

# THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 33, NO. 3 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY FALL 2013

...to foster a greater knowledge of birds and to promote conservation of all natural resources

FOUNDED 1952



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## ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 1325, DAUPHIN ISLAND, AL 36528-1325

### OFFICERS

PRESIDENT.....Bianca J. Allen  
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 NORTHWEST FLORIDA.....Vacant

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 Geoff Hill, Bill Summerour,  
 Greg Jackson

#### MEETINGS

Don Self  
 Tom and Joan Siegwald, Charlotte Fanz, Pat Reed,  
 Priscilla Tubbs, Mike Wilson



GOOD NEWS!! THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY (AOS) is now an officially incorporated non-profit entity in the state of Alabama. Eric Soehren filed the articles of incorporation at the Macon County courthouse on Friday, August 9, 2013. Eric is the registered agent of AOS so the decision was made to file the papers in his home county for continuity. Now we need the membership to approve the newly revised bylaws and policies to continue in our efforts to make AOS a stronger and thoroughly documented organization. I want to urge everyone, if you haven't already, to go to the AOS website ([www.aosbirds.org](http://www.aosbirds.org)) to look for the copies of the proposed bylaws and policies and review them now. I would greatly appreciate your contacting me (205-854-5233 or [brdnrd1022@bellsouth.net](mailto:brdnrd1022@bellsouth.net)) in advance of the October meeting if you have any issues you would like to discuss. AOS has been in existence for sixty-one years and the knowledge and experience gained in those years plus the new documented structure should ensure many more successful years for one of the greatest organizations that I have ever had the pleasure of serving.

The AOS board will be submitting a recommended slate of officers for your approval at the October meeting with Dr. Ken Ward being nominated as your next president. Ken is an associate professor at Alabama A&M University in the Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences (NRES) department and serves as the director of the Center of Forest Ecosystem Assessment (CFES). Ken is also the leader of the North Alabama Birdwatchers Society (NABS) and shares a love for birding with his wife, Rufina, who is also a member of the faculty at Alabama A&M. I'm confident that Ken will serve AOS well and take it to new heights during his term.

It has been an exciting and busy two years, and I have truly enjoyed serving as your president. Our speakers have helped us move forward in our mission to "...to foster a greater knowledge of birds and to promote conservation of all natural resources," and our October speaker, Dr. Scot Duncan, will be educating us on the wonderful diversity of Alabama so that we can be more knowledgeable about why we need to conserve our natural resources.



There are so many people to thank for all their help during my tenure as president. First and foremost, I could never have done this without the assistance and encouragement of the AOS board, members, and friends. The board has worked very long and hard to compile all the new documentation for AOS, and the past presidents have offered invaluable advice and consolation. What I have treasured most is the encouragement of our membership. Your comments during our meetings and your emails before and afterwards have helped me to stay the course.

I feel the need to acknowledge the contributions of some individuals who have

gone far and above in serving AOS. Everyone knows that the job of treasurer is one of the most demanding positions in AOS, and Mary Frances Stayton has done an excellent job for several years, but plans to "retire" at the end of this term. Eric Soehren and Linda Reynolds have served as fountains of knowledge and were always available for my questions and to serve as a sounding board. Shirley Farrell initiated a free electronic newsletter, *Alabama Youth Birder*, for the youth chapter of AOS. Any child between the ages of 6-17 who resides in Alabama can receive this newsletter. If you have a child or grandchild you would like to enroll, contact Shirley at [shirfarr@gmail.com](mailto:shirfarr@gmail.com). Don Self served us well as the meetings coordinator until family health issues forced his resignation. He served as our single point of contact with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL), which simplified our efforts for the spring and fall meetings, and he also made thorough arrangements for our winter meetings. We still need someone to fill that position, so please notify Ken Ward ([bustmilo@knology.net](mailto:bustmilo@knology.net)) if you are interested in helping in that capacity. I also want to thank Kathy Hicks, our website coordinator, for responding so quickly to my many requests for updates. Kathy and I had never met until just recently, which goes to prove that telecommuting really works in this electronic age. The committee chairs are too numerous to mention individually, but you can see their names on the second page of every issue of *The Yellowhammer*. Every one of these people served us well and kept us and others informed of matters of concern. (Continued on page 6)



### *Dr. Nicholas Robert Holler*

**D**R. NICHOLAS ROBERT HOLLER, 74, OF AUBURN, DIED JUNE 4, 2013. Nick was a long-time member of AOS and Col. Bob Reed's birding partner on many CBCs.

Dr. Holler loved and gave himself fully to two careers, first as a wildlife biologist and then as a congregational care minister, as well as serving in the United States Army. In 1973 he received a Ph.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia in the field of Zoology. He worked as a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from 1970 to 1993, and served as unit leader of the Alabama Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Auburn University from 1985 to 1998, as well as a professor of zoology and wildlife sciences.

Dr. Holler was ordained as a deacon in the United Methodist Church in 1998 and served as congregational care minister at Auburn United Methodist Church from then until 2009.

Nick was born in Plymouth, Indiana and was preceded in death by his mother and father Margaret (Flaig) Holler and Nicholas J. Holler, and his siblings, Elizabeth Bryan, Edward Holler, and Lydia Walch. He leaves behind his wife of thirty years, Margaret Holler, and two daughters, Jeanette (Tim) Culpepper and Nicole (Luis) Holler-Garzon.

### *Geoff Hill Receives Appointment*

**D**R. GEOFF HILL, PROFESSOR AND CURATOR OF BIRDS AT AUBURN University, an AOS member for many years and recent speaker to our society, has been hired as the deputy divisional director for the Division of Integrative Organismal Systems at the National Science Foundation. This division funds physiology and behavior, which has sponsored many hundreds of studies of birds over the years (including all of Geoff's work on bird coloration and mate choice). He will rotate between two jobs, retaining his faculty position at Auburn. He'll still have graduate students and an active lab. He'll spend most of his time in Washington, DC and the remainder at Auburn. It is a temporary position, with the maximum tenure being four years.

Geoff says, "This is a good career advancer for me, and it gives Auburn University and Alabama a presence at the top of the scientific community in Washington."

According to the National Science Foundation's website, the Division of Integrative Organismal Systems supports research aimed at an integrative understanding of organisms as units of biological organization, with particular emphasis on systems-level approaches to the study of their development, function, behavior, and evolution. Congratulations, Geoff.

### *Important Notice for Sea Lab Patrons*

**I**T HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO OUR ATTENTION THAT SOME OF OUR members who stay in the Sea Lab are going to the office and asking to get into the hall before check-in time.

Please, please do not attempt to get into the hall until the time stated in *The Yellowhammer*. I do my best to have everything set up and ready so that you can get into your room without any delays.

The staff at Sea Lab has a very busy schedule on the weekend we have our meeting. Many schools schedule their field trips on the same weekend that we are on the island, and it takes much more time to get students settled in than it does our members.

Please keep in mind that the Sea Lab is for students first. We need to do everything possible to maintain our positive relations between the Sea Lab and AOS.

Thanks for your understanding and help with this matter.

—Mary Frances Stayton

### *Electronic Yellowhammer?*

**I**T COSTS WELL OVER \$1.50 TO PRINT AND MAIL *The Yellowhammer*. We are delivering, on a totally voluntary basis, *The Yellowhammer* via the Internet. If you would like to receive your *Yellowhammer*, in color, electronically, as a PDF file, please email the editor at bobreed1987@gmail.com.

#### *Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions*

Winter 2013	November 10, 2013
Spring 2014	February 10, 2014
Summer 2014	June 1, 2014

## BOOK REVIEW

# Feathers, The Evolution of a Natural Miracle

By Thor Hansen (2011)

REVIEWED BY LIN FAGAN

**E**VERY YEAR I MAKE AN EFFORT TO FIND AND READ THE book that receives the Burroughs Medal Award for Natural History Writing. This spring I was able to attend the John Burroughs Association awards ceremony at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and collect the basketful of award winners. There were seven Riverby Award books for children of different ages, an award-winning article from *Orion* magazine, and *Feathers* by Thor Hansen—the Burroughs Medal winner. I lugged my new library home and started to read.

Hansen, a world traveler and birder, now lives in the Seattle area. He has written an amusing and informative book, which itself has collected a basketful of awards. In *Feathers*, Hanson recaps recent fossil discoveries that shed new light on the evolution of birds and studies the structure of feathers and their functions for birds. Not stopping with the science, the author follows with several essays on the sociology and human history of feathers, showing how useful they have been to our species through the ages. The first sentence of *Feathers* in the preface is a grabber: Hanson writes, "The vultures made me do it." However, the preface and also an introduction may have been requested by an editor or publisher not sure of the audience for this book. My advice is to jump right into Chapter 1 and begin to learn and enjoy.

## Important Dates

**SECOND FRIDAY**—October 11–13, 2013  
Fall Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

**FOURTH FRIDAY**—January 24–26, 2014  
Winter Meeting, Florida Panhandle

**THIRD FRIDAY**—April 18–20, 2014  
Spring Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

JANUARY 1, 2013 – JUNE 30, 2013

# 2013 AOS Financial Report

By MARY FRANCES STAYTON, *Treasurer*

BEGINNING BALANCE: January 1, 2013      \$17,944.50

## Income

AOS Dues	2,892.00
CBA Dues	182.00
DIBS Contributions	1,392.00
Winter & Spring Meeting 2013	
Registration	4,250.00
Dauphin Island Sea Lab	855.00
Banquet	2,973.00
AOS Meeting Sales Winter & Spring	233.12

TOTAL INCOME      12,777.12

## Expenses

CBA Disbursement	182.00
DIBS Disbursement	517.00
Printing <i>Yellowhammer</i>	990.78
Workshops, Inc	298.28
<i>Alabama Birdlife</i>	1,545.40
Website	75.00
USPS	20.60
Liability Insurance with The Harford	425.00
Holliman Research Fund Award	2,000.00
Misc Expenses	30.00
DISL Deposits	200.00
Winter & Spring Meeting 2013	
Joe Wheeler State Park	787.86
Dauphin Island Sea Lab	1,105.00
Banquet	2,374.80
Items for Spring Meeting Sale	27.83
Misc Items for Winter & Spring Meeting	615.74
Expenses for Sea Lab Day	302.30

TOTAL EXPENSES      \$11,497.60

ENDING BALANCE: June 30, 2013      \$19,224.02

A O S F A L L M E E T I N G , O C T O B E R 1 1 - 1 3 , 2 0 1 3

## Meet the Speaker: Dr. R. Scot Duncan

DR. R. SCOT DUNCAN is an associate professor of biology and urban environmental studies at Birmingham-Southern College. Originally from Pensacola, Florida, Scot received a BS in biology from Eckerd College (1993), and an MS (1997) and PhD (2001) in zoology from the University of Florida. His research on ecology and conservation biology has taken him to Costa Rica, Panama, Uganda, Florida, and Alabama. Scot took a position at BSC in 2002 and teaches courses in conservation, ecology, and environmental studies. He and his students are currently study-

ing the ecology of endangered species and threatened ecosystems, including the Ketona dolomite glades, montane Longleaf Pine woodlands, and the Watercress Darter. Scot is the author of *Southern Wonder: Alabama's Amazing Biodiversity*. Written for the layperson, the book interweaves the disciplines of ecology, evolution, and geology into an explanation of why Alabama is home to more species than any other state east of the Mississippi River. *Southern Wonder* will be published November 2013 by the University of Alabama Press. He is the son of Bob and Lucy Duncan.

## Southern Wonder: Alabama's Surprising Biodiversity



*S*OUTHERN WONDER BY R. SCOT DUNCAN EXPLORES Alabama's amazing biological diversity, the reasons for the large number of species in the state, and the importance of their preservation.

Alabama ranks fifth in the nation in number of species of plants and animals found in the state. When all the species of birds, trees, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, wildflowers, dragonflies, tiger beetles, and ants are tallied, Alabama harbors more species than all but the much larger western states of California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. Alabama is particularly rich in aquatic biodiversity, leading the nation in species of freshwater fishes, turtles, mussels, crayfish, snails, damselflies, and carnivorous plants. The state also hosts an exceptional number of endemic species—those not found beyond its borders—ranking seventh in the nation with 144 species. The state's 4,533 species, with more being discovered each year, are supported by no less than 64 distinct ecological systems—each a unique blend of soil, water, sunlight, heat, and natural disturbance regimes. Habitats include dry forests, moist forests, swamp forests, sunny prairies, grassy barrens, scorching glades, rolling dunes, and bogs filled with pitcher plants and sundews. The state also includes a region of subterranean ecosystems that are more elaborate and species rich than any other place on the continent.

Although Alabama is teeming with life, the state's prominence as a refuge for plants and animals is poorly appreciated.

Even among Alabama's citizens, few outside a small circle of biologists, advocates, and other naturalists understand the special quality of the state's natural heritage. R. Scot Duncan rectifies this situation in *Southern Wonder* by providing a comprehensive overview that the general public, policy makers, and teachers can understand and use. Readers are taken on an exploratory journey of the state's varied landscapes and are introduced to remarkable species, such as the cave salamander and the beach mouse. By interweaving the disciplines of ecology, evolution, meteorology, and geology into an accessible whole, Duncan explains clearly why Alabama is so biotically rich and champions efforts for its careful preservation. *Southern Light* is published in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy.

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (continued from page 3)

I would certainly be remiss if I didn't personally thank the editors of our publications: Col. Bob Reed (*The Yellowhammer*) and Dr. Tom Haggerty (*Alabama Birdlife*) and Robin McDonald, who does the design for *The Yellowhammer*. I know they all would very much appreciate any articles you would like to submit for publication. Having once served as *The Yellowhammer* editor, I can assure you that articles are always in great demand.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone in October and having some free time to bird after I pass the gavel to Ken. Meanwhile, get out there and find those wonders of summer birding—Kites, Wood Storks, White Pelicans, etc.

## AOS FALL MEETING 2013

*Dauphin Island, Alabama, October 11-13, 2013*

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11

3-4:30 p.m. Registration at Challenger Hall (look for signs)  
 6:00 p.m. Social Hour and Pot Luck at Challenger Hall  
 7:00 p.m. Members Slide Show

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12

6:00 a.m. Complimentary Danish and coffee  
 at Sea Lab  
 7:00 a.m. Field trips—Meet at Sea Lab  
 11:30 a.m. Lunch at the Stowers' house, 1618 Cadillac Ave.  
 1:30 p.m. Board meeting—Galathea Hall  
 6:00 p.m. Open bar social at Shelby Center  
 6:30 p.m. Banquet at Sea Lab  
 7:30 p.m. Membership Meeting  
 7:45 p.m. Program—Dr. R. Scot Duncan

### SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13

6:00 a.m. Complimentary Danish and coffee at Sea Lab  
 12:00 p.m. Compilation—Goat Tree

### ACCOMMODATIONS AND INFORMATION

#### Motels

Gulf Breeze and Harbor Lights Motel: (800) 286-0296

#### Rentals—

Boardwalk Realty, Inc: (877) 861-3992  
 Dauphin Island Real Estate: (888) 707-6444  
 Tyson Real Estate: (251) 861-8312  
 Island Resort Management: (877) 219-7392  
 ACP Real Estate, Inc.: (866) 861-3311

#### Websites

[www.gulfinfo.com](http://www.gulfinfo.com) and [www.dauphinisland.cc](http://www.dauphinisland.cc)

#### FRIDAY NIGHT POT LUCK

Don't forget to bring your favorite appetizer, snack, dessert,  
 etc. for the social hour.

**NOTE:** Until further notice, spring and fall banquets are limited to the first 120 people.

## AOS FALL MEETING 2013 REGISTRATION FORM

*Complete and return to:*

Mary Frances Stayton, 952 Mockingbird Lane, Leeds, Alabama, 35094  
 Telephone: (205) 640-4502 • E-mail: [lovingcats@windstream.net](mailto:lovingcats@windstream.net)

*Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by October 1, 2013.*

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

**AOS DUES** Student: \$10 • Individual: \$25 • Family: \$40 • Sustaining: \$50  
 Life (individual): \$350 • Life (family): \$550

#### Accommodations (see note, page 4):

#### Sea Lab Challenger Hall

\$20/night double occupancy or \$40/  
 night single occupancy, limit 20 rooms,  
 1st-come 1st-served: circle nights and  
 note number of occupants: Friday \_\_\_\_\_  
 Saturday \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Registration @ \$25 per person	\$
Banquet @ \$21 per person	\$
Sea Lab @ \$20 per person per night	\$
AOS 2014 Dues	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution	\$
Coastal Birding Association 2014 Dues (\$5)	\$
<b>TOTAL ENCLOSED</b>	\$

ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 1325  
DAUPHIN ISLAND, AL 36528

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## THE YELLOWHAMMER

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DESIGN.....Robin McDonald  
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### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Larry Gardella  
Greg Harber  
Greg Jackson  
Carroll Pinckard

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Address correspondence concerning membership to:  
Mary Frances Stayton, Treasurer  
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Leeds, Alabama, 35094  
e-mail: lovingcats@windstream.net

Annual Membership:  
Student: \$10 • Individual: \$25 • Family: \$40  
Sustaining: \$50 • Life (individual): \$350  
Life (family): \$550



### AOS ONLINE

<http://www.aosbirds.org>

**AOS RARE BIRD ALERT  
TELEPHONE HOTLINE:  
256-773-8560**

### ALABAMA WILDLIFE CENTER

<http://www.awrc.org>

### BIRMINGHAM AUDUBON SOCIETY

<http://www.birminghamaudubon.org>

### DAUPHIN ISLAND BIRD SANCTUARIES

<http://www.coastalbirding.org>

### FRANCIS M. WESTON AUDUBON SOCIETY (PENSACOLA)

<http://www.fmwaudubon.org>

### THE HUMMER/BIRD STUDY GROUP

<http://www.hummingbirdsplus.org>

### MOBILE BAY AUDUBON SOCIETY

<http://www.mobilebayaudubon.org>

### SOUTH ALABAMA BIRDING ASSOCIATION

<http://www.bamabirds.com>

### SOUTHEASTERN RAPTOR REHAB CENTER

<http://www.vetmed.auburn.edu/raptor>

### TENNESSEE VALLEY AUDUBON

<http://www.tvas.org>