come to a hover, lowering its “landing gear” for several moments and then fold its wings and dive toward the ground, swooping back up at the last moment. Turning downwind, it would disappear behind the ridge and reappear to catch the upslope wind and rise, as if on an elevator, to repeat the maneuver. It did this maneuver several times. The hawk’s activities brought to mind the story of Jonathan Livingston Seagull, who gloried in his flying ability and was disappointed when the other gulls did not share his enthusiasm and joy of simply flying.

During the aerial show, several Magpies were attempting to mob the hawk, but it simply ignored them, quickly rising and diving as if to demonstrate to them his superior maneuverability. After several minutes “Hawk” discontinued his aerial show and disappeared over the ridge, apparently concluding it was time to look for supper.

Was the hawk “playing” as we use the word? I think that, with no hunger pains bothering him, and no lady hawk in the vicinity, he was just enjoying a warm sunny afternoon with a little recreational flying a la Jonathon Livingston Seagull.

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**Word
Search**

By
Karen
Thead

A	C	Z	K	D	B	C	E	P	O	G	H	I	P	W	Y
T	B	X	W	O	E	L	G	A	E	D	L	A	B	F	E
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J	K	C	O	O	P	E	R	S	H	A	W	K	Z	D	H

Cardinal Painted Bunting Wood Thrush Barn Owl
 Great Blue Heron Red-tailed Hawk Cooper’s Hawk Blue Jay
 Eastern Bluebird Common Loon
 Bald Eagle Canada Goose



Indigo Bunting
By Lauren Thead

It's a Bird! It's a Plane! It's...

By Lauren Thead

We were heading back to Macon from Collinsville in late afternoon after stopping there to pick up various odds and ends, when I had an encounter with a couple of very unusual birds.

It was late April, and the month before, I had been fortunate to spot several owls on some of our drives down to Collinsville. The trick had been simply to look for odd-shaped lumps stuck up in the bare branches of trees along the roadside. Now that it was April, it seemed that most of the owls had stopped coming to their nighttime lookouts. Nesting was over, so there was no need to spend so much time hunting prey for the young owls. These impressive night birds had headed back to the forest for a few months.

But wait a minute! There they were: two owls perched in a dead tree about 500 feet from the road. I asked my mom turn around and go back so I could get a better look at them, which she willingly did. When we were parked on the side of the road, I picked up my binoculars and got out of the car, fairly certain that even though I couldn't make out any "ears" from this distance, the birds were most likely Great Horned Owls. I brought the binoculars to my eyes and focused on the chunky birds, perched side by side on a limb. I expected to see the majestic silhouettes of two owls. Instead, the binoculars revealed a couple of lumpy, hunched-over figures with tiny, wrinkled heads. Well, if these were owls, then they must have crept a little too close to a

campfire a long time ago. The two Black Vultures appeared to be settling in for the night; probably they had dined on the road earlier that day.

I got back into the car, and everyone asked me what species the birds were. When I answered, we all laughed over it. What about the birds? Well, as we left, I think I saw them stretch and fluff their feathers.

If you ever happen to be driving down Highway 45, late in the day, definitely keep your eyes open for birds. Maybe you'll be one of those fortunate birders who can draw a group of naturalists together to tell them about your encounter with the rare Great Horned Vultures...

What is it?



We left the power pole in
for scale.

This bird was almost
directly over the pole
when the photo was snapped.

E-mail me at lauth87@hotmail.com for the answer or wait till next meeting to find out.

Note from Rich Richardson: Meetings are held at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Meridian. Trinity is located at 4223 Poplar Springs Drive. Please use the **SOUTH** driveway on the church property (the one nearer downtown Meridian) and proceed around through the parking lot to the back, where you may enter the building through the double doors.

October 13, 2003, 7:00 p.m. See you there!

Go to this website for a special treat—thanks to Mary Hollis.
<http://community-2.webtv.net/hotmail.com/verle33/HummingBirdNest/>



Painting by Karen Thead

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