Paint Rock River, Larkin Fork and Jackson County, AL
Saturday, June 22, 2013
6:30 a.m.

Back by popular demand, the June field trip will be to scenic Jackson County in northeast Alabama where we will spend the morning birding at a couple of sites along the Larkin Fork of the Paint Rock River. One of the target birds for the trip will be **cerulean warblers**, which breed in the area, along with the usual species common to a forested, riparian zone habitat.

Following a picnic lunch in the field, we will head slightly east to the Skyline Wildlife Management Area, where we will continue searching for species typical of the habitat found there. Certainly indigo buntings will be plentiful. There are several other birding options in Jackson County we can explore, as time and weather permit. If the day is sunny and warm we may also enjoy lots of butterfly sightings, so bring butterfly field guides if you own them.

Travel Plans: (Note the earlier than usual departure time). Depart at 6:30 a.m. from the Birmingham Botanical Gardens parking lot. We'll carpool and caravan north on Alabama 79 (Tallapoosa Street) through Guntersville to the town of Gurley, located on U.S. 72 east of Huntsville. We then reconvene about 8:30 a.m. at the Hardee's Restaurant in Gurley (5975 Highway 72 East Gurley, AL 35748). Those wishing to meet us directly at the Hardee's are welcome to do so, but an advance notice to the trip leader would be appreciated. Once we've had a short rest break, we'll depart for our first birding stop located almost to the state line up CR 65.

This trip is one of the more distant trips Birmingham Audubon takes so plan accordingly and bring plenty of drinks and snacks in addition to your picnic lunch, a full tank of gas, insect repellent, rain gear, and appropriate summer attire.

Trip Leader: Greg Harber, 251-2133 or Email me or contact me here.

Summer Field Trips ~ Kites, Wood Storks and More!
Saturday, July 27, 2013 (Autaugaville and Prattville)
Saturday, August 3, 2013 (Lakeland Farms and Greensboro area)

Birmingham Audubon is once again offering two summer field trips in search of kites and storks. If you have never witnessed the spectacle of Mississippi and swallow-tailed kites feeding on the wing, you are missing one of the most spectacular aerial shows on earth. Kites are regular late summer visitors to the Tombigbee and Alabama River systems in the upper coastal plain. Their acrobatic maneuvers while catching insects in flight is truly a sight to behold. And speaking of eating, another bonus on these outings is the food, Chef Lee's in Autaugaville and the Pie Lab in Greensboro or perhaps the Faunsdale Bar and Grill in Faunsdale, will be our destinations for lunch.

We also hope to see wood storks on these outings. Wood storks, whose numbers fluctuate from year to year, have to be one of the homeliest creatures you will ever see, but in the air their striking black and white forms are beautiful sights indeed. You won't want to miss these field trips so mark your calendars now and get prepared for the summer heat!

Here are the details of both trips:

Saturday, July 27, 2013 trip: We will head to the Prattville/Autaugaville area as we have in previous years. These are wide ranging species, but I feel confident we will observe them at some point during our trip. Plus, the areas east of Autaugaville have been good locations to look for painted buntings and lark sparrows in the past, so we will focus our birding efforts here in the morning.

Our departure point remains the same: the McDonalds on US. 31 in Hoover located at 1731 Montgomery Highway 35244 across from the Galleria. Plan to depart at 7 a.m. and caravan to our destination from there. We will have lunch at Chef Lee's in Autaugaville to take a break from the heat which we will likely experience.

After lunch, for those who wish to continue their summer adventure, we will drive to the south side of the Alabama River, to the overlook at Holy Ground Battlefield Park. We are likely make a couple stops along the way. The picturesque "ghost town" at Robinson's Switch Road will be worth a short visit as well, so bring your cameras!

If the necessary arrangements can be made, we will visit a heron rookery in Pine Level, south of Montgomery off US Hwy 231, at the end of the day. We will have dinner at Red's Little School House Restaurant in Grady at 5:30 p.m. and then depart for the rookery from there. If you participate in this optional side trip, please expect a very long day in the field as we plan to be at the rookery until sunset. The return trip to Birmingham from Pine Level is about a two-hour drive.

Saturday, August 3rd trip: The ever-popular Galleria McDonalds, located at 1731 Montgomery Highway 35244 (US 31) across from the Galleria, will serve as our departure point for this trip as well. Plan to leave at 7 a.m. again. We will caravan west on Interstate 59/20 to exit #97 and head south on Alabama 5 to the Centerville/Brent area where we will take a rest stop before continuing to Lakeland Farms and the catfish ponds south of Greensboro. We will have lunch either at the Faunsdale Bar and Grill in Faunsdale, or at the Pie Lab in Greensboro, depending on where arrangements can be made in advance to accommodate a group of our size. A stop at Perry Lakes Park to watch herons and egrets returning to their roost at day's end is a likely bet too.

Last year, we were able to make arrangements to visit the State Cattle Ranch after lunch, and the trip leader will attempt to obtain access again this year. We will know more about final trip plans closer to the date of the trip, so please check Birmingham Audubon's website or our Facebook page for the latest details. Please consult with the trip leader if you have any additional questions.

Remember, these trips will be daylong affairs so plan accordingly and bring plenty of drinks and snacks in addition to a full tank of gas, insect repellent, rain gear, and appropriate summer attire.

Trip Leader for both of these trips: Greg Harber, 251-2133 or Email me.