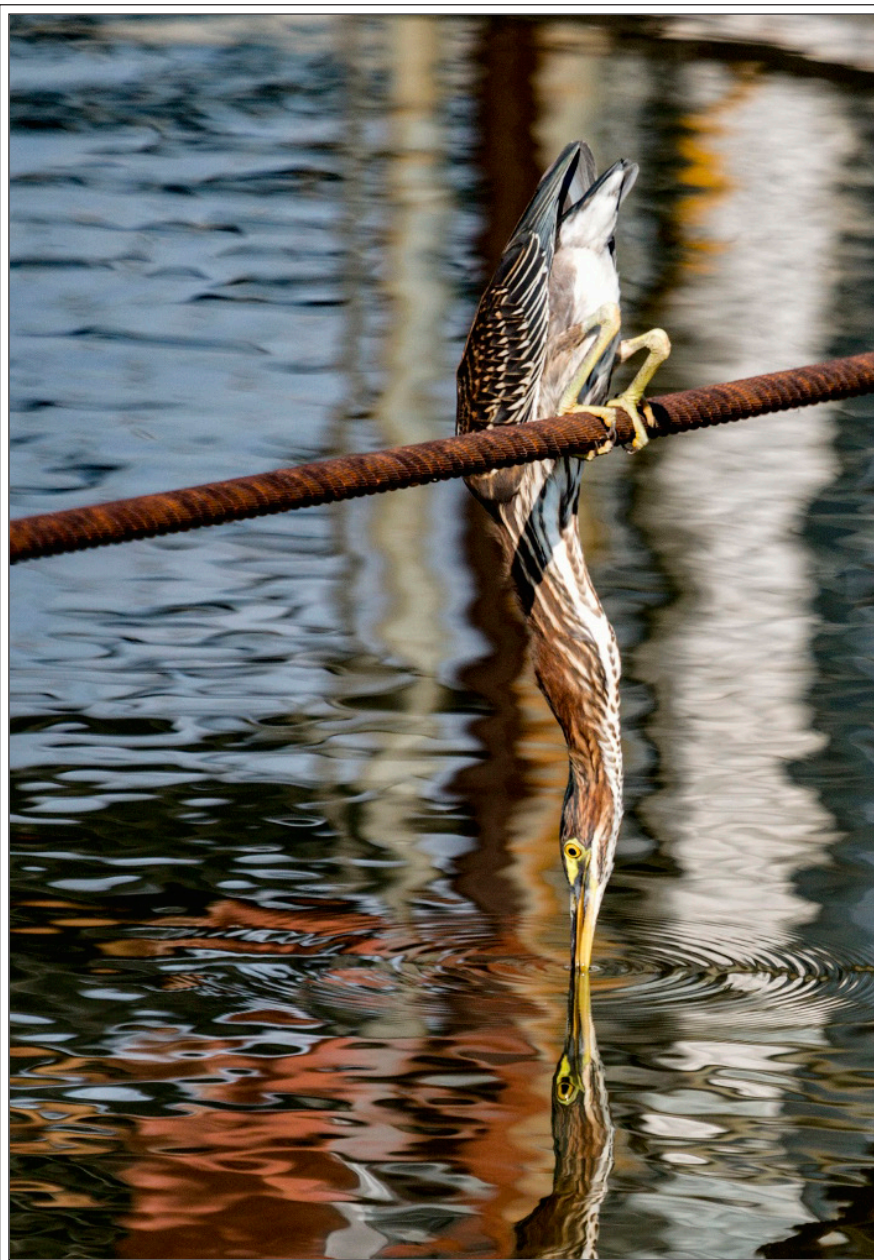


THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 36, NO. 4 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY WINTER 2016

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

FOUNDED 1952



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FRONT COVER: Susi Stroud's
photo of a Green Heron was
selected as the inaugural AOS
Photo Contest "Best in Show."
See article on page 12.

ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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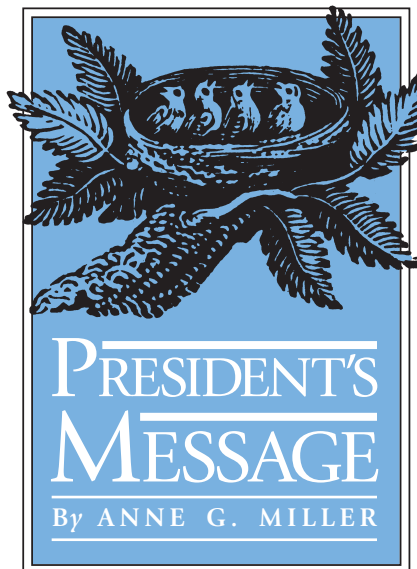
MEETINGS

Rufina Ward
 Charlotte Fanz, Priscilla Tubbs

LIVING A BIRD-FRIENDLY LIFE in the modern world isn't easy, even for bird lovers. Whenever I drive somewhere on a birding trip, I'm burning fossil fuels that produce greenhouse gases. So as a birder I'm contributing to climate change, even though I know that climate change, among its many other catastrophic effects, threatens the decline or disappearance of more than half of North America's bird species before the end of the century. We can add significant value to our birding expeditions by contributing our observations to eBird. But the tragic truth remains, as Walt Kelly's immortal poster honoring the first Earth Day proclaimed, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

Many of the forces causing drastic declines in bird populations require broad-scale remedies that make individual actions seem insignificant. Yet we bird lovers, as individuals, living mostly in urban areas, have a real impact on bird populations, for good or for ill. Collectively, urbanization is having a large and increasing impact on the Earth and its ecosystems. I'm sure that most AOS members make their gardens bird-friendly, planting native trees, shrubs, and flowers to provide birds with food and shelter, providing water features, and putting up bird feeders and houses. But it constantly surprises me that some important bird-friendly practices are often overlooked.

Aside from domestic cats, one of the greatest causes of mortality to birds is impact with glass windows and doors, which kills 988 million birds every year according to the American Bird Conservancy. Migrating birds like Wood Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, and White-throated Sparrows are especially endangered by glass. Birds don't understand a solid barrier that they can't see, so they're oblivious to the danger posed by glass windows that reflect the sky and vegetation. Shortly after I moved to my home on top of Shades Mountain, a Wood Thrush crashed into a large picture window in my living room and was killed instantly. The loss of this beautiful bird moved me to action. My inexpensive solution was to purchase cheap, light-weight bird netting in the garden section at a big box store and staple



it (taut, but not tight) on the outside of the window frame, about 2 ½ inches from the glass. This works well as long as there is a gap between the netting and the glass. The view from inside is only slightly altered, but it effectively makes the window visible as a barrier to most birds. In the rare case where a bird does fly towards the window, it bounces harmlessly off of the netting.

I know a number of bird lovers who have taken the trouble to fasten hawk silhouettes on the glass, thinking that songbirds will recognize and avoid the threatening shape of a predator. Unfortunately, hawk silhouettes on windowpanes do not have any effect on birds. Silhouettes of

any kind are only effective in a dense pattern spaced about 4 inches apart over the entire surface of the glass. You can do this more effectively with Bird Tape, which can be applied in strips or small squares. It's available from the American Bird Conservancy (abcbirds.org). Their Glass Collisions Program researches the best available materials and offers a number of other commercial options on the website.

Another great hazard for birds is the use of pesticides and herbicides. The pesticides in most widespread use right now belong to a group known as neonicotinoids (known as 'neonics'), which are highly toxic to our native bees as well as to honey bees. This class of pesticides is so toxic that they can kill songbirds even in tiny amounts, and they linger for long periods in soil and water. Despite this extreme toxicity, according to the American Bird Conservancy, "... concentrations of insecticides sold for residential use on ornamental plants contain as much as 30 times the chemical load allowed in the agricultural sector." The website of the Center for Food Safety provides a list of garden products that contain neonics (centerforfoodsafety.org/files/bee_toxic_fact-sheet_73518.pdf). It's worth checking, because among the many familiar garden products that contain neonics, the names of some products don't even hint that they contain pesticides. Pesticides and herbicides are not only toxic to birds, but they also decrease the diversity of native plants and insects that makes your garden bird-friendly. As a general rule, less is more—less management of your surroundings will lead to better habitat for birds. Shrink your lawn and encourage thicker buffer

zones of native plants--tall trees, as well as understory trees, shrubs and flowering plants that produce berries and other foods for wildlife.

If you really want to get serious about living a bird-friendly life, I highly recommend a remarkable resource offered by Cornell Lab of Ornithology in partnership with the Nature Conservancy: it's called the Habitat Network, and you can join (free) at the Habitat Network's website (content.yard-map.org). This is a citizen science project initiated at Cornell in 2012 with funds from the National Science Foundation. The Habitat Network offers you a chance to learn from local and national resources how to improve your property as wildlife habitat, while you are contributing to research about the most successful methods of maintaining healthy ecosystems for wildlife in urban and suburban settings. I just signed up a few days ago, and am working with the tool provided online for analyzing the existing habitat on my property. If all goes well, I hope to link up with some of my neighbors so our yards can provide connectivity to increase the value of my neighborhood for wildlife. The Habitat Network is also

"the world's first interactive citizen scientist social network... focused on sharing strategies, maps and successes to build more wildlife habitat." The Habitat Network lets you see what others are doing, and get advice if you need it. If you've already created a bird-friendly habitat, you can help others in our region who are just getting started.

Another essential resource is the National Audubon Society's website (audubon.org), which offers detailed information for creating bird-friendly habitat as part of their Bird-friendly Communities project. One of the most useful tools on the website allows you to enter your zip code and receive an immediate, extensive list of native plants for your area, including information about which birds are most attracted by each plant. NAS encourages us all to work together to "reestablish the ecological functions of our cities and towns" in our yards and throughout our communities, with "simple acts of hope." For those of us who love birds, facing so many threats that seem beyond our control, it's good to know there is still vital work to be done in our own homes and backyards.

IN MEMORIAM

Harriett Harton (Findlay) Wright

January 18, 1918–September 15, 2016



ARRIETT WRIGHT, A RESIDENT OF BIRMINGHAM since 1945, died September 15, 2016 at the age of 98. She was a native of Conway, Arkansas, born January 18, 1918 to Daniel O.,

Jr. and Hattie Gibbons Harton. She received a BA degree from Hendrix College in Conway and an MA from Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1940 she married Dr. D. O. Wright, who died in 1968. In 1986 she married John Findlay III, who died in 1995. Harriett was active in organizations that supported nature and ecology. She was a published nature photographer who gave hundreds of programs on birds and wild flowers for garden clubs and civic groups. She was a charter member of the Alabama Ornithological Society and served as president. She was also a member of the Blanche Dean Chapter of the Alabama Wildlife Society, the National Audubon Society and

the Birmingham Audubon Society, which she served as president. Her backyard woods were a bird sanctuary for more than 60 years.

Harriet was an inspiring leader for all of us in the birding community, as well as a kind and gentle soul. Perhaps one reason our birding community here in Alabama is as warm and welcoming to all is because of Harriett's example throughout her long life. I know we will all miss her.

Anne G. Miller

God rest her soul. She was ready and the good Lord answered her prayers. We're losing the giants of the birding world!!! I have the sixth edition of the *National Geographic Field Guides to the Birds of North America* (spiral bound) with a note from Harriett enclosed saying, "The President

of AOS should have the latest edition of this field guide." I will forever treasure that book and most of all the sweet note. I received several notes from Harriett throughout the years and I have saved them all because they reflected what a gracious, loving soul she was. She was always my inspiration and I adored her. May her soul rest in peace forever with her Lord.

Bianca Allen

I am devastated. Harriet was always the epitome of grace and dignity, with the strong underpinnings of wit and intelligence. She will be sorely missed by all who knew her.

Paul Franklin

Oh, no. I know Harriet was in her 90s, but I am still very sad. She lived a long and productive life. She was one of the founders of AOS, and I believe the last one to go. I always loved seeing her at the meetings. Even though I hadn't seen her at a meeting for a while, it is strange that I thought of her yesterday and wondered how she was doing. She was a lovely, lively personality, and I was always, always in great admiration of her.

Sue Moske

Indeed, Sue, she earned the admiration of us all for her kind and gentle ways, her willingness to share her passion for birds and for her generous heart. Harriett had been confined to home and a wheelchair for the past many months and she would have been the first to tell you that she was ready for St. Peter to meet her at the bridge. Do know that to the very end she loved her birds and they brought her constant joy. Many Sundays I would join her for lunch after my platelet donations at the Red Cross and she and I would sit at her kitchen table and watch the birds at her feeders, and discuss what birds had been reported on ALBIRDS. Those reports to ALBIRDS were her lifeline to the birding community and she would recall the places and the birds she had seen there.

The ever-present Red-shouldered Hawk was outside the kitchen window waiting to give Harriett her first flying lessons now that she has earned her wings.

Harriett was diligent about keeping records. Indeed, all of Tom Imhof's "students" were—he trained them well. Perhaps Harriett's last contribution to the birding records

was the Baltimore Oriole that spent several weeks visiting her feeders this past winter. I always told her that if for some reason I died before she did I wanted to come back as a bird in her yard. She was especially fond of her bluebirds, and she might be the only person I know who had a red-shouldered hawk trained to come when she whistled. You would have, too, if you knew there was homemade suet awaiting upon your arrival.

I just checked some old BAS newsletters Harriett had given me, from her first years when she joined the organization—the date is 1952. Suffice it to say that anyone who has EVER been an active member of BAS or AOS knew Harriett Wright, as she has been active in these organizations from their earliest days.

A little story for you all.... A few weeks ago Harriett had a bout with pneumonia and was in the hospital for a spell. Ever Harriett, she would say that hospitals were no fun and that they were noisy places—how could anyone ever get any rest?! I told her that she should wear her hearing aids and turn them off, as they make great ear plugs, too—a fact I use to my advantage at times! Anyhow, she proceeded to tell me that the hearing aid place had called her not long ago asking her to come to the store and try on some new aids, with new technology. Her response was priceless, "Imagine! Trying to sell a 98-year-old lady new hearing aids!"

So there you have it. 98 years old, but forever young.

Greg Harber

Thank you for the stories and memories, Greg. Harriett did so much for AOS (and for birds and birders in Alabama). She had many of the records in Tom Imhof's *Birds of Alabama*. I just opened the book and turned to her record of seeing 80 Lapland Longspurs in Marion in January 1957. She was getting close to 40 even back then.

Rest in peace, Harriett.

Larry Gardella

Harriett was our birding mentor. She took us under her wing during bird counts. We will always remember the food she would bring and share. Well, not really share but force you to eat! How could you so "No" to her. We would have sausage biscuits in the morning, tuna sandwiches for lunch, and delicious brownies for dessert. Frequently, after the bird count we would either stop at Wendy's on 280

or treat her to chili and a frosty or stop at Pablo's to eat Mexican with a cold beer. We had to toast our sightings. Harriett turned over her spring and fall bird route to us and she would join us. We would meet her and drive. However, after several years of driving up from Selma, we had to give the route back to her to share with someone else. It was during these times when we had the route that we carried on Harriett's tradition of food. We would bring the sausage biscuits and share nuts and fruit and chocolate. She still insisted on bringing those tuna sandwiches, though!

Shirley and Frank Farrell

Harriett was the epitome of grace, elegance, and beauty. When one of her caregivers called to tell us that she had gone on, I thanked Janice, and said that I hoped Harriett did not suffer at the end. Janice assured me that Harriett passed with a smile on her face and when she left the house yesterday morning for the last time, her hair was done perfectly, and she had her lipstick on. Harriett was such a gentle teacher. She shared her knowledge with such an ease that we didn't even realize how much she was teaching us. Her sweet voice, telling us to watch for unmowed vetch fields, "that's where the Bobolinks will be! When the cross-vine blooms, the Orchard Orioles are passing through, piercing those blooms to sip the nectar. We need to find the Brown-headed Nuthatches for the count; let's find some Virginia pine, they like those. That's another good bird...spoiled by a second look!"

Harriett was a gracious southern woman who loved to host her family and dear friends. As Shirley mentioned, on bird counts, Harriett brought food to share, especially those famous tuna salad sandwiches. Harriett told me that during the war, tuna was at a premium and "the boys liked to go with the girls who brought tuna." She always seemed to have a tin of chewy, moist brownies tucked away, and at Christmas time, she made and shared her magical chocolate almond toffee.

There are so many precious memories of times spent in the field with Harriett. Her friendship was a gift I feel honored to have shared. Her legacy lives on in our hearts: the vast amount of knowledge she shared with us, and the sweet memories we made when spending time with her.

Dana Hamilton

Harriett was a great friend of long standing, and we shared many fond memories. After Duard died, she began traveling with Bob and me, first to a National Audubon meeting in St. Louis in 1969 I believe, then to another in Wisconsin (where we met John Findlay for the first time), and yet another in Seattle. We continued after she and John married, and I don't think she missed a one of our 20-plus Spring Tours—actually helping us to plan some of the early ones. Harriett was always a delight to be with and a wonderful addition to any group. She will continue to live always in my memories.

Elberta Reid

A lovelier person than Harriet would be hard to imagine, lovely as a lady of grace, intelligence and strength. Harriet candidly stated that she was ready for the next stage of her life, and she faced this eventual passing with bracing courage, grateful for her life, her family, and her many devoted friends.

For those of you who birded with Harriet during the last 75 years, I can hardly imagine what her departure will mean. But I join with you in my admiration for this very special friend to all of us.

Donald B. Sweeney

Harriett's winning smile, obvious joy of birding, amazing energy, and her wonderful ear, even in her 90s, were amazing and undeniably appealing. Being around her was always a joy and a treat. What a lady! And every time you enter an Alabama rest area, notice that the picture of the Northern Flicker on the wall was taken by Harriett Wright.

Pat and Bob Reed

Upcoming Meetings

FOURTH FRIDAY—January 27-29, 2017

Winter Meeting, Lake Guntersville State Park

THIRD FRIDAY—April 21-23, 2017

Spring Meeting, Dauphin Island

SECOND FRIDAY—October 13-15, 2017

Fall Meeting, Dauphin Island

AOS FALL MEETING, OCTOBER 14-16, 2016

Fall Meeting Report

By GREG HARBER



HAVE OFTEN TOLD FOLKS THAT FALL AOS MEETINGS were the times we reintroduced ourselves to our friends, and spring meetings were when we reintroduced ourselves to the birds. The implication and rationale being, of course, that at fall meetings bird numbers can be scarce and it makes for an easier time to bird at a leisurely pace with our friends as we stroll the paths and roadsides and catch up with each other. Fallouts, on the other hand, sometimes punctuate spring meetings, and with neotropical migrants seemingly everywhere it is more difficult to chat with folks.

This fall, however, was the perfect blend of the two scenarios—not huge numbers of birds, but enough to keep the mood placid and conversations engaging while at the same time offering a great selection of migrants, which resulted in 163 species being reported at compilation on Sunday. Andrew Haffenden summed it nicely when he commented, at the Saturday night banquet, that the secret to finding this many species at a fall meeting was because there were that many birders together at once, enjoying each other's company while keeping their eyes and ears tuned to the birds. I could not have agreed more, Andrew.

Several species provided extra satisfaction during the course of the weekend: a Couch's/Tropical Kingbird on the Fort Morgan peninsula, two gull species—Thayer's and Greater Black-backed Gulls—and undoubtedly the rarest in the bunch, a Red Phalarope first observed by Tennessee birder and AOS member, Chuck Estes. The bird was very cooperative as it stayed in the vicinity of a tidal pool near the pier during the first half of the weekend, and as word of its discovery spread many people were able to see it. As mentioned earlier, the tally at compilation was 163 species and we all agreed that this was one of the better fall meetings in recent years. Thanks to Ann and Lynne for hosting us, and to our guest speaker, Dr. Erik Johnson, for serving as guest compiler.

This year marked the beginning of what I hope will become a fall meeting tradition: the announcement of the win-

ners of our AOS Photography Contest—the results of which are published elsewhere in this issue—and the exhibition of their photographs, plus those of others who submitted entries, at the Friday night social hour and potluck supper.

The traditional Saturday lunch at Jenny and John Stowers' house brought together nearly all of the meeting attendees, who were there to honor the memory of John "Sto" Stowers, who passed away earlier this summer. We admired Jennie for her efforts to continue Sto's legacy by hosting us. Jennie, thank you. We also solemnly recognized the deaths of Dr. John F. Porter and Harriett Wright, two stalwarts in the AOS community whose contributions and friendship will be remembered for years to come. Following lunch, we reconvened at Shell Mounds Park to dedicate a bench in Sto's memory, in recognition of his dedication to bird habitat protection and his many years of service to AOS.

Saturday night's banquet once again featured a delicious buffet and keynote speaker Erik Johnson, whose address focused on shorebirds. I especially appreciated his emphasis on the role that citizen scientists can play in helping to conserve birds by actively participating in surveys of species of conservation concern. As we learned, several species are experiencing long-term population declines, and it will take a concerted effort by scientists and birders to help stem the loss. Erik generously donated his time to co-lead field trips with Andrew and Howard Horne, and we at AOS are grateful.

I hope to see many of you at the 2017 winter meeting at Lake Guntersville State Park. Meeting registration details can be found in this newsletter.

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Spring 2017	February 10, 2017
Summer 2017	June 10, 2017
Fall 2017	August 10, 2017

DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, OCTOBER 15, 2016

Minutes of the AOS Board Meeting

By KEN WARD, *Secretary*



HE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MET ON SATURDAY, October 15, 2016, in the Fellowship Hall of the Dauphin Island United Methodist Church. President Anne G. Miller called the meeting to order at 3:08 pm. The spring 2016 minutes were unanimously approved by the Board.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A discussion was led by Anne concerning current AOS organizational needs, with three major areas emphasized, all tied to building and sustaining membership:

A. Build membership by making meetings attractive to current and potential new members

- **Publicity**—Better and more information on meetings provided earlier and more widely disseminated—publicize on AOS website at least three months in advance, add photos from field trips, etc., more extensive use of social media for additional dissemination and reminders (especially ALbirds and Facebook, etc). It was noted that improvements in these directions are already being made, with much more information (including photos) going out on the AOS Facebook page and sharing/posting to other pages/groups, via the Public Relations (Lisa Gardner) and Social Media (Carrie Threadgill) committees. A notable addition that is providing some excellent publicity is Ken Hare's Natural Alabama (WSFA.com), which has regularly provided meeting information, as well as promoting the AOS photo contest, providing and sharing member photos, etc., all shared widely on Facebook.
- **Meeting Features**—Quality keynote speakers with educational skills well known to the birding community; this has been a consistent feature of AOS over the years, and continues, with Marshall Iliff (ebird Project Leader) and Kevin Karlson (author of *The Shorebird Guide*) as speakers for upcoming winter and spring AOS meetings respectively; plentiful and well-run field trips with top local birders and

opportunities for speakers to lead and/or conduct workshops (Andrew Haffenden's good work and continued success of Friday field trips was noted); greater variety of activities on Friday nights to appeal to a wide audience, e.g., photo contest/slide shows, workshops.

- **Meeting arrangements**—Good food (Wilton's Caterers and potlucks continue to be popular); high quality audiovisual equipment is needed, including purchase of a computer projector; comfortable attractive meeting place (UMC-DI is serving this purpose well and is very convenient to set up and clean up afterwards; possible issues with size in the future if membership and popularity of meetings increases significantly over past levels, as current venue capacity is limited to 95).
- **Point of Business**—Motion was made, and seconded, to allocate \$900 for purchase of a computer projector—unanimously approved by board.

B. Enhance communications with members and potential members

- **Website**—Complete updating of website to provide current and useful information to members and potential members; update is now scheduled to begin 11/1/16, by Joe Watts, for \$500. This enhancement was approved during the spring 2016 AOS board meeting (Kathy Hicks was unable to do the update, as originally approved for the same cost). Paypal capability was added to the website on 8/16/16 (cost about \$40; estimated charge at 1-1.5%) to enable online payments and has been well received; continued improvement of online membership registration and membership renewal should be pursued. Additional ideas include adding a hand-drawn map of Dauphin Island to the website, with major birding spots included; a tee shirt might also be produced with the map. A subcommittee from the PR committee will be assigned to study this possibility (Shirley Farrell, education committee chair, will help).
- **Facebook**—Should continue efforts to keep page active,

with good content; send more photos of AOS field trips and meetings to Carrie Threadgill.

- **Email Communications**—More member emails are needed for more effective communication about important events and occurrences (death of well-known members, important votes, meeting reminders, annual dues notice, participation in board-approved surveys, electronic transmission of *The Yellowhammer*). However, third party use of AOS member emails requires authorization by members; generally best policy is for AOS to pass along third party information to members.

- **Whooping Crane Survey** (Wayde Morse)—Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences has partnered with The International Crane Foundation to gather information on knowledge, opinions, experiences, and conservation preferences regarding Whooping Cranes in Alabama. It has been proposed to distribute a link to a survey to the Alabama birding community for this purpose. AOS would send the link through member emails and through ALbirds.

- **Point of Business**—Motion made, and seconded, to approve cooperation with organizations conducting research on birds for the state of Alabama—unanimously approved by Board.

- ***The Yellowhammer***—Anne proposes offering members free choice between digital and print copies of *Yellowhammer*. Extra cost of mailing at first class instead of bulk rate will be balanced.

- ***Alabama Birdlife***—Anne proposes appointing a committee to consider alternatives for reducing costs (currently costs about \$1,400 per issue) and increasing value of this publication. Consider Jon Dunn's suggestion of collaborating with adjacent states to produce a regional journal. This may not be practical, especially not with the larger adjacent states, perhaps more with Mississippi. Online only journal? Could consider providing online version at reduced cost or even online only. This topic needs further discussion.

C. Membership—Improve system of new member registration and current member renewal

- **Dues notices**—Send once yearly in January by email to members receiving *The Yellowhammer* electronically, with envelope/notification in January print edition of YH.

- Create welcome packet to be mailed to all new AOS

members with information about organization (including details about meetings and information on on-line communications; include details on how to sign up for ALbirds, email bulletins, etc. PR committee to prepare copy and be ready for use by January (packets currently in progress). New members should consistently be recognized at meeting banquet.

- Send out acknowledgements for all donations; use Sibley postcards with brief message.

- Consider changing name tags for meetings; lanyards tangle too easily out-of-doors.

TREASURER'S REPORTS

Treasurer Elberta Reid reported beginning checking account balance, as of 1/1/16, was \$10,462. Ending checking account balance, as of 10/15/16, was \$28,695, approximately \$18,000 of which are operating funds (\$10,000 is restricted, donation from Martha Sargent toward Fort Morgan). CD balance—\$26,866. Education Fund—from silent auction about \$700. There is a need to better separate operating and restricted funds in budget reports including amount to be allocated to Holliman fund. Need to itemize out fall, spring and winter meeting expenses.

- **Point of Business**—Treasurer's report approved.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Vice President Harry Dean reported that the number of photo contest entries was low (eight entries, 18 photos), but the quality of the entries was very high. Plan is to try again next fall. Contest committee needs to meet and discuss refinements needed to increase participation (e.g., number and type of categories, method of submission and reception of photos, type of prizes, etc.). More traditional and appealing categories (other than category of camera used) and better prizes are probably warranted.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Conservation** (Greg Harber)—DIBS (Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuary): several plots of land donated; Holliman Fund allocation.

- **Point of Business**—Motion made, and seconded, to approve an allocation of \$2,000 for the Holliman Fund, in support of bird research by students—unanimously approved by Board.

- Education (Shirley Farrell)—AOS and Alabama Youth Birder continue to sponsor the Alabama Green Ribbon Schools Award program. The committee donated \$200 and is providing ongoing support to the bird feeding trail at the Montgomery Public Schools Arboretum and Nature Center. We are looking for volunteers to help with support. Please contact Shirley J. Farrell at shirfarr@gmail.com if you would like to volunteer.

The education committee will hold a silent auction at the Spring 2017 AOS meeting to raise money to purchase Flying WILD curriculum guides for teachers who will attend a three-hour training to learn about birds and birdwatching. Shirley brought Flying WILD into the state of Alabama through BAS and AOS, and will now handle the training throughout the state. There are several training facilitators who will help with the statewide workshops.

- Point of Business—Motion made, and seconded, to conduct a silent auction to fund the Flying WILD curriculum—unanimously approved by board.

- Membership Recruitment (Larry Gardella)—Efforts to recruit through Birding Alabama and Alabama Birding Trails continue.

- Public Relations (Lisa Gardner)—Lisa is working with Kathy Hicks on website development, but currently has limited ability to do much; this should be remedied soon with help from Joe Watts; articles, photos and meeting information posted to Facebook, shared widely by individuals and via other pages such as the Tennessee Valley Audubon Society Facebook page.

- Social Media (Carrie Threadgill, not present)—Facebook page should be much more active in posting of meeting, photo contest and other information, which brings us to a much wider audience, also more photo posting/real time posting of photos during meetings has been an excellent idea; photo contest winners and other participants' photos will be posted.

- Online Services (Kathy Hicks, not present)—see Public Relations above and earlier discussion in President's Report.

- *The Yellowhammer* (Bob Reed)—Deadline for materials for YH is November 10. Need to transfer Post Office box key to someone as John Porter was doing this. Articles are needed and welcomed for the newsletter.

- Meetings (Rufina Ward)—Planning for winter meeting (January 27-29, Guntersville State Park Lodge and Con-

vention Center) going well; block of rooms secured, field trips planned around Guntersville area (more information elsewhere in this issue of YH).

- Censusing/checklist/Fort Morgan (Greg Jackson, not present)—Alabama checklist has been updated with latest taxonomical information and sent to ADCNR for processing/printing.

- Field trips (Andrew Haffenden)—More field trip leaders are needed, and ideas for field trips. Noted that the AOS meetings are an excellent place to attract keen young birders, given the opportunities to see lots of good birds and learn from some of the best birders in the state; this effort should be further cultivated and promoted; using *The Yellowhammer*, social media and website.

- Meeting Adjourned 5:02 pm

Time to Pay Your 2017 Dues

CHRISTMAS AND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS ARE FAST approaching, and another great year of birding with AOS is coming to a close. As you get ready for 2017, please remember to renew your membership in AOS—and to invite your friends to renew or sign up, too. You can now join or renew your membership online on the AOS website (aosbirds.org). You can also register online for the winter meeting, and see the full schedule of the weekend's activities at aosbird.org.

Some of you are getting courtesy copies of *The Yellowhammer* even though you did not renew for 2016. You can send in payment for both 2016 and 2017 now. If you ever have any questions about whether your membership is current, you can either look at the mailing label on your hard copy of *The Yellowhammer*, or you can get in touch with Larry Gardella at lgardellabirds@charter.net. We look forward to your continuing participation in the AOS family.

New Members

Rita Collins • Mary Dockery • Robert Farley
 Neil Gilbert • Carol Kautzman • Jean Madden
 Calli Patterson • Elissa Ritchey • Susi Stroud
 Theresa Withee

2016 AOS Fall Meeting Compilation List Dauphin Island, Alabama, October 14–16

NOTEWORTHY BIRDS OF THE WEEKEND INCLUDED RED Phalarope, Thayer's and Great Black-backed Gulls, and Couch's/Tropical Kingbird. Count total was 163 species.

Black-bellied Whistling Duck
Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Mallard
Mottled Duck
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Pied-billed Grebe
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
Common Ground-Dove
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Black-billed Cuckoo
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Clapper Rail
Common Gallinule
American Coot
Black-necked Stilt
American Oystercatcher
Black-bellied Plover
Snowy Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Piping Plover
Killdeer
Whimbrel
Marbled Godwit
Ruddy Turnstone
Red Knot
Stilt Sandpiper
Sanderling
Dunlin
Baird's Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
Short-billed Dowitcher
Long-billed Dowitcher
Wilson's Snipe
Spotted Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
Willet
Lesser Yellowlegs
Red Phalarope
Laughing Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Thayer's Gull
Great Black-backed Gull

Caspian Tern
Common Tern
Forster's Tern
Royal Tern
Sandwich Tern
Black Skimmer
Northern Gannet
Double-crested Cormorant
Anhinga
Brown Pelican
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Reddish Egret
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Black-crowned Night-Heron
White Ibis
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Great Horned Owl
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
American Kestrel
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Eastern Phoebe
Couch's/Tropical Kingbird
Western Kingbird
Gray Kingbird
Loggerhead Shrike
White-eyed Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay

American Crow
Fish Crow
Tree Swallow
N. Rough-winged Swallow
Bank Swallow
Barn Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Brown-headed Nuthatch
House Wren
Sedge Wren
Marsh Wren
Carolina Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
House Sparrow
House Finch
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Golden-winged Warbler
Blue-winged Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
American Redstart
Northern Parula
Magnolia Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Palm Warbler
Pine Warbler

Yellow-rumped Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Nelson's Sparrow
Seaside Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Summer Tanager
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Dickcissel
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Common Grackle
Boat-tailed Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Baltimore Oriole

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.

Donations

Donations in memory of John Stowers
Barbara Byrd, Sylvia Fullerton

Donation in memory of Harriett Wright
Linda Reynolds (Scholarship Fund)

Donation in honor of Dwight Cooley
Elberta Reid

Inaugural AOS Photo Contest a Smashing Success

By HARRY DEAN

IF YOU ATTENDED THE FALL MEETING, YOU KNOW THAT all of the entries in the inaugural AOS Photo Contest were outstanding. I'm sure our judges, Patsy Russo, Greg Almond, and Barry Fleming, had a hard time selecting the winners. Our thanks to them.

Best in Show (photo on cover)

Susi Stroud: Green Heron fishing, Ditto Landing Marina, Huntsville. Photo taken at sunset, with SLR camera.

Best Single Lens Reflex

Lewis Scharpf: Great Horned Owl just after fledging nest, defensive posture, Wood Duck Heritage Preserve, Opelika.

Best Point and Shoot

Lewis Scharpf: Ruby-throated Hummingbird feeding 2.5-week-old nestlings, private residence, Opelika.

Best Digiscope

John Trent: Solitary Sandpiper, M. Barnett Lawley Forever Wild Field Trial Area, Hale County, Alabama. Photo taken with an iPhone and Vortex Razor spotting scope.

The winning photos are featured on the AOS Facebook page and also on the AOS website.

The first AOS Photo Contest is now history. We learned many things in the first contest that should make the next contest in the fall of 2017 even better. Several suggestions related to the categories and prizes have already been received, and any other comments and suggestions can be directed to Harry Dean or Ken Ward. I want to thank Ken Ward, Ken Hare, and Greg Harber for making the contest happen.

So, as you are out and about in the coming months, keep the next contest in mind and take those photos. The contest rules are posted on the AOS website. Remember, it isn't all about the price of camera and length of the lens. The choice of subject, composition, and lighting goes a long way in determining a winning photo. And please encourage your young birding friends to enter the contest next year. We need to attract new generations to birding and bird photography.



Top and middle photos by Lewis Scharpf; bottom by John Trent.

A O S W I N T E R M E E T I N G , J A N U A R Y 2 7 - 2 9 , 2 0 1 7

Meet the Speaker: Marshall Iliff



MARSHALL ILIFF *fell in love with nature exploring the fields and forests near his home in Annapolis, Maryland. After attending a National Wildlife Federation Camp at age eleven, he fell in love with birds in particular, and he has devoted his life to enjoying and understanding them. After graduating college, Marshall worked on ornithological field jobs around the country, and led birdwatching tours for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. In 2007 Marshall joined two longtime friends, Brian Sullivan and Chris Wood, giving rise to the “three-headed monster” of eBird, which has grown not only into a popular platform for birders but also into the largest citizen scientist and biodiversity database and monitoring system of birds that is increasingly used in science and conservation.*

The Benefits of eBird to Science and to Birders

Birds are the bellwethers of our environment. Their migrations span continents and connect human societies across international borders. As we continue to alter the landscape and impact the very world around us, including the seasons and the climate, birds and humans alike are impacted. As in the past, the response of birds has helped alert us to the health of the environment upon which we depend. They continue to send us those messages...if we listen to them.

Birds also bring great joy to people. Hundreds of thousands of people bring birds into their daily lives through birdwatching, connecting people to the natural world in a time when humanity is ever more isolated in urban and suburban landscapes. The connection to birds can bring people together across social, national, and political lines and help to place humanity in its broader context of the creatures around us.

eBird connects both sides of these two important roles for birds. At its core, eBird is a free, online platform that connects tens of thousands of birders and provides a free database in which to record your personal bird sightings. Data can be entered online or via a smartphone app. You are incentivized to record information on common species as well as rare ones and, with a little extra effort, to provide information that helps put each bird-sightings list in context.

In addition to being a memory box and journal for your personal sightings and a way to upload and store your bird photos and audio recordings, eBird also provides powerful tools to explore and visualize the data of others. The result is an ongoing heartbeat of bird movements around the world and the opportunity to easily explore those movements on maps, graphs, charts and other tools. Anyone, regardless of whether you have yet contributed data yourself, can punch up an eBird map to see where a favorite species is being seen or to interpret the movements of winter finches or the timing of spring migration as it surges up from the tropics. If you have upcoming travel, eBird gives special tools for trip planning to look for the best spots for birding. And the more data you contribute the greater the benefit. Once eBird is aware of your life list, state list, or county list, you can receive rare bird alert emails customized for the species you have yet to see, or draw on historical eBird data to better prioritize the species to search for around home or on your travels.

The eBird Enterprise is much more than a website and much more than a database. It is more than the 375 million records contributed and more than the hundreds of thousands of birders worldwide who have contributed observations. eBird has helped to change the paradigm of scientific data, and the entire database can be downloaded by anyone for use in science, conservation, or education—or just out of sheer curiosity. This open data access has led to hundreds of scientific papers that have drawn on eBird data in major or minor ways. The eBird platform is adaptable and extensible, allowing more specialized bird survey protocols to be coordinated and permanently archived in the eBird data structure.

These same data resources are also used by scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to predict bird occurrence across the landscape on any day of the year. These models are not just providing a mesmerizing and unprecedented way to visualize the movement of birds across the landscape, but are providing some “Big Data” answers to fundamental biological questions. They are also providing new ways to do conservation planning at the local, landscape, and continental scales.

LAKE GUNTERSVILLE STATE PARK, JANUARY 27-29, 2017

AOS Winter Meeting Schedule

FRIDAY, JANUARY 27

4:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m. Registration

5:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m. Social Hour

6:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m. Dinner on your own (Most of us eat in the Lodge Dining Room)

7:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. Workshop: Using eBird for Better Birding; instructor: Marshall Iliff, eBird Project Leader

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28

7:00 a.m. Field Trips:

1) *Lake Guntersville State Park*. Explore the wooded mountaintops and lakeshores of beautiful Guntersville State Park looking for wintering song birds, waterfowl, and sparrows with trip leader Linda Reynolds, former Guntersville State Park naturalist and one of Alabama's leading birders.

2) *Lake Guntersville Waterfront*. Explore the waterfront along Sunset Drive and other locations around the lake looking for ducks, loons, grebes, and gulls with trip leader Andrew Haffenden, international birding guide, and keynote speaker Marshall Iliff, of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

3) *Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge*. Explore the backwaters and back country of this Important Bird Area with Trip Leader Dwight Cooley, recently retired as the refuge manager, and one of Alabama's top birders. Expect to see Sandhill Cranes and possibly endangered Whooping Cranes, as well as many waterfowl, raptors and songbirds.

12:00 p.m.–2:00 p.m. Lunch on your own

2:00 p.m. Field Trip: *Guntersville Dam (north)*. The dam is a magnet for gulls and waterfowl, and there are frequent sightings of raptors such as Bald Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, and Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, as well as rare sightings of Short-eared Owls and Golden Eagle. Wintering songbirds and sparrows are also likely. Trip leader Ken Ward, president of the North Alabama Birdwatchers Society.

5:30 p.m. Social Hour

6:30 p.m. Banquet Buffet

7:15 p.m. Keynote Speaker: Marshall Iliff, eBird Project Leader, Cornell Lab of Ornithology: "The Benefits of eBird to Science and to Birders"

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

7:00 a.m. Field Trip: *Lake Guntersville Waterfront*. We'll return to the waterfront along Sunset Drive and other locations around Lake Guntersville looking for ducks, loons, grebes, and gulls with Trip Leader Andrew Haffenden, wildlife tour guide, and Keynote Speaker Marshall Iliff, member of Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Team Sapsucker.

12:00 p.m. Compilation

1:30 p.m. Board Meeting

ROOM INFORMATION—GROUP CODE 6240

Call Lake Guntersville State Park Lodge 256-571-5440 to make reservations by December 31. Or make reservations online at www.alapark.com/lakeguntersville.

Quantity	Type of Room	Rate Per Night
15	Double Queen Bed, Bluff-Side 1st Floor	\$91.00
15	One Queen Bed, Park-Side	\$78.00

Please note that room rates are subject to lodging tax, city and state surcharges, as well as a 3% resort fee. Rates reflect occupancy by up to two people. There is a \$10.00 per person charge for each additional person. Check-in begins at 4:00 p.m. and your guests may check out any time before 11:00 a.m.

To ensure that your guests receive the special rate extended to your group, please ask that they mention they are with the Alabama Ornithological Society—**GROUP CODE 6240**. Guests can also make reservations online at www.alapark.com/lakeguntersville. Please note that a deposit is required for each reservation made. Deposits are the sum of one night's lodging plus taxes and are due at the time the reservation is made. These rooms will be held until December 31, 2016. At that time any unreserved rooms will be released back into the general inventory although we will still honor your group rate if there are rooms available.

AOS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Your Membership Dues Support the Work of the Alabama Ornithological Society

Please check membership category: ____ New Member ____ Renewing Member

Please check membership category: ____ Student \$10 ____ Individual \$25 ____ Family \$40* ____ Sustaining \$50
 ____ Life (individual) \$350 ____ Life (family*) \$550 *Number of family members _____

Communicating with our members online saves the earth's resources, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and also saves much-needed funds for AOS. Your digital subscription to *The Yellowhammer* and *Alabama Birdlife* will automatically be sent to the email address listed below. To receive print copies of AOS publications instead, please ____ check here. Mail your completed form and check to:

Elberta Reid, 2616 Mountain Brook Parkway, Birmingham, AL 35223

Name(s) _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Email address _____ Phone _____

YOU CAN ALSO JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP ONLINE AT WWW.AOSBIRDS.ORG

AOS WINTER MEETING 2017 REGISTRATION FORM

Complete and return to:

Elberta Reid, 2616 Mountain Brook Parkway, Birmingham, AL 35223

Telephone: (205) 879-1935 • E-mail: elbertareid@gmail.com

Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by January 17, 2017.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____ Phone _____

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

YOU CAN ALSO REGISTER ONLINE AT WWW.AOSBIRDS.ORG

Registration @ \$25 per person	\$
Banquet Buffet @ \$25 per person	\$
AOS 2017 Dues	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution	\$
TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$

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