

# Okatibbee Creek Audubon Society

## July-August 2004

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Read OCAS' newsletter online at <http://mywebpages.comcast.net/ocas>

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](mailto:sthead@mississippi.net)

Note from Rich Richardson: Meetings are held at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Meridian every second Monday of the month at 7:00. 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. Next meeting: September 13, 7:00 p.m.

### **Sightings**

**Submitted by our members and others**

By **Alan Broussard**: Puffin, Gannets 0 and 3 species of Shearwater, (also another tiny seabird--I think it was Rednecked Phalarope). Digby, Nova Scotia, and the Canadian Maritime Provinces. Highlight of our trip was the 400-year celebration of French in N America, including the Halifax Tall Ship Festival with 40 tall ships in the harbor!

By **Ruth Ann and Lomax Rosamond**: 8/8 Pileated Woodpecker in the back yard. The local Bluejays were not pleased with it being in their pine tree. Collinsville, MS.

## Events & Interesting Stuff



**Audubon Mississippi** – Vicksburg, MS will be the site of the Gathering of Chapters and Woodstorks on August 27th-28, 2004. The 2004 Chapter Weekend will be held in Vicksburg to coincide with the spectacular concentrations of Wood Storks, Roseate Spoonbills and other colonial waterbirds along the Mississippi River. The event will allow chapter members and others to see Audubon Mississippi's new storefront office in Vicksburg's historic downtown re-development district and learn about Audubon's work on the Mississippi River in Mississippi and along the entire river, including the Great River Birding Trail project. Participants will also learn about the important habitats for birds and wildlife. Please contact our Vicksburg office at (601) 661-6189 or by email at <mailto:cguizerix@audubon.org> for suggestions or information.

Many thanks to  
Coralee  
Richardson and  
Maria  
Cunningham for  
the great  
refreshments at  
the June meeting!



**Annual Hummingbird Migration Celebration, Strawberry Plains Audubon Center** September 10-12, 2004: Many educational activities are planned for this year's event, which features the hummingbird experts from the Hummer/Bird Study Group banding and releasing Ruby-throated Hummingbirds during their southward migration. Some of the other activities and demonstrations scheduled for the celebration involve bats, alligators and other critters. A trade show featuring great nature related products will also be present.

Last year's celebration was attended by 3,000 people, making it the most popular single planned event for Holly Springs, MS. We're hoping to attract even more people this year, but to do that we will need volunteers to help with parking, equipment set-up, food service and other activities. We are also accepting sponsorships from corporations, groups or individuals. Please contact the staff at Strawberry Plains Audubon Center for more information at (662) 252-1155 or by email at <mailto:mriley@audubon.org>



A workday is planned for October (no firm date scheduled yet) at the **Duck Pond restoration site** at Strawberry Plains—Holly Springs.



If you haven't yet seen this series of unique hummingbird photos, the Rev. Patrick Sanders would like for you to do so! Go to <http://community-2.webtv.net/hotmail.com/verle33/HummingBirdNest/> at your first opportunity and watch the development of another tiny creature.

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

***OCAS OFFICERS***

R.L. Richardson....President

Howard Malone....Treasurer

Brant Cunningham...Program Chairperson

Van McWhorter...Conservation Chairperson

Joe McGee....Field Trip Chairperson

Ruth Ann Rosamond...Refreshments Coordinator

Lauren & Sheila Thead....Newsletter

## **Roseate Spoonbill Nest Discovered**

By Mary Stevens

[As of July 25, the 3 young birds are doing fine and branching and almost as big as the adults. –Mary]

***First Breeding Record of Roseate Spoonbill in Mississippi*** On Monday, July 5, 2004, Don McKee and I kayaked into a large multi-species heronry in Yazoo County and located a Roseate Spoonbill nest with three chicks. This is the first known nesting record of Roseate Spoonbills in Mississippi. One adult in breeding plumage was present at the nest. The chicks appeared to be 3-5 days old. The nest was a large V-shaped nest located in a buttonbush approximately five feet above the water. The buttonbush was growing next to a tupelo tree which was being used as a perch tree. Also observed were 6 subadult spoonbills perched in a nearby tupelo tree. For almost 4 years we have been watching this site for possible breeding spoonbills because two subadult spoonbills were observed at this site in June, 2000 by David Linden, biologist at Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge.

June is early for spoonbills to show up in Mississippi. On June 30, 2004, while counting this rookery for the Colonial Waterbird Count, Mary Stevens, Jenny Thompson, Bryan Fedrick, and Meredith Wilson observed one subadult spoonbill perched in the tupelo tree next to the nest site but we observed no evidence of nesting at that time. On July 5, 2004, Don McKee took photos of the adult and chicks at the nest.



This swamp rookery where the spoonbills are nesting is one of Audubon Mississippi's Important Bird Areas. It was selected because the habitat supports this large heronry. It is a 960 acre bald cypress-tupelo-buttonbush swamp located in Yazoo County. It is privately owned, used for duck hunting in winter and located adjacent to commercial catfish ponds. It also borders Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and supports significant breeding populations of White Ibises, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Herons, Cattle Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Great Blue Herons, Tricolored Herons, and Anhinga—with a total of 2,000 - 3,000 nesting pairs on an annual basis. This site holds the largest concentration of nesting White Ibis in the state.

P. S. Thanks to Don McKee, Jenny Thompson and David Linden. Thanks to the rainy weather which keep the access roads to the swamp pretty soggy and the lightning which ran us out of the swamp on our first attempt to count, Jenny and I were counting this rookery after the count period, which luckily helped us find the Roseate on June 30. I had no real reason to go back into this swamp after our count, but Jenny had posted that we had seen the Roseate and a Black-bellied Whistling Duck flyover on June 30. Don

McKee read the e-mail and talked me into taking him into the swamp to add these two birds to his Big Year Count. If he got the Roseate, it would be bird Number 299 for the year, and if he nailed the Black-bellied he would have 300 birds well before Aug 1. That's why Don and I kayaked back into swamp on July 5! And thanks to David Linden for finding the first spoonbills in the swamp while counting the CWC in 2000. He wondered about breeding at that time and planted the seed for future observations. You never know, we may find storks breeding in these swamps next year. Another good reason to join the folks who help with the Colonial Waterbird Count. Call me if you want an adventure. You never know what you will find in the swamps. Thanks, all. –Mary



**Important notice: Need someone to provide refreshments for the Sept. meeting. Please let me know at [sthead@mississippi.net](mailto:sthead@mississippi.net)**



## **Bat Workshop**

By Lauren Thead

I spent the third Tuesday and Wednesday of July around a bunch of bats. The occasion was the First Annual Mississippi Bat Working Group Mist Net Trip at Noxubee Refuge. One of the refuge personnel had told my mom about this event, and naturally I was interested in attending. I think that you'd be hard-pressed to find a more fascinating and intriguingly mysterious group of animals to study than bats. I became interested in bats last year, after listening to a presentation on them at the Mississippi Hummingbird Festival, and purchasing a field guide. Then I began to really notice bats and give them their due attention. And mist-netting for bats sounded interesting; I had gleaned a little information about it from books and the Internet, but seeing it performed by bat experts would be a great experience. Even the fact that I'd be staying out in the woods past midnight didn't stifle my enthusiasm.

My mom dropped me off at the refuge's relatively new conservation center at around 1:45 p.m., leaving me with plenty of time to relax and help out around the place. At about 4:00, the volunteers for the bat working group began to arrive, and the program itself started thirty minutes later, with several of the "bat workers" presenting information on bats through use of PowerPoint. Species identification was covered first, followed by

“Resolving Human/Bat Conflicts”, “Bats and Rabies”, and “The Why’s and How’s of Bat Research”. Afterwards, we were divided into groups as mist net crews, ready to perform what we had come here for: surveying Noxubee Refuge’s bat species.

We set out at about 6:30, and the groups quickly split up to mist-net separate areas of the refuge. The crew I had been assigned to decided to put up the nets in a fairly remote section: swampy forest cut through by a levee overgrown with weeds. I helped set up the mist nets, which we arranged with three on one side of the levee, and three on the other, over pools of water. After feasting on insects, the bats would come down to the largest water source they could find for a drink. Walking the bank of a pond at 7:00 at night, in the woods, is not the most pleasant experience. The members of the group who would be checking these nets (and who were required to have their pre-rabies shots) had on hip-waders, since the water was about three feet deep.

As it got gradually darker, we were treated to the calls of the frogs and Barred Owls. Once we finally saw a few bats flying overhead, we turned on a bat detector, a machine that lets you listen to the bats as they echolocate their surroundings. When the bats are searching for their prey, the detector registers a fast, continuous clicking. If you hear a swooping and then a crunching sound, you know that the bat has just nabbed and eaten its victim! When it was too dark to actually see the bats flying, the bat detector filled us in on their behavior.

With all this feeding going on, surely some bats were getting thirsty. The mist-netters checked the nets with flashlights, and there was our first captive, struggling in the fine mesh that entangled it. After it was retrieved, and pronounced to be an Eastern Pipistrelle, everyone moved forward in fascination.

The Pipistrelle is the smallest bat in the eastern U.S., and this specimen was no exception to the species. Something similar to a bird banding station had been set up on the tailgate of a pickup truck, and soon data on this little bat was being recorded. The tiny mammal was a female. Its age, juvenile. The handler stretched the bat’s wing out and shone a flashlight under it, where we could see the bones. The joint of the finger (bats’ wings are composed of skin stretched over extremely long fingers) was not fused as it would be on an adult, and there was a noticeable cartilage-filled gap between the bones.

Next some measurements were taken, and then the bat was weighed. Its handlers put the bat into a nylon stocking, and hung the stocking from a scale. The bat weighed in at only 4.5 grams! This tiny creature was nevertheless feisty, and gnawed on the captor's protective glove; the minuscule teeth almost ridiculous, pitted against the tough leather. If you can get past this toothy aspect, bats are really strangely attractive animals. This Eastern Pipistrelle's fur was thick and soft. Each hair was banded with three separate shades, which made the fur silvery-blond in color. The ears and snout were dark brown. The bat's tail membrane, the webbing that acts as an extension of the wing, was covered in fur, helping this species, which hangs by branches during the day, keep warm. All important information recorded, and everyone finished admiring the bat, it was released, free to continue its existence as an essential component of the ecosystem.

Soon afterwards, another bat was caught. This one was a female Eastern Red Bat, and it was much larger than the Eastern Pipistrelle and somewhat feistier. As its name suggests, the Red Bat has a rufous tone to its fur. It is also one of the few bats that displays sexual dimorphism in coloration. Males are a bright brick-orange; females are more of a reddish-tan. Red Bats are very abundant but never use bat-houses; instead, they hang upside-down from tree branches, looking like dead leaves. This Red Bat was very furry; its tail and even part of the wing membrane was covered with hair. Red Bats need this extra insulation during cold weather, when they might be hibernating.

The bat weighed about nine grams, and was a juvenile, meaning that it had been born this year. After the measurements were taken, and it was released, a second Red Bat was captured and brought in. It, too, was a juvenile female. When the mist-netters stretched out its wing to check the finger joint, we were surprised to see scars on the membrane where it had torn and healed over. It's interesting to wonder what caused the wounds, but the bat was certainly not handicapped by this, and the handlers decided to place a cyalume light on its back so that we could watch it in flight. Tiny radio transmitters are available for bats, but since they are just last a few hours and are so expensive, they are only used for behavior research projects. The green cyalume light, attached to the bat's back with glue, was itself expected to drop off after a few minutes. The bat was let go, and it circled overhead a few times before setting in a tree to roost. The green light glowed from the branches. This bat had no intention of going anywhere! Ten minutes later, the light slipped off the bat and fell straight into the water.

Another juvenile female Red Bat was netted: a larger specimen than the others had been. When a cyalume light was glued to this bat, it sprang into the air and promptly lost the tag. The next animal to be caught was a different species: an Evening Bat, which differs from the Pipistrelle and Red Bat in that it always roosts in cavities in trees and buildings. And, according to the experts, it is a very smelly bat. This individual, an adult male, did have a fairly strong musty scent. It appeared small, but weighed about nine grams, as much as the Red Bat. The fur was dark brown and not as thick as it was on the other two species, and did not cover the tail membrane. As the handlers began to examine the bat, everyone noticed that it was missing three toes on one of its feet! Two toes were left for the bat to cling from.

After catching this animal, we waited for another hour, but no more were netted. It was about 11:30, so we decided to head back up to the Conservation Center to turn in our data. There we heard about some of the bats that the other groups had found. Some volunteers spent the night at the refuge, but my mom came and brought me home for the night.

The next day I went back to the refuge and left with the group to visit a roost of Rafinesque's Big-eared Bats in Phebe. Yes, these bats are as bizarre-looking as they sound. They are medium-sized, brownish creatures that have ears over an inch long. They are uncommon in Mississippi, where they live in bottomland hardwood forests with lots of old trees. These, the largest known maternal colony of Rafinesque's Bats in the state, had chosen a dilapidated old building for giving birth. The habitat around the area was not really appropriate, but there was a bottomland forest close by. With us at the bat roost was a WCBI news crew, who would be reporting on the unusual colony.

We crept carefully into the building, hearing squeaks and fluttering. Clustered in a corner was the bat colony, numbering about sixty-two individuals, all adult females and juveniles. One bat was even brought out into the open for the WCBI crew to videotape. It kept its long ears folded down most of the time, but when it was surprised, it raised them to full height. WCBI interviewed a few members of the Bat Working Group on issues such as bat conservation, which was a good topic. Then the bat was taken back to the building to roost.

We left to look at one more roost site: an Evening Bat colony in the top of a fire tower. An individual was brought down to be observed, and then we had several hours of resting, eating, and socializing at the Conservation Center. Soon it was once again time for mist-netting, but at different sites from last night. The group I was in drove around for a while looking for a good place to set up, and we finally found a small pond in the middle of a pine forest. We quickly found, however, that the pool was too deep, so we went on. Eventually we met up with another crew who were netting above a creek in a hardwood forest. We set up there, on the other side of the bridge, so that there were four nets on one side and two on the other. Several minutes later we noticed the first bats flying overhead, probably Red Bats. There were a couple of dead snags near the creek, and as we watched, a few bats, probably Evening, emerged from them and began feeding. But only after it got dark did we begin to capture the animals in the mist nets.

Our first two bats were juvenile female Red Bats. Almost immediately afterwards, we caught an adult female Evening Bat. This one had obviously borne young a few months before, as it showed evidence of lactation. Next an adult male Evening Bat was netted, and then another juvenile female Red Bat. This Red Bat was noticeably larger than any of the other individuals we'd caught, and weighed fifteen grams. A while later a large bat flew into the nets: a Big Brown Bat. This was a pleasant surprise for everyone, because, although this species is very common around human-made buildings, it is less often seen in dense forests. The bat was an adult male weighing seventeen grams, about average size for its type, and resembled a large Evening Bat. The handlers glued a cyalume light to its back before releasing it, and it flew around several times before swooping upward and dropping the light right in the middle of our station!

With a total of six bats netted, we were ready to leave. On the way, we stopped to observe what others were doing. One crew had caught a small bat whose identity they were unsure of. It could be either a Little Brown Bat or a Southeastern Bat, both in the genus *Myotis*. The bat had medium-colored brown fur and was missing part of one ear. The crew decided to bring it back to the Conservation Center to get the opinions of the other experts.

We got back a few minutes late; my mom had arrived and was sitting outside the building with all the other Bat Working Group members. The little bat was produced from the bag it had been in, and we all looked at it,

admired its ear injury, and discussed the identification. Finally, it was decided that the animal was most likely a Southeastern Bat, and the crew who had captured it took it back to its habitat to be released. All in all, eight species of bats had been mist-netted on the refuge during the two days, and there are plans to continue this project next year, maybe in DeSoto National Forest. Some of us spent a little time around the Conservation Building, looking at all the insects attracted to the light (bat food). Then, as quickly as a bat darts through the air, we left the refuge, with great memories and priceless information about these beneficial and mysterious creatures who haunt our summer nights.

**From Audubon Newswire, Volume 2, Number 12,  
Thursday, June 24, 2004**

***Lights, Camera...Nature! Audubon Announces The Return Of  
The 'Tern Cam'***

*Hog Island, Maine, Thursday, June 24, 2004* - The Project Puffin seabird camera is now beaming live-streaming video of Eastern Egg Rock's nesting Common and Roseate Tern colonies, just off the Maine Coast. The tiny island is home to the world's first restored puffin and tern colony and it is the largest colony of endangered Roseate Terns in the state. This is the fifth year that the camera has beamed real time video to the web; to watch, visit [www.projectpuffin.org](http://www.projectpuffin.org) and click through.

The robotic camera was funded by the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, and is the invention of Daniel Zatz of SeeMore Wildlife systems. It transmits microwave signals from the south end of Eastern Egg Rock to the Audubon Visitor Center in Bremen, Maine, eight miles across Muscongus Bay. Currently, terns can be seen incubating and hatching eggs. In mid-July, the camera location will shift to enable viewers to see Atlantic Puffins. The camera will operate each morning from 9-11 a.m. to insure a variety of views of all species within reach of the powerful lens. Later in the summer, interns on the island will occasionally provide on-line, narrated talks directly from Egg Rock bird blinds.

For more information, visit <[http://www.audubon.org/news/press\\_releases/Tern\\_Cam.html](http://www.audubon.org/news/press_releases/Tern_Cam.html)> and go directly to <[http://www.projectpuffin.org/eeer\\_cameras.html](http://www.projectpuffin.org/eeer_cameras.html)> to watch live.

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***"If it Flies, it Dies" Bill Would Transfer Management of  
Migratory Birds from USFWS to APHIS***

Washington, D.C., Thursday, June 24, 2004 - Gregory S. Butcher, Ph.D., Audubon's director of bird conservation, gave testimony today to the U.S. House of Representatives against House Resolution 3320, the American Aquaculture and Fishery Resources Protection Act. The bill would transfer management of migratory bird populations from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the Department of Agriculture (APHIS).

"Audubon is opposed to H.R. 3320. This legislation proposes to strip away 85 years of migratory bird conservation progress under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act by giving control over the take of migratory birds to an agency -APHIS- that has no mandate to conserve populations of migratory birds. In addition, the legislation proposes to exempt the Department of Agriculture from the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for any desired migratory bird management activities. The effect of this bill on migratory birds is clear: If it flies, it dies.

"If passed, (this bill) would bring on killing of wild birds at a level we haven't seen for more than 100 years. The ironic part is that scientific research to date suggests that massive killing of fish-eating birds would almost certainly be ineffective in protecting or increasing populations of economically important fish. There is no quick fix for most wildlife damage problems. We should all work together to find workable solutions, not sacrifice long-held American values in a vain effort for a quick fix."

For Dr. Butcher's full testimony, please visit  
<[http://www.audubon.org/news/press\\_releases/If\\_it\\_flies\\_it\\_dies.html](http://www.audubon.org/news/press_releases/If_it_flies_it_dies.html) - TopOfPage>

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***Audubon, USFWS, and Louisiana Celebrate 100th Anniversary  
of Breton National Wildlife Refuge***

*New Orleans, LA, Thursday, June 24, 2004* - A century ago, President Theodore Roosevelt established Breton National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) at the urging of the National Audubon Society. A century later, the refuge is celebrating its 100th birthday as it hosts a re-creation of Roosevelt's historic 1915 Audubon-hosted expedition to the refuge - the only refuge the President is known to have visited.

Tomorrow, Roosevelt's great-grandson Theodore Roosevelt IV, Audubon's Chief Operating Officer Bob Perciasepe, and others will visit Breton to remember and celebrate Roosevelt's historic 1915 trip. They will mark the importance of Roosevelt's conservation legacy and Breton's vital role in protecting Louisiana's besieged coastal wetlands. They will walk the beaches and work with biologists to survey Eastern Brown Pelican nests, just as Roosevelt and company did in 1915.

"I was very glad to have seen this bird refuge," wrote Roosevelt. "With care and protection the birds will increase and grow tamer and tamer, until it will be possible for any one to make trips among these reserves and refuges, and to see as much as we saw, at even closer quarters. No sight more beautiful and more interesting could be imagined." For more, visit <[http://www.audubon.org/news/press\\_releases/index.html](http://www.audubon.org/news/press_releases/index.html)>

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***Audubon Connecticut And Connecticut DEP Announce Six  
State-Owned Sites  
Are Named 'Important Bird Areas***

*Milford, CT, Wednesday, June 23, 2004* - Audubon Connecticut today announced six new Important Bird Areas (IBAs) located on the state coastline. All sites are state-owned and under the management of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

"I'm thrilled that DEP's stewardship of these properties has contributed to their designation as IBA's." said David Leff, Deputy Commissioner of the DEP. "Connecticut residents are really fortunate to be able to enjoy such important natural resources right in their back yards".

The sites include some of the best-known birding destinations in the state: Milford Point in Milford, and Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison. In addition, these sites contain some of the most important bird habitats in the state, serving as critical rest stops for thousands of migratory shorebirds on their long annual journeys. Some contain nesting sites for birds of global conservation concern, such as Piping Plover and Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow, both listed as globally vulnerable by BirdLife International. For information on each site, and the Connecticut IBA program, visit

<[http://www.audubon.org/news/press\\_releases/CT\\_IBA\\_04.html](http://www.audubon.org/news/press_releases/CT_IBA_04.html) - TopOfPage>

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***Southwest Utah Birding Trails Map is Now Available Through Wasatch Audubon Chapter***

*Salt Lake City, UT, Wednesday, June 23, 2004* - Audubon and numerous project sponsors are pleased to announce the Southwest Utah Birding Trails Map is now available to the public. The full-color map provides information on almost 50 sites with great birding in Southwest Utah. The map includes driving directions to each site, types of habitat, peak seasons to visit, and bird species that may be seen. The map is available upon request through any of the sponsors for \$2 plus shipping costs, or at [www.wasatchaudubon.org](http://www.wasatchaudubon.org) - where it can be viewed in its entirety.

The Southwest Utah Birding Trails map is the second of a three-part series highlighting the best birding locations in Utah. The first map in the series, the Great Salt Lake Birding Trails Map, was published in 2001. Keith Evans, a member of Wasatch Audubon Society in Ogden, was the main author of the Southwest map as well as the Great Salt Lake Birding Trails Map. Evans worked with numerous expert birders in Southwest Utah to develop site information for the map.

"Birding trail maps are an excellent way to help people enjoy the outdoors," explains Wayne Martinson, Utah Important Bird Areas Coordinator for National Audubon Society. "Also, by becoming more appreciative of wild birds, individuals are more likely to work towards saving these wonderful resources for the future."

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***New Promotional Brochure is Available for Chapters and State Offices***

*New York, NY, Tuesday, June 22, 2004* - Audubon Adventures, which celebrates its 20th Anniversary this autumn, is offering a new brochure that it would like to distribute far and wide. Designed to be a tool to help Chapters and centers promote Audubon Adventures to local schools, the new brochure is available now. To order a free supply of this new brochure, send a request with your mailing address to [education@audubon.org](mailto:education@audubon.org). or call 800/813-5037.

To mark the 20th anniversary, Audubon Adventures is now available in pre-packaged kits in 4 different classroom editions. And, for the 20th Anniversary edition of Adventures, Education is offering customers the ability to order the Audubon Adventures kit of their choice. The new "Pick and Pack Your Own Resource Kit" edition makes more than 30 different nature topics available to Adventures classrooms.

To order call 800-340-6546 or view the product line at [www.audubon.org/educate/aa](http://www.audubon.org/educate/aa) <<http://www.audubon.org/educate/aa>>.

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Audubon Newswire is sent to Audubon Chapter leaders, board members, and others interested in Audubon activities nationwide. For questions or to suggest topics for Newswire, please contact the Chapter Services Office through e-mail at <<mailto:ltennefoss@audubon.org>>, or by phone at (800) 542-2748.

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