

Bird feeding and watching never grows old

I glanced out my kitchen window at the bare limbs of the popcorn tree in the back yard and saw movement. A small bird that I couldn't identify flitted in and landed on a limb. Before I could grab my bird book, it flew away.

Once or twice before, I had seen some flock to a cedar tree and strip its berries in a matter of minutes, then depart simultaneously. The bird feeders have gone unattended for some time in the back yard, so I've missed the goldfinches, cardinals, wrens, sparrows and other birds that frequented them. I especially miss those entertaining but pugnacious hummingbirds that try to keep each other away from the feeders. After I received an email from Fred Bassett of Montgomery who bands hummingbirds, I

decided I need to hang my hummingbird feeders in that popcorn tree. According to Fred's report, there are plenty of winter hummingbirds buzzing around various places in south Alabama right now. Besides banding Ruby-throated that are the most prevalent in our area, he's banding Rufous, Buff-bellied, Black-chinned, and even an Allen's.

Fred set up in the dark at Jim Dickerson's Lillian home in December to catch and band a Buff-bellied. It was the eighth hummingbird species he had banded at the Dickerson home over the years. Mr. Dickerson holds the record for the most species of hummingbirds banded at any home east of Louisiana. Fred also banded two Rufous and a Black-chinned at the Dickerson's. He recaptured a Rufous he had banded there two years ago. He returned there this month to band another Buff-bellied. If you happen to see a

pink mark on a hummer's head when it wings by, don't jump to the conclusion that you've discovered a new species. It's just a mark Fred and a Tallahassee, Fla. man make to help identify hummers easier. It's hard to see the bands, Fred explained.

Although hummingbirds certainly pique my curiosity most, another fascinating bird is the goldfinch. They are so beautiful. Once as I was replenishing several little goldfinch bags dangling from my clothesline, one sat on a fence nearby. Then flew in close, making little noises. It landed some distance away on the clothesline and sat watching. There wasn't much doubt in my mind that this little bird had complete trust in my furnishing it and its friends with something to eat. Once I backed off, it flew to a feeder and dug in.

Now that I've recalled the fun of feeding and watching my backyard visitors, I might just fill all my feeders. Then sit back and enjoy myself again.

Nina Keenam is a retired journalist, who formerly worked at The Foley Onlooker.

Secret of father's phrase revealed in magazine

I have finally come face to face with Frances Lusco.

For years I had imagined she was some fictional character whose name my dad used in a turn of a phrase, one that I often heard growing up. Much like my dad, I have a tendency to turn phrases around, swap words or letters in them on the spur of the moment to make them say something nonsensical, but with a backwards rhyme.

The only one that comes to mind at the moment is "Newy Hap Year," a take on "Happy New Year" that I'm really not sure if he or I came up with. I wish I could come up with a few more. There are several, and I come up with new ones constantly. But they escape me tonight as I am deep in thought about Frances Lusco.

Like my dad, I went to John Carroll High School, a Catholic institution in Birmingham since the 1940s. Unlike my dad, I graduated.



JOHN MULLEN
Island Reflections

He was merely one of the members of the venerable old school's first freshman class, something he was quite proud of even though he only lasted that one year. If memory serves, he went to Fairfield a year, too, then off to the Navy and a GED.

I graduated in 1979 and for the past several years have been mailed a magazine that gives details of current happenings, milestones for graduates, alumni passings and the like. I peruse it for names of former classmates who have might have somehow made their way into it for their accomplishments or, sadly because they had passed away or had family members who died.

Waiting in the driver's through at a chicken tender joint one recent evening, I noticed a copy of the latest one in a side pocket of my car. On the cover was a picture of the homecoming queen from 1952 crowning the smiling queen of 2011.

When I got inside to the story, it said, "Frances Lusco Walker '52 returned to John Carroll on October 1, 2011 and received a spirited ovation from current students and staff..."

Complete with a picture of lovely Miss Lusco from 1952. "She's real!!!!!!" I thought and laughed out

OLIVASTRO

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need for the same select scientists to focus their attention on ameliorating, that is, reducing, those risks that they personally can do something about.

For example, let's take one their stated concerns: Safety at Nuclear Plants.

They could, and I dare say ought to, focus their personal and group scientific effort on a project that would develop enhanced safety designs for nuclear power plants. That would make a difference for all of us.

It would also reset the Doomsday Clock to perhaps 12 minutes to midnight.

What do you think?
Richard Olivastro is president of Olivastro Communications. Contact him at: RichOlivastro@gmail.com or by phone at 1-877-RichS-peaks.

CRYSTAL METH

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estimated 25 to 30 percent of meth labs are discovered due to explosions.

It costs law enforcement and public health enormous sums of money to clean up a meth lab site, most of which are located in people's homes in communities across our state. This issue touches all areas of our life, from health and safety to our children and more. Meth costs all Alabama taxpayers big money. In fact, recent reports showed that meth-related crimes cost our nation \$4 billion annually.

I wrote my colleagues in the Senate asking them to sign onto my bill, and I have received strong bipartisan support from across the state. I encourage you to contact your lawmakers about this problem and urge them to help pass this legislation to protect our communities.

For more information on the meth epidemic plaguing our state, please see <http://www.zerometh.com/> — the website established by the Alabama District Attorneys Association to fight the drug and its deadly consequences.

MARTIN

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nia likely would have yielded better short-term returns. He believes that although the investment returns might be a bit lower in Alabama, they make up for that in jobs that create an increased tax base for the state.

I suggest there are only two ways to avoid raising taxes in the long term. The first would be to reduce the number of state public employees in the neighborhood of 25 percent. For the past few years the number has regular state worker total has remained in the neighborhood of 37,000. If education and other ancillary groups are added in the total number of full and part time state employees, as compiled by the U.S. Census in 2008, was almost 108,000.

Alabama local government employees in K-12 in 2008 totaled 104,587. The total number of non-federal public workers in Al-

abama in 2008 therefore stood at over 212,000.

I wrote a few weeks back that we need to abandon the "No new tax" theme that seems to permeate political thinking these days. Folks in Alabama pay the lowest state and local taxes in the country and most of us have enough sense to understand that our schools, garbage collection service, courts, law enforcement, driver license tests and other public services cannot exist on a tax base established in the 1950s.

So I would suggest to our governor and legislators that somebody start giving some thought as to how this state is going to pay to fix the potholes.

Bob Martin is editor and publisher of The Montgomery Independent. Email him at: bob@montgomeryindependent.com.

Write us: Send your letters of opinion to the community news director listed in the masthead on Page 4A. Letters should be about 350 words in length and may be edited for length and content. Be sure to include your name and phone number, which will only be used for verification purposes.

Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustee Council

Help Restore the Gulf

Draft Phase I Early Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment

PUBLIC MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Trustees want to hear from you! A draft plan of proposed early restoration projects is available for public review and comment. The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Draft Phase I Early Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment describes eight projects, two in each of these states: Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi. The projects are intended to benefit injured marshes, coastal dune and nearshore habitats, oysters, and human usage of Gulf resources.

The trustees will conduct three public meetings in Alabama where you can learn more about the draft restoration plan and provide your thoughts and suggestions.

<p>ALABAMA PUBLIC MEETINGS</p> <p>Jan. 23, 2012 6:00 – 7:00 PM 7:00 – 9:00 PM</p> <p>Jan. 24, 2012 6:00 – 7:00 PM 7:00 – 9:00 PM</p>	<p>Open House Meeting</p> <p>Battle House Marriott Hotel 26 North Royal Street Mobile, AL 36682</p> <p>Open House Meeting</p> <p>Kaiser Realty Meeting Facility 1557 Gulf Shores Parkway Gulf Shores, AL 36542</p>
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To learn more about Early Restoration, and review and comment on the draft plan, visit www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov. For more information by phone, please contact: Paul Powell, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 334.242.3464, or Nancieann Regalado, Dept. of the Interior, 678.296.6805.

Industrial Economics 01/17/2012

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Planning Commission of the City of Robertsdale, Alabama will conduct a public hearing to consider a subdivision request made by Eastern Shore Acquisitions, LLC. The proposed subdivision, Harvest Meadows Phase 3B, containing 16 lots, is located on Harvester Drive, off County Road 56. Metes & Bounds description available at the City Clerk's office.

The hearing has been scheduled for Monday, January 23, 2012, at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall. Interested persons and adjoining property owners will be given as opportunity to ask questions and make comments at this time. Written comments should be addressed to the City Clerk, P.O. Box 429, Robertsdale, AL 36567.

Kristina Bentley, Chairperson,
Robertsdale Planning Commission