

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 33, NO. 4 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY WINTER 2013

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

FOUNDED 1952



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IT'S A NICE CRISP DAY UP HERE in Huntsville, beautiful and sunny, a bit warmer than the past couple of days. Our fall colors, after a slow start, are finally taking off, not quite yet in full glory in the Valley, but starting to peak in the mountains and on the hillsides. Monte Sano State Park is ablaze with color, especially the areas between the headquarters and overlook, with its mix of such colorful species as blackgum, sourwood, scarlet oak, poison ivy, sumac, sugar maple and mockernut hickory. It's a great time of year to be out and about, as was NABS (North Alabama Birdwatchers Society) yesterday, on an outing to Wheeler NWR, along White Springs Dike. Lovely day, good birds and great friends, sharing in a cherished activity; it doesn't get much better than that.

As I sit here writing my first message as president of AOS, I am not entirely sure what to include. I am hesitant to take up much space with an introduction, but do think something brief is in order. You're getting a team when you get me, as my wife Rufina comes in the mix, and is our new treasurer. We have lived in Huntsville since 1994 (I am a native of Huntsville; she is from the Philippines), when I came here to take a position as the forest health specialist with Alabama A&M University's Forestry, Ecology and Wildlife Program (FEWP). I am an entomologist. Rufina soon found a position at A&M as a research entomologist. We've worked on a variety of things over the years, often together, in various agricultural- and forestry-related fields, including apiculture, biological control and organic production. For the past several years I have been the coordinator of FEWP, one of two professionally accredited forestry programs in Alabama. I should mention too that Rufina and I serve as editor and president, respectively, for NABS.

Since I am on introductions, I should mention that we have an entirely new slate of officers this year. In addition to Rufina and myself, David Pylant is our new vice-president; he's a native of, and currently lives in, Cullman. David is a wildlife biologist by trade, having spent a number of years working in Florida before heading north for a position as a biology instructor with Wallace State Community College,



from which he recently retired. David is an expert on the ecology, management and conservation of wildlife, an avid birder and a dedicated educator; he'll be a dynamic VP. Pat Reed graciously agreed to serve as AOS secretary. Most of you already know Pat and her husband Colonel Bob (*Yellowhammer* editor); I have no doubt she'll do a great job. Maureen Schaefer and Anne Miller have volunteered to oversee local meeting arrangement responsibilities associated with our Dauphin Island AOS meetings, formerly covered by Joan and Tom Siegwald, including catering arrangements and banquet setup. I really want to express my appreciation to

all of these folks for being willing to serve.

I'd be remiss if I did not express my heartfelt appreciation, on behalf of AOS, for the selfless and dedicated service provided by those long-serving individuals who have recently stepped down. Mary Frances Stayton served as treasurer for several years before "retiring," as of the fall 2013 meeting. She has been especially dedicated and has done a super job organizing tasks and keeping good records, such that the transition has been smooth; thanks so much for your efforts. Dana Hamilton has been an excellent and efficient secretary. I know she helped a lot with the incorporation issues in terms of records searching and such this past year; thanks for everything, Dana. Tom and Joan Siegwald have been stalwart in their support and efforts over the years. The logistics of getting the meeting events set up can be complicated and frustrating; we really appreciate your dedication to AOS. And, finally, we owe our heartfelt appreciation to Bianca (BJ) Allen as immediate past president. Bianca's tenure as president would have been noteworthy even had it been a typical one but, as most of you know, that was not the case. Her diligent efforts on our behalf to get AOS officially incorporated as a nonprofit entity are of historical significance to our organization and should be highly commended. She tirelessly pursued the resolution of this issue for much of her term. I personally owe her a debt of gratitude for getting us to a good place before I stepped in, and offering to continue to help as needed with this issue. You were a great president, BJ and we'll never forget what you've done for our organization.

As a long-time educator within a natural resource conservation academic program and an avid “naturizer” (birds, trees and insects are my specialties), one of my emphases as president will be to advocate toward expanding educational opportunities for birding and natural resource conservation, especially for young people. We have made strides in this area in the past few years, notably Shirley Farrell’s efforts with her free electronic newsletter, *Alabama Youth Birder*, and other activities. In these days of “nature deficit disorder,” where youth seem to be getting more and more disconnected from the outdoors, I think it’s especially important to reach out to kids, their parents and, especially, their teachers. Rufina and I have noticed over the years the often remarkable influence early-grade teachers can have on their students, depending on their own attitudes toward, and knowledge of, the natural world. It does not take much, for example, to foster a fascination among youngsters for insects and related critters, as well as dispel fears, if the teacher has an interest and appreciation for these fascinating creatures. Birds are inherently charismatic creatures for the most part, but are difficult to observe in the classroom. It would be so cool if we could get more backyard bird habitat incorporated on school grounds, to give the kids some more “up close and personal” opportunities to observe birds (and practice some citizen science too).

Another opportunity I am hoping to foster in some way involves coalition building among groups that don’t always see eye to eye on conservation issues. There is currently an effort in the Paint Rock River Valley to develop an outdoor classroom focusing on sustainable and ecologically sound agricultural and natural resource management/conservation practices. The Graham Farm and Nature Center, which some of you have visited, is a partnership among Auburn University, Alabama A&M University, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Student Conservation Association and The Nature Conservancy. This unique partnership brings a broad coalition of entities together that covers a broad swath of interests and attitudes regarding use and conservation of natural resources. I am inclined to see the commonalities rather than the differences and think this is another interesting opportunity to build consensus on how best to manage and conserve our precious natural resources. You’ll hear more about this effort as it proceeds.

I’ll close by saying I am really looking forward to my tenure as your president, and I think we have assembled an

outstanding team that will work hard for our organization. I am pretty easy-going and will always be quick to solicit input before making important decisions. I appreciate everyone’s support and confidence in me to take on this important position. Finally, please take note that we have an exciting winter meeting coming up January 24-26, 2014, down in the Florida panhandle near St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. We had a meeting there in 2007, which was memorable, and I think we’ll have a great time again. Please see this newsletter for more information on our speaker, Julie Wraithmell, and the accommodations. Happy birding!

Dues News

IT’S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN. If you haven’t renewed your AOS membership, please do. We want you to keep you as a member, and you want to continue to enjoy all the benefits you get from being part of AOS.

Speaking of the benefits of membership, do you have any friends (Facebook or otherwise) who might be interested in AOS? Please let them know, or get me their name, and I’d be glad to get in touch. My email is lgardellabirds@charter.net.

—Larry Gardella

Electronic Yellowhammer?

IT 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 Robert.Reed@psc.alabama.gov.

Important Dates

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

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

SECOND FRIDAY—October 10–12, 2014
Fall Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

Way Up North to Alaska



E PREPARED TO BE AMAZED—but also be prepared!

That, in a nutshell, is the lesson we learned during a June 2013 birding trip to Alaska, a beautiful and unpredictable place in which to add many birds to your life list and many experiences to a lifetime.

Among our little Alabama clutch of travelers there were two serious birders, Lorna and Kevin, and one SOB—a term, we learned from some of our fellow birders on this Alaskan tour, that stands for “spouse of birder”—which has been Katie’s moniker ever since.

Our Alaskan birding adventure took us to Nome, the Pribilof island of St. Paul and the Kenai Peninsula with several lay-over nights in Anchorage as we navigated our way to three very different birding locales and tried to cram what would usually be a 17-day birding trip into 10 days.

Despite the condensed timeframe within which we operated, we saw an amazing number of birds. Kevin, who has been birding only four and a half years, added 76 life birds to his list while Lorna, a 50-year very experienced and well-traveled birder, added 35. Katie was not keeping a list (exercising SOB prerogative), but as a novice/sidekick she probably saw more than 100 new birds on the trip. Not only were there a lot of birds, we were able to enjoy exceptionally long, detailed looks at most of them.

A good portion of our trip was arranged through the WINGS international bird watching tour company; however, parts of it we did without an official guide (though with lots of guidance about where to look for birds from WINGS leaders and other birders with Alaskan experience).

Our trip officially began very early (4 a.m.) on June 5 when we left our hometown of Opelika, Alabama, headed to Atlanta, Georgia, to catch our flight to Anchorage, Alaska. Though it was a long day of travel, we landed in Anchorage in time for an early dinner, then, thanks to a very hospitable



taxi driver named Bob, went birding on the Winchester Lagoon. There we sighted our first Alaskan birds—Arctic terns and red-necked grebes—before returning to our rooms at the Coastal International Hotel.

The next morning we flew to Nome where we caught up with WINGS tour guides Jon Dunn and Gavin Bieber just as they were landing in Nome with a birding group that had spent the previous several days birding on Gambell. It was then we realized that we had brought way too much “stuff” despite the fact that we (Kevin and Lorna specifically) had spend literally months carefully figuring out just what kind

of gear and clothes we would need. We were prepared, but maybe a wee bit over-prepared. We will forever be indebted to some of the Gambell birders who helped schlep our bags across a large parking area to a waiting tour van.

As an aside: Despite that slightly embarrassing realization that we had over-packed, none of the three of us—whose Alabama blood was probably a little thinner than some of the other birders—regretted the layers of warm clothes we took. Every layer came in handy throughout our travels where temperatures often hovered near freezing and cold fog, rain and winds were often deeply chilling. So first advice to anyone planning an Alaskan birding adventure: take layers and make sure they offer warmth and some degree of water and wind repellence or resistance! Gloves and water-proof “muck” type boots are also a must.

After a convivial dinner and get-to-know evening with the Gambell birders and our intrepid tour leaders, we went to our rooms at the Aurora Hotel to rest up for the first full day of birding in the Nome area.

Another aside: “Full day” is not an understatement. June days in Alaska are 19 or more hours long. Throughout the trip we often had to tightly draw the curtains in our rooms to convince our bodies and minds that it was really bedtime.

However, one of the perks of those 19-plus hours of daylight is that it is literally never too late to bird.

That “day”—June 7—began at 4 a.m.—“early to rise” was a recurring experience of the trip—when the entire group of 20 or so people clambered into two vans for a four-hour drive on the famous Kougarok Road to Coffee Dome where we hoped to see the Bristle-thighed Curlew, a bird that is rarely seen after 8 a.m., thus the reason for such an early departure.

Along the way to Coffee Dome we had our first sighting of Alaska’s state bird, the Willow Ptarmigan, as well as sightings of Rock Ptarmigans, a very vocal and gorgeously plumed Bluethroat, a variety of sparrows, Long-tailed Jaegers and even Arctic foxes and hares.

The hike up Coffee Dome was strenuous, made even more difficult by the heavy fog that settled over our group making it hard to navigate through the hummocks of tundra grass that covered the hillside.

Yet another aside: trekking poles are extremely helpful on this hike, and this is a tough climb for anyone with mobility issues. What’s more, simply carrying bags and equipment and rushing to meet planes can be physically demanding on this trip. If going to Alaska is on your must-do list, don’t wait so long that you’re unable to make the trip due to physical limitations!

When we reached the top, we were so smothered in fog that our guides instructed us all to stay in sight of one another so we would not become lost and, for a while, it seemed all hope of seeing the Bristle-thighed was lost. However, the hard work of climbing the hill and a mutual determination to find the bird paid off—the fog lifted and we were able to see three bristle-thighs—a true highlight of the trip!

The next morning we “slept in,” setting out about 7 a.m. to drive Council Road along the Norton Sound where we joined a “sea watch” at Cape Nome, made a stop at Safety Sound and on to the Solomon Bridge. The drive took us by many remarkable birds in habitats ranging from icy wetlands on one side of the highway to a still-frozen Bering Sea on the other. That day of birding yielded sightings of a wide array of birds including puffins, loons, Tundra Swans, a plethora of various gulls (including an Ivory Gull), terns, cormorants, godwits and too many others to list here.

One of many highlights of the trip for Lorna was to see Sabine’s Gulls, and everyone on the tour was thrilled to get a

fog-shrouded look at a nest of Gyrfalcons (a parent and some chicks) under a highway bridge.

More birding ensued that evening after dinner when Gavin took part of the group up Teller Road in a pouring rain (a reminder that some of those layers should be waterproof as well as windproof) to look for a White Wagtail. No White Wagtail was spotted, but the group got great looks at a Yellow Wagtail and saw a Long-tailed Jaeger pounce on a vole and eat it in the middle of the road.

On the fourth day of our Alaskan adventure, we birded a while along Kourgarak Road where we saw Arctic Warblers, another highlight of the trip, before returning to Nome to board a flight back to Anchorage. This was our first true introduction into the weather-related vagaries of Alaska, as our flight was delayed for several hours by thick fog, but we were lucky enough to finally fly out by 9 p.m. and get into Anchorage for a short night of sleep before we three and one other birder from the Gambell/Nome trip left the following morning for St. Paul with Gavin as our guide. Jon, who not only is an expert on bird subspecies but can quote almost every song lyric written by Leonard Cohen, left us to attend another event in some warmer state.

EDITOR’S NOTE: *Stay tuned for part 2 of “Way Up North to Alaska” in the Spring issue of The Yellowhammer.*

Thanks for the Stories

IF YOU HAVE AN ARTICLE, STORY, OR AMUSING INCIDENT YOU would like to share, please send it to the Editor. Electronic versions are much easier to copy and paste, but send them by snail mail or paper airplane if you can make one. The addresses are on the back cover.

Please send other articles about your birding adventures, trips, yard sightings, or just short vignettes that were interesting, different, or amusing.

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

| | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| Spring 2014 | February 10, 2014 |
| Summer 2014 | June 1, 2014 |
| Fall 2014 | August 10, 2014 |

RUSTY BLACKBIRD SPRING MIGRATION BLITZ—CALLING ALL BIRDERS!

"Get Rusty" This Spring to Save a Declining Blackbird!



WHY? OVER THE PAST HALF-CENTURY, THE HISTORICALLY abundant Rusty Blackbird has endured one of the steepest population declines ever documented among North American landbirds. Within the last 15 years, scientists have learned more about this bird's breeding and wintering ecology, and this knowledge allows us to target conservation initiatives during these phases of this bird's annual cycle. However, as with many migratory species, we know very little about Rusty Blackbird ecology, distribution, and habitat use during migration. Are there hot spots where many individuals congregate? Are there stopover areas that are used predictably each year, and are these locations protected? The Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz will address these and other questions to help focus future research and conservation of one of North America's most vulnerable blackbirds. We're recruiting an army of birders to participate in this effort to help conserve this fascinating songbird. Will you accept our birding challenge?

Who? The International Rusty Blackbird Working Group, eBird, and the Vermont Center for Ecostudies are partnering with local organizations to recruit volunteer observers from across the southeastern U.S., East Coast, Midwest, Alaska, and Canada. In Alabama, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources—Wehle Land Conservation Center is supporting this effort.

What? Each participating state will have a 3-8 week target window during which birders will search for Rusty Blackbirds. Within this window, birders may explore favored birding haunts or newly identified areas that they suspect may harbor Rusty Blackbirds. We'll provide some guidance on potential habitats

to explore, but birders should feel free to get creative—and ambitious!—with their searching.

When? Target dates for Alabama are all in March.

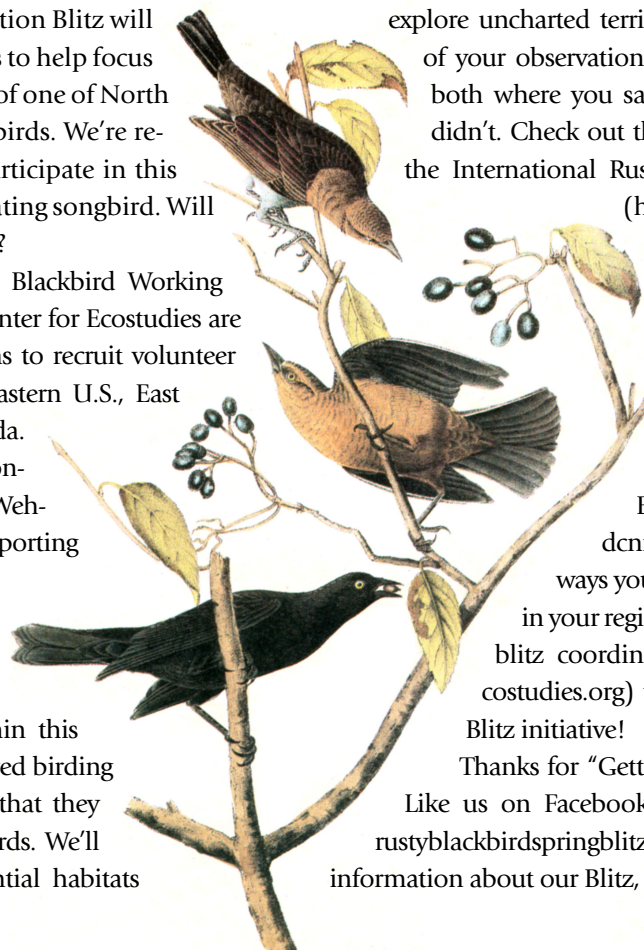
Where? Get ready for a continent-wide event! The Spring Blitz will span the Rusty Blackbird's entire spring migration range, from the wintering grounds in the southeastern United States, up the East Coast and through the Midwest to Canada and Alaska.

How do I get involved? Easy! If you'd like to contribute data to the Spring Migration Blitz effort, bird as you normally do, focusing on potential Rusty Blackbird habitat during the Blitz time frame established for your region. You can seek out the best-known places for Rusty sightings or explore uncharted territory. Make sure to report ALL of your observations to eBird—we want to know both where you saw these birds and where you didn't. Check out the newly revamped website of the International Rusty Blackbird Working Group

(<http://rustyblackbird.org/outreach/migration-blitz/>) for information about identification, vocalizations, habitat preferences, and types of data to collect to support this initiative. Also, check with your Alabama Coordinator Eric Soehren (eric.soehren@dcnr.alabama.gov) for additional ways you can help with the Blitz efforts in your region, or contact spring migration blitz coordinator Judith Scarl (jscarl@vtecostudies.org) to get involved in the broader Blitz initiative!

Thanks for "Getting Rusty" with us this spring!

Like us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/rustyblackbirdspringblitz>) to follow up-to-the minute information about our Blitz, and happy birding!



2013 AOS Fall Meeting Compilation List Dauphin Island, Alabama, October 11-13

NOTEWORTHY BIRDS OF THE WEEKEND INCLUDED GLOSSY IBIS, Greater Black-backed Gull, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. The total for the meeting count period was 150.

Mallard
Mottled Duck
Blue-winged Teal
Pied-billed Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
American White Pelican
Brown Pelican
American Bittern
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Reddish Egret
Cattle Egret
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
White Ibis
Glossy Ibis
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Cooper's Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
American Kestrel
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Clapper Rail
Common Gallinule
Black-bellied Plover
Snowy Plover
Wilson's Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Piping Plover
Killdeer
American Oystercatcher
Black-necked Stilt
American Avocet

Spotted Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
Willet
Lesser Yellowlegs
Ruddy Turnstone
Sanderling
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Dunlin
Short-billed Dowitcher
Wilson's Snipe
Laughing Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Gull-billed Tern
Caspian Tern
Black Tern
Common Tern
Forster's Tern
Royal Tern
Sandwich Tern
Black Skimmer
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
White-winged Dove
Mourning Dove
Common Ground-Dove
Great Horned Owl
Barred Owl
Common Nighthawk
Chuck-will's-widow
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker

Pileated Woodpecker
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Acadian Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Gray Kingbird
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Loggerhead Shrike
White-eyed Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Carolina Wren
House Wren
Sedge Wren
Marsh Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird
Gray-cheeked Thrush
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Black-and-white Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
American Redstart
Cape May Warbler
Northern Parula

Magnolia Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Pine Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Canada Warbler
Yellow-breasted Chat
Eastern Towhee
Grasshopper Sparrow
Nelson's Sparrow
Seaside Sparrow
Summer Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Painted Bunting
Bobolink
Red-winged Blackbird
Yellow-headed Blackbird
Common Grackle
Boat-tailed Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Orchard Oriole
House Finch
House Sparrow

All reported sightings will be accepted and published in *The Yellowhammer*. However, the meeting compilation list in *The Yellowhammer* is not an official record. Species that are **boldfaced**, or listed in the Hypothetical section of the AOS Field Card, must be supported by complete written details and submitted to, and accepted by, the Records Committee to become an official AOS record. *Italicized* species usually need written details but these may be brief. Out of season and locally rare birds should also be documented. Refer to the front page of the AOS Field Card for additional details.

DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, OCTOBER 12, 2013

Minutes of the AOS Board Meeting

By DANA HAMILTON, *Secretary*

THE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF directors of the Alabama Ornithological Society, Inc. was held on October 12, 2013, at Dauphin Island, Alabama. A quorum was present for the meeting.

Bianca J. Allen served as temporary chair and Dana Hamilton served as temporary secretary.

The chair announced that the meeting is being held pursuant to a written waiver of notice signed by each of the directors or waiver e-mailed in lieu of physical signature. By action of the board, the waiver was made a part of the minutes.

The organization's articles of incorporation were filed in Macon County, Alabama, on August 9, 2013.

The chair announced the new officers as Ken Ward who will be president, David Pylant as vice-president, Rufina Ward as treasurer, and Pat Reed as secretary. Maureen Shaffer and Anne Miller will be the new Meetings Committee chairmen.

The chair announced that the new ex-officio members of the board, Bianca J. Allen, immediate past president, and Steve McConnell, officer of the Alabama Bird Records Committee will be voting members of the board.

Shirley Farrell moved that the chair recommend the new slate of officers to the membership for voting by the AOS membership. The motion, duly seconded, passed.

Col. Bob Reed moved to recommend to the AOS membership for approval the proposed bylaws attached to these minutes and further, that the official copy of the AOS bylaws, once approved by the membership, shall be kept at the AOS principal office on record with the state of Alabama or that the official copy otherwise shall be secured and maintained as directed by the board of directors. The motion, duly seconded, passed.

The chair announced that the Alabama Ornithological Society already has been determined by the Internal Revenue Service to be exempt from payment of federal corporate income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code per the IRS determination letter dated November 9,

1988. It assigned EIN 62-1368169 to AOS. The EIN was changed in 1999 to 63-1229959 because someone filed again for an EIN. The IRS now recognizes 63-1229959. The chair will present a copy of the federal income tax exemption letter to the secretary and instruct the secretary to keep a copy of that letter with the organization's official records. The chair announced that AOS is exempt from state corporate income or similar taxes but not from state or local sales and use taxes.

The chair announced (1) that the principal office of the Alabama Ornithological Society was established by inclusion in the articles of incorporation as being in Birmingham, Alabama, and (2) that the registered agent and the registered agent's address were established by inclusion in the articles of incorporation as follows: Eric Soehren, 1962 Old Federal Road, Shorter, AL 36075-3512

The chair announced that the person designated as the registered agent and the address of the registered agent may be changed in the future by action of the board of directors and filing with the office of the Alabama secretary of state.

Mary Frances Stayton moved that the funds of the Alabama Ornithological Society shall be maintained in account(s) at the Compass Bank and subsequently at banks or financial institutions as shall be designated by action of the board of directors. The motion was seconded, and the motion passed. Mary Frances Stayton added that Alabama Ornithological Society also has a certificate of deposit at the Telco Credit Union.

The chair announced three new policies: the membership policy, the publications policy, and the committees policy. Shirley Farrell moved that the new policies be presented to the membership for approval, recommending their approval. The motion, duly seconded, passed.

The chair announced that AOS must rescind our AOS constitution since all of the information contained therein is also contained in the new by-laws. Damien Simbeck moved to ask that the membership rescind the Alabama Ornithological Society constitution. The motion, duly seconded, passed.

Col. Bob Reed moved to invite the AOS immediate past President to serve on the Executive Committee. The motion, duly seconded, passed.

The chair announced that the state of Alabama requires that at least two board members must serve on each standing committee. The chair requested that each board member examine the list of standing committees to determine on which committees they are willing to serve. Stan Hamilton volunteered to serve on the Membership Committee. Damien Simbeck and Scot Duncan volunteered to serve on the Conservation Committee. Annabel Markle volunteered to serve on the Public Relations Committee. Eric Soehren volunteered to serve on the Dan C. Holliman Research Committee.

OFFICERS' REPORTS

Secretary's Report: Larry Gardella moved to approve the minutes from the Spring AOS meeting. The motion, duly seconded, passed.

Treasurer's Report: Mary Frances Stayton reported that the deposits to the AOS account total \$6,289.50. The withdrawals from the account total \$9,652.70. The account balance as of October 12, 2013 is \$18,902.39. At the time of the report, the bills from the AOS fall meeting had not yet been paid.

Vice President's Report: Ken Ward reported that the arrangements for the AOS Winter Meeting have been finalized. The meeting will be held in Crawfordville, Florida at the Wildwood Resort. A contract has been signed, a block of rooms has been reserved at a discounted rate of \$76.59 per room including tax. Ken has not yet finalized the selection of a speaker for the meeting, and he is still working on the arrangements for the field trips.

President's Report: Bianca Allen thanked the AOS Board members for their participation and input during her term as president. Annabel Markle interjected that the AOS Board owes Bianca a huge thanks for her perseverance, her patience, and her efforts over and above for getting the job done. The AOS Board responded with a round of applause for Bianca.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Conservation Report: Bianca Allen reported that Greg Harber wrote a letter based on a recommendation from Greg Jackson to Commissioner Guy on behalf of the Alabama Ornithological Society to express our support for the proposal submitted by the Alabama Coastal Heritage

Trust, the Weeks Bay Foundation, the Mobile Audubon Society, and Gulf Highlands to acquire the Gulf Highlands property. Greg Jackson reported that the land in question is located on Fort Morgan Road between the Beach Club and the Gulf Shores Plantation property. It is approximately 112 acres and includes coastal scrub all the way from the highway to the beach and includes the beach. It includes the highest dunes on the Fort Morgan peninsula; there are several wet areas and a few oaks on the property. It was slated for development as condominiums and is the largest undeveloped tract in that area. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is considering using a portion of the BP oil spill settlement money to purchase this land for protection. The landowner is willing to sell it. AOS sent a letter to support the initiative to acquire this property. It is unspoiled beach, dunes, and coastal scrub bird habitat. Bob Duncan advised that Snowy Plovers breed on the property. He and Lucy Duncan conducted an environmental survey there when the Beach Club was first built. Greg Jackson added that Piping Plovers winter on the property.

Membership Report: Larry Gardella reported that the Membership Committee recognizes that the need to incorporate more social media and linking to other organizations' websites. The Membership Committee is also happy to have Stan Hamilton on it.

Publications Report: Annabel Markle reported that this is her last meeting as the chairman of the Publications Committee. She also reported that *Alabama Birdlife* will be published in a couple of weeks. Annabel wanted to take the opportunity to thank Tom Haggerty, Robin McDonald, and Bob Reed for turning out really fine quality publications. She stated that their efforts have made her job as the chairman a "piece of cake."

Education Committee: Shirley Farrell reported that we have about 135 children on the *Alabama Youth Birder* email list. A newsletter will be published next week. The newsletter is published four times a year via email. The Education Committee will hold a silent auction at the 2014 AOS Spring meeting to raise funds for the Education Committee. The Committee is in dire need of funding. Shirley reported a recent generous donation by Charlotte Fanz. Shirley also reported that the Education Committee will also participate in Dauphin Island Discovery Day at the AOS spring meeting.

Last spring, they had approximately 100 children who signed up for the *Alabama Youth Birder* newsletter as a result of Dauphin Island Discovery Day. Shirley also reported that AOS has two festival kits that can be used to represent AOS at festivals across the state. These kits may be used for other birding festivals; not just for children's events. These kits include AOS membership applications and checklist. The rolling carts also include the huge banner for true-to-scale wingspan so that the children can stand up against it and measure their arm length against the wingspan of birds.

Meetings Report: Bianca thanked Don Self for his service as chairman of the Meetings Committee. Maureen Shaffer and Anne Miller volunteered to take Don's place as the Meetings Committee chairs. They coordinated the Meeting Committee activities during the 2013 AOS fall meeting. Bianca also commended John Stowers who stores the AOS meeting materials and supplies in his home on Dauphin Island.

ABRC Report: Steve McConnell reported via email that the next ABRC meeting has not been scheduled, but he plans to hold it before the 2014 AOS spring meeting, if possible. Three member terms are completing this Fall, so the ABRC will hold elections to fill the vacancies at their next meeting. Two records have completed both rounds without a decision and require a meeting review in both. One record is making its second round of circulation. Eighteen records were distributed for first round review in August, and votes are due in by November 7, 2013. The old business includes potential treatment of exotics and subspecies and a clarification of state pelagic boundaries.

DIBS Report: Bianca Allen reported that John Porter is working with the realty company that represents a property owner for the possible acquisition of a piece of property. The property contains some open springs on it. Also, DIBS has been contacted by the state of Alabama for some possible funding which could potentially be used toward acquisition of additional property for DIBS. Specific proposals will be discussed at the DIBS board meeting on October 13, 2013.

Website: Bianca Allen reported that Kathy Hicks does a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes to keep the AOS website up to date. Bianca encouraged the AOS board to get in touch with Kathy if changes and/or updates to the website are needed.

Public Relations: Carrie Johnson reported to Bianca via email that the new bird checklists are on their way to the

printer and AOS should have them very soon. Carrie also reported that they are interested in updating the checklist every two years. This is a very worthwhile partnership.

OLD BUSINESS

AOS Fort Morgan Habitat Restoration Initiative: Greg Jackson reported that due to some recent Fort Morgan birder visitation issues and incidents, the AOS Fort Morgan initiative has changed direction. The original initiative was to formulate a plan for the restoration of the birding habitat at the Fort. In addition to the habitat restoration initiative, Greg proposes that AOS and a coalition of other interested stakeholders should partner with the Alabama Historical Commission and the Fort Morgan management to work toward restoring and improving the relationship between the Fort Morgan management and the birding community and to work together to formulate a long-term habitat management plan for Fort Morgan. Greg noted that an environmental assessment survey has been conducted in the past, and that this environmental assessment survey could potentially serve as a starting point for the discussion. Greg has approached several other organizations to form a coalition which could potentially involve some funding sources, as well as biologists, botanists, and other people with valuable expertise in the management of natural resources. Joining with other groups will involve thousands of active members who share the common goal of improving the Fort Morgan habitat and restoring a positive relationship between the Alabama Historic Commission, the Fort Morgan Management, and the birding community.

Eric Soehren reported that he received an email from Brian Hill, the Fort Morgan superintendent, inviting him to attend a meeting on Friday, October 11, 2013 for interested stakeholders to discuss the recent Fort Morgan issues. Mr. Hill indicated that this is an initial meeting and that subsequent meetings will be conducted in the future. Eric Soehren attended as a representative for the Alabama State Lands Division. Eric provided an account of the meeting to the AOS board. The primary topics of discussion included the timing of the prescribed burn at Fort Morgan in the spring, birders' access to birding the Fort property, and the use of a previous environmental assessment survey to develop a master plan for future management of the natural resources at Fort Morgan. Eric reported that Mr. Hill was extremely receptive to the assembled stakeholders. Mr. Hill was very conciliatory and

stated that he wants to begin to outline a plan for management of the Fort, and he wants input from the stakeholders in the development of the plan.

Vacancies on Board and Committees: Bianca Allen encouraged the board members to look over the list of vacancies for the open board positions.

NEW BUSINESS

Website Reciprocal Agreement: Bianca Allen asked the board to consider entering into reciprocal agreements with other organizations so that links to AOS events can be shown in their publications and links to the other organizations can be shown on the AOS website. Bianca stated that in the past links to AOS events on the Birmingham Audubon Society website have generated interest for AOS events. Bianca advised that these reciprocal agreements will not involve expenditure of any funding. Larry Gardella stated that these types of agreements are critical to AOS's outreach efforts to recruit new members. He also stated that the board will need to develop such a policy.

P.O. Box for AOS: Bianca Allen advised that John Porter has been checking the AOS post office box faithfully for many years and is now ready to relinquish this responsibility. This P.O. box is not the official AOS address but it is on the website, the brochure, and in the *Yellowhammer*. Bianca added that we do not receive a large volume of mail there, and it would not be necessary to check it more than once a week or so. Subsequent to the meeting, Mary Flint Porter volunteered to continue checking the AOS post office box. Bianca advised that Mary Flint Porter will be primarily responsible for checking the P.O. box and Andrew Haffenden has agreed to be a back-up in case Mary is unable to do so.

Bianca also commended Andrew for mowing the birding habitat trails into the lawn at the Isle Dauphine Golf Course.

Old Sound System: Bianca reported that the Siegwalds have brought down the old AOS sound system which consists of speakers, a microphone, and a satellite conference bridge. AOS has not used it for years. Bianca suggested that it could be given to a charitable organization. Stan Hamilton asked if it is the same system that we tried to use in Crawfordsville. If so, that system did not work. Col. Bob Reed moved that the AOS president be authorized to make a determination to dispose of the old AOS sound system in whatever manner that he deems fit. The motion, duly seconded, passed.

Bianca Allen called for any additional business. Eric Soehren commended Mary Frances Stayton's dedicated service as treasurer through three AOS administrations, Dana Hamilton's service as AOS secretary and Annabel Markle's dedicated service as the chairman of the Publications Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Area Christmas Bird Counts

Birmingham, AL—Saturday, December 21, 2013

Compiler: David George (205-477-5074; dpsageorge@bellsouth.net)

Dauphin Island, AL—Saturday, December 21, 2013

Compiler: Tom Siegwald (251-666-1762; siegwald@outlook.com)

Eufaula NWR, AL—Thursday, December 26, 2013

Compiler: Mason Jarrett (706-992-8864; beltedkingfisher2000@yahoo.com)

Guntersville, AL—Friday, December 26, 2013

Compiler: Linda Reynolds (256-582-2970 or 256-298-1810; rreynolds2970@charter.net)

Montgomery, AL—Saturday, January 4, 2014

Compiler: Larry Gardella (334-356-6073; lgardellabirds@charter.net)

Russell Cave National Monument, Bridgeport, AL—Saturday, December 14, 2013

Compiler: Keena Nichelle Graham (256-495-2672; Kenna_graham@nps.gov)

Tuscaloosa, AL—Saturday, December 14, 2013

Compiler: Harry Blewitt (205-826-6747; Hblewitt@NC.UA.EDU)

Waterloo, AL—Saturday, December 14, 2013

Compiler: Paul Kittle (256-765-4395 pdkittle@una.edu)

Wheeler NWR, AL—Saturday, December 14, 2013

Compiler: Dwight Cooley (256-353-7243, ext. 23; dwight_cooley@fws.gov)

Ponce-de Leon, FL (Choctawhatchee River)—

Thursday, December 19, 2013

Compiler: James Hill (814-323-2001; info@supergourd.com)

Columbus, GA—Saturday, December 21, 2013

Compiler: Mason Jarrett (706-992-8864; Beltedkingfisher2000@yahoo.com)

A O S W I N T E R M E E T I N G , J A N U A R Y 2 4 - 2 6 , 2 0 1 4

Meet the Speaker: Julie Brashears Wraithmell

JULIE BRASHEARS WRAITHMELL is Audubon of Florida's director of wildlife conservation. Julie earned her BS from Duke University, and her MS from Florida State University. She worked for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for eight years, creating the Great Florida Birding Trail, and finally overseeing the agency's wildlife viewing programs. In 2005, she joined Audubon Florida's Tallahassee office where she coordinates state wildlife policy and Audubon's grassroots communications, lobbies the state legislature, and oversees Audubon coastal bird management work, including Audubon's Northeast Florida program, Important Bird Areas program, Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries program in Tampa Bay, and Audubon's new Deepwater Horizon restoration program

in the Florida Panhandle. She has served as a board member for the Florida Ornithological Society, serves on the Technical Committee of Florida's Bird Conservation Initiative, and was appointed to the Adaptation Technical Working Group of the Governor's Florida Climate Action Team by Deputy Secretary Michael Sole in 2008. She also serves as an appointed member of the steering committee for the development of a Coastal Habitat Conservation Plan for the Department of Environmental Protection's Coastal Construction Control Line program. In 2010, she was recognized as one of National Audubon Society's Women of the Gulf for her role in the Deepwater Horizon disaster response. She lives in Tallahassee, Florida, with her husband and daughter.

Florida's Beach-Dependent Birds

By JULIE BRASHEARS WRAITHMELL



FLORIDA'S BEACH-DEPENDENT BIRDS HAVE DECLINED precipitously in the last three decades, often for lack of undisturbed beach habitat where they can successfully nest and raise their young. Once widespread, beach nesters such as Least Terns, Black Skimmers, American Oystercatchers and Snowy Plovers have grown increasingly restricted to public lands and, even on these conservation properties, have been challenged to successfully fledge young due to recreational disturbance and other pressures. Today, for example, surveys suggest that fewer than 500 Snowy Plover breeding adults remain in the state.

Audubon is Florida's oldest wildlife conservation organization, with more than 100 years of stewardship born of the fight to end the slaughter of the Everglades' wading birds for the millinery trade. Today, our dedicated staff biologists and 44 chapters engage volunteers, moving them from awareness to action to advocacy on behalf of these species. In few examples is this better demonstrated than our efforts to conserve beach-dependent birds.

In the late 1990s, Audubon chapters in the St. Petersburg area, alarmed at the trends in their bird surveys, began working with Florida Fish and Wildlife to better protect these beach-obligate breeders, standardizing symbolic posting to mark their colonies and posting volunteer bird stewards to chaperone nesting areas on busy warm weather weekends. In 2013, stewarding efforts have expanded to 36 sites around the state with staffed or volunteer coastal bird management and protection occurring at 109. Chapters have pioneered unique strategies to support Least Terns nesting on gravel rooftops for lack of undisturbed beach sites, and successfully championed dramatic changes in public land management to give these species a fighting chance at survival. Audubon is a charter member of the Florida Shorebird Alliance, led by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which coordinates regional partnerships of coastal habitat managers, wildlife biologists, volunteers and others to collaborate on management and recovery of these species.

When the Deepwater Horizon disaster occurred, the Florida Panhandle saw (and continues to see) oil on its shores

and statewide, and our beaches saw horrible impacts as a result of the spill response, which destroyed nests and nesting areas, modified beach profiles, scarred sea grass beds and marshes, and more. While the public outpouring of interest in volunteering was immense during the spill, few official opportunities were provided by government agencies or BP for volunteers to really make a difference; Audubon was able to channel these eager volunteers into bird stewarding, to stand witness to and try to stem the tide of the spill and spill response impacts.

Today, Audubon is a leading voice in Florida for the use of Gulf restoration dollars to recover coastal bird populations and their habitat, and we are excited to be implementing an early restoration project in the Panhandle, with an eye to expanding this work statewide and throughout the Gulf.

Get involved! To learn more, follow Audubon Florida on Facebook and Twitter, subscribe to our advocacy newsletters online (<http://bit.ly/e5LPYX>) or better yet, contact us to volunteer: flconservation@audubon.org.

If You Get to the AOS Winter Meeting Early...

Wakulla Springs Trails

There are several short trails around the hotel as well as excellent winter birding on the hotel grounds. Easy walking on wooded trails.

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Lighthouse Road birding. General birding for wading birds, winter passerines and shorebirds. Easy roadside birding; moderate walking. Self-guided.

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Shorebirding

This event branches off of the main road with a dike hike to the back side of Stoney Bayou 2. There are thousands of shorebirds in Stoney Bayou 2 right now (early November).

Hickory Mound Hammock

Hickory Mound Hammock is east of the St. Marks NWR entrance road about 21.5 miles. It is more remote than St. Marks and can be astonishingly rich with shorebirds and

ducks in winter. You pass through coastal woodland heading south to the impoundments. You'll see more of the same that you saw on the Lighthouse Road, but the vastness of the panorama is daunting.

Bald Point State Park

Renowned for scoters, other ducks, and shorebirds, Bald Point is located west of the Wildwood Inn. Drive south on Hwy 98 across the Ochlockonee Bridge in Panacea. Turn left on Hwy 390. When the road splits, bear left and drive to the end. \$4 charge per car for entry. Following this area, drive to Alligator Point before returning on Hwy 390 up to Hwy 98. Alligator Point is known for scoters seen in close as well as the sometimes seen Common Merganser.

Mashes Sand Beach

Ducks and shorebirds and rails in the marsh. Go South from the motel, then east on Hwy 372 which is immediately before crossing Ochlockonee Bay. Drive to the end of the road and there's a park.

Otter Lake

This small NWR lake is the most beautiful place to experience sunset. The moss-draped cypress trees ringing the lake will fill up with cormorants, ibis, herons and egrets coming to roost for the night. Barred owls are often heard and seen here. If you have a camera, you must bring it! From US 98 in the town of Panacea, turn west on Otter Lake Drive. (There's signage there to the Panacea First Baptist Church.) Drive the road due west and into the parking area for the lake. It's also beautiful at sunrise, but the sun comes up behind you as you view the lake.

Bird Trail Websites

See the guidebook to the Panhandle Great Florida Birding Trail here: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/62485724/Panhandle-Great-Florida-Birding-and-Wildlife-Trail-Guidebook>

See the guidebook to the West Florida (Gulf Coast east of St. Marks and down to around Tampa) Great Florida Birding Trail here: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/62485724/Panhandle-Great-Florida-Birding-and-Wildlife-Trail-Guidebook>

Subway sandwich shop on US 98 at Hwy 363 (Woodville Road which is about 8 mi. east of the motel and west of the entrance to SMNWR. Opens at 5 am).

AOS WINTER MEETING 2014

Wildwood Resort, 3896 Coastal Highway 98, Crawfordville, Florida, January 24-26, 2014

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24

6:00 p.m. Open Bar Social

7:00 p.m. Members Slide Show

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26

7:00 a.m. Field Trips—Meet in Wildwood parking lot

3:00 p.m. Board Meeting—Wildwood Conference Room

6:00 p.m. Open Bar Social—Wildwood Conference Room

6:45 p.m. Buffet Banquet—Wildwood Banquet Room

7:45 p.m. Program—Julie Brashears Wraithmell

SUNDAY, JANUARY 27

7:00 a.m. Field Trips—Meet in Wildwood parking lot

12:00 p.m. Compilation—Wildwood Conference Room

ACCOMMODATIONS AND INFORMATION

WILDWOOD RESORT

3896 Coastal Highway 98 Crawfordville, FL 32327

For reservations and information, call (850) 926-4455

Block room rate is \$76.59 including tax

Reservations should be made by January 1, 2014
to guarantee a room at the block rate

FRIDAY NIGHT POT LUCK

There will be *no* pot luck supper

AOS WINTER MEETING 2014 REGISTRATION FORM

Complete and return to:

Rufina Ward, 1689 Longleaf Drive NW, Huntsville, AL 35806

Telephone: (256) 837-5646 • E-mail: phinken@wowway.com

Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by January 14, 2014.

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

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Registration @ \$25 per person | \$ |
| Banquet @ \$15 per person | \$ |
| AOS 2014 Dues | \$ |
| DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution | \$ |
| | |
| TOTAL ENCLOSED | \$ |

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

Federal EIN: 63-1229959

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 33, NO. 4 • WINTER 2013

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ILLUSTRATIONS.....Annabel Markle

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The Yellowhammer, the newsletter of the Alabama Ornithological Society, is published four times a year. Editorial Office: 88838 Tallassee Highway, Tallassee, AL 36078. Send articles to be considered for publication to: BobReed1987@gmail.com. Subscriptions to *The Yellowhammer* and *Alabama Birdlife* are included in the AOS annual membership dues. Single copies \$2.00. Complimentary copies available for review and promotional purposes.

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Huntsville, AL 35806
e-mail: phinken@wowway.com

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>