

# Okatibbee Creek Audubon Society

## October 2005

**Inside This Newsletter...**  
**Events & Sightings**  
**Hummingbird Festival**  
**Prescribed Burning Is "Proactive" Fire Control**

**Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished. -  
- Lao Tzu**

Read OCAS' newsletter online at <http://home.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. [sjathead@bellsouth.net](mailto:sjathead@bellsouth.net)

Opinions in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Mississippi Audubon or of National Audubon but of individual writers. We view it as important to provide a forum for discussion and therefore we include articles from diverse sources where we can.



**L**ast month seemed eerily like last year this time, when I was composing a little essay about life's storms. But it was Katrina this time, two letters down in the alphabet from last year's Ivan. When I started writing this, I had no telephone and thus no way of e-mailing the newsletter. We OCAS members decided more or less unanimously that it would be better to postpone the newsletter a month, as well as the start-up meeting in September. So it's just now that I sit down to wrap up a piece begun a month ago.

I fussed a little last year about the branches down in the yard, the old redbud tree felled, the damage to my pecan crop...relatively trivial things. With Katrina I didn't complain about the temporary electrical

outage (just two and a half days for us) or lack of a telephone (two weeks). The storm did wreak considerable more damage to my house and land this time. But I count myself blessed and mourn instead the loss of my close friend who died unexpectedly, very suddenly, after the storm, and I grieve because of all the misery and death and destruction people have experienced.

Driving down Macon streets and roads, I was always puzzled by the sight of some strong-appearing, robust tree uprooted alongside others still standing that seemed no stronger, or sometimes even looked weaker. Why did that particular tree fall? And why not all those around it? It's human nature, I suppose, to wonder sometimes about these things, and so I fretted and pondered for a long time. I wanted to find a parallel, a lesson I could take from the sight of those lone trees, something I could apply to explain my friend's death. Why her, and not somebody weaker or older? Why THEN?

I still wonder. I don't know if there ARE answers.

We may feel these days as if there are just too many broken things, too many hurting souls, too much still to do in the shelters right now for us to think of meetings and newsletters and so on. But we could remember that just as our human friends are wounded and displaced, so are some of our animal and avian ones. So perhaps it's time to start trying to go forward again. Unless something else comes up, we will meet on October 10 as usual, at 7:00. We'll all be most grateful to see each other this time.

## Events & Happenings

---

**S**tarting with the October 10<sup>th</sup> OCAS meeting, we will only have dessert and drinks--no more sandwiches or soup. Whoever has responsibility for refreshments for each meeting should keep it very simple!

Please sign up to do refreshments.

If you'd like to save postage, let us know and we'll e-mail you the newsletter.

---

## Hummingbird Festival

**S**trawberry Plains hosted the annual Hummingbird Festival the weekend of September 9-11 at the state Audubon facility at Holly Springs. Because of the hurricane some activities were changed a little, but attendance was very good indeed, and several very interesting and informative programs were presented.

In **October** the Enchanted Forest festival will be presented again, with volunteers playing the roles of different birds, insects and animals. This is an especially good event for children to attend. For more information, visit Mississippi Audubon Society's website.

Remember, articles, bird sightings and items of interest are requested for the newsletter! For SIGHTINGS this month, visit our website.
---



## Prescribed Burning Is "Proactive" Fire Control

By Ed Brown, County Forester  
(Final of a three-part series)

**"Fighting fire with fire"** is a commonly used expression, which most people know arose from a wildfire management technique. They visualize firefighters setting a backfire against a firelane in front of an onrushing wildfire. This technique is used in fire suppression in reaction to an imminent threat. But prescribed burning is a proactive technique that eliminates the threat before it becomes an imminent danger.

Wildfires are a part of the "natural" world. In areas where fires have not burned for many years, fuel loads can become very heavy. When a fire does strike, it can be very intense, killing trees and burning everything in its path across thousands of acres. If no one values the trees or if no one lives there, who cares?

We don't live in a natural world. In Mississippi, trees have such economic value that we often go to great trouble and expense to plant and cultivate them. In rural areas, homes are built right in the forest, and our cities'

suburbs spill over into wooded areas (wildland fire fighters refer to this as the "urban/wildland interface), so we DO care.

To protect life and property, we must suppress wildfires. Fighting an ongoing fire is only part of our suppression effort. Fire prevention is at least as important, if not more so.

Periodic burning removes accumulated fuels and can prevent wildfires, or keep their intensity low so they do less damage and are easier to control.

The Mississippi Forestry Commission has an active prescribed burning program. All burns are conducted according to a prepared and approved burning plan. They are conducted by trained and well-equipped crews working under the supervision of a certified burner.

Burning techniques suitable to the timber type and terrain are carefully selected. Control lines are constructed in advance. These are usually plowed, but in environmentally sensitive areas they may be "foam lines." Burning is not done until the specified weather conditions prevail. Not only are specific weather conditions needed to control the intensity of the fire, but they are necessary for smoke to dissipate so it does not become a traffic hazard or cause a pollution episode.

Prescribed burning was once considered primarily a forest management tool. It still is, but it is being increasingly used for "fire mitigation" in the urban/wildland interface, with the primary goal of protecting lives, homes and other property from damage by wildfires.

Smokey Bear's advice "Only you can prevent wildfires" is as relevant today as ever, but prescribed burning is just one more tool in the foresters' fire-prevention kit, and it is becoming more widely used.

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.

© 2005 OCAS, except where copyrighted by author.

***OCAS OFFICERS***

R.L. Richardson....President

Howard Malone....Treasurer

Ed Brown....Field Trip Chairman

Nancy Donald....CBC Coordinator

Ruth Ann Rosamond..Refreshments  
Coordinator

Lauren & Sheila Thead.....Newsletter