

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 38, NO. 2 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SUMMER 2018

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

FOUNDED 1952



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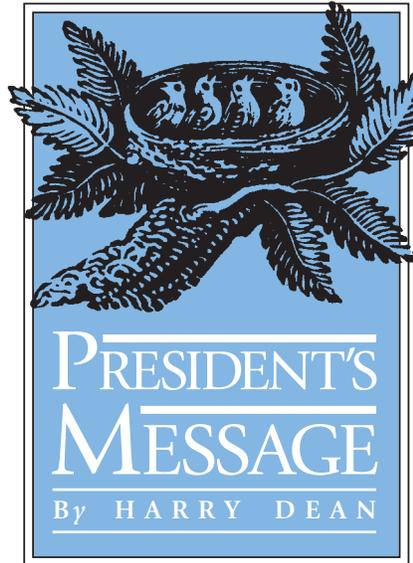
Greg Harber
 Scot Duncan, Catherine Rideout, Eric Soehren

MEETINGS

Kathryn Palmore
 Susan Barrow, Priscilla Tubbs

SUMMER BIRDING IN ALABAMA? It is not something I normally do with any regularity. Our local birding club, the North Alabama Birdwatcher's Society (NABS), has no scheduled meetings during the summer. Neither does AOS. After all, the "good birds" have already passed through during the spring migration. And it is hot, and there are vacations and other things in the way. Well it may be hot, but have all the "good birds" left? Not necessarily. Depending on your area, there are many opportunities for rewarding birding trips. In North Alabama, for example, Kentucky Warblers, Hooded Warblers, and Broad-winged Hawks have nested, raised their young, and conducted flight training on the mountain in Monte Santo State Park. Other areas of the state have their specialties as well. It is just a matter of researching the summer residents in your area. Later in the summer, shorebirds will begin to pass through. I wondered how many eBird checklists are submitted during the summer months. I couldn't find an easy way to figure that out, but I would think not nearly as many as other seasons. It is interesting that there are spring, fall and winter meetings and various counts during those months as well. But there are no summer meetings or counts. I am not advocating a summer meeting, but lately I have heard some discussion about getting a summer count started (again). If you have ideas about this, send me an email. It could be fun but it will be hot!

Earlier this year, several interesting birds were seen in Alabama. A female Ruff and a Wurdemann's Heron were located at Penny Bottoms in the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. About that same time, a Cinnamon Teal and a Blue-winged/Cinnamon Teal hybrid were found on the Point Mallard golf course in Decatur. There was also the famous yellow Cardinal in the Birmingham area. So, how did the word get out about these great birds? Well, there were several possible ways. Initially, the cell phone was probably used to call people. This word of mouth is quick and effective but only for a limited audience. Perhaps eBird was being used to document sightings. eBird is a great tool for documenting



and sharing bird lists and for tracking and analyzing data for a particular location or area. Rare bird sightings and photographs can now be included as well. After returning home, Facebook postings might have been updated. Facebook offers a great way to spread news although it is not as timely as a phone call. Birding Alabama is one Facebook page where many people post photos of birds and discuss sightings. Finally, the sighting might have been documented in an ALbirds post.

The issue with all of these methods is that not everyone is on personal calling lists, eBird, Facebook, or ALbirds. So, how do you find out about what is going on in

Alabama? Well, you could ask people to call you if they see a rare bird. If you don't have an eBird account, sign up for one and learn how to use it. I think this is a good idea regardless. Sign up on Facebook and join the Birding Alabama page (as well as the AOS page). You could sign up for the method currently sponsored by AOS, the Yahoo group list, "ALbirds." For the time being, ALbirds is where we (I hate to say "officially") should expect to see items of interest and sightings for Alabama birders. I have noticed a dramatic drop in ALbirds postings over the last several years. I haven't done the research, but I understand the same issue is affecting TNbirds and MSbirds. Perhaps these listservs are being overtaken by other forms of social media. Maybe it is time to examine our process, but, to close this topic, I would just ask that you include ALbirds when you attempt to get the word out about that fantastic bird find.

The AOS 2018 spring meeting has come and gone. The birds during the meeting weekend were better this spring than in the recent past. Several people did note that it seemed like we missed the peak again as the weeks prior to the meeting were great. This meeting was really "interesting" for us in terms of logistics. As you know, we had to move the location about three weeks out and we are attempting to make sure we are not in the same situation again. What is important to note is that we had a great team working to find a new location. If I try to mention individuals, I will surely miss someone. I would like to note, however, the work of Dena McKee and others on Dauphin Island to help secure the Isle

Dauphine Supper Club for our meeting. Thank you. The reality is that our options for meeting locations on the island are very limited. I would like to thank our speaker, Dr. Mark Woodrey, for an interesting and thought provoking discussion of the Gulf of Mexico Avian Monitoring System. I would also like to extend a big welcome to all of our new members. I hope to see all of you at future meetings. Thanks to all of you who attended this meeting and continue to support AOS with your time and contributions. This volunteer organization cannot be successful without volunteers.

On the subject of volunteers, we really do need people to serve on the meetings committee with Kathryn Palmore. Three or four folks are needed to help with the meeting set

up and the cleanup. It is not complicated; it just takes some time on Friday and Saturday afternoons and evenings. If you see this as something you would like to support, please get in touch with Kathryn. The AOS Board agreed at the spring meeting to continue the AOS photography contest for the third year. Winners will be announced at the Fall meeting. For this to happen, I need a volunteer to lead this effort. The task would involve soliciting judges, prizes and gathering entries. If you are interested in either of these opportunities or possibly another area where you would like to contribute, please let me know. We are looking for volunteers and do not have the option of "voluntold." Please check the website for updates. Good birding!

In Memorium

THOMAS (TOMMY) RALPH PRATT SR., age 87 of Prattville, Alabama, passed away on April 24, 2018. He was born August 24, 1930, in Aliceville, Alabama, to Joel Ralph and Kathryn McClelland Pratt. Tommy grew up in Aliceville, graduated from Marion Military Institute in 1948, and Mississippi State University in 1952. Thomas R. Pratt was preceded in death by his wife of 64 years, Mary Wetherbee Pratt, his parents, his son, Thomas Ralph Pratt Jr. along with his daughter, Missy Pratt Aita.

He is survived by his daughter, Deborah Pratt Clark, granddaughters, Marilyn Pratt, Maggie Clark, Elizabeth Clark Rockwell, his grandson, Max Pratt, two great-granddaughters Winter and Autumn Rockwell, as well as his brother, Phillip Barry Pratt.

Tommy was a member of the Prattville United Methodist Church and, over the years, various civic organizations in Prattville. He was an avid birdwatcher with a special interest in bluebird conservation. He maintained a route of bluebird houses for many years.

—Published in the *Montgomery Advertiser* on April 28, 2018

DR. THOMAS A. BRINDLEY (TOM), 86, passed away peacefully at his home in Huntsville on Saturday, April 28, 2018. He was born on July 2, 1931, in Toledo, Ohio. He obtained post-secondary degrees at the University of Colorado Boulder, the Thunderbird School of Global

Management, and Ohio State University. His PhD at the University of Michigan was in comparative education. Tom was a veteran of the U.S. Army, stationed in Germany during the Korean War. From 1962–1965, he worked for the U.S. Information Agency's Binational Center in Vientiane, Laos, where he met his wife, Monica. They married in 1966 and together had three daughters. In 1974 Tom joined the faculty in UAH's College of Education, teaching and supervising teachers for 26 years before he retired in 1999.

Tom was an avid birder and conservationist, as well as a lifelong student of the humanities. He was a founder and former president of the North Alabama Birdwatchers Society and was also passionate about local and national politics. Tom is survived by his wife of 52 years, Monica Chien Brindley; daughters: Bianca Brindley, Becky Thuma (David), and Erica Fox Brindley (Derek); six grandchildren.

—Published in the *Huntsville Times* on May 6, 2018

Upcoming Meetings

FALL MEETING—October 12-14, 2018
Dauphin Island, Alabama

WINTER MEETING—January 25-27, 2019
Location to be arranged

SPRING MEETING—April 19-21, 2019
Dauphin Island, Alabama

AOS SPRING MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, APRIL 20-22, 2018

AOS Spring Meeting Report

By GREG HARBER & KEN HARE

THE FIRST THING KAP GARMON SAID TO GREG when he ran into her on Dauphin Island was, "We've seen more birds already than we've had in the past three years combined!"

And so it was—a common theme expressed by many and experienced by all at the spring AOS meeting on Dauphin Island the weekend of April 20–22.

Although the Friday field trip technically did not get under way until the group gathered at 6:45 a.m., many early risers greeted the dawn at the Dauphin Island airport where Soras and Clapper Rails were calling and skittering in and out of the reeds.

The trip, led by Andrew Haffenden and our speaker, Dr. Mark Woodrey, caravanned up Interstate 65 to the Splinter Hill Bog. While birding the site was the group's main goal, the site is best known for the variety of carnivorous plants found there, including several species of pitcher plants and sundews. Seeing them in this beautiful setting is always a treat. The group identified about 20 species of birds there, including a lingering Winter Wren and hearing at least two and possibly more Bachman's Sparrows. One of the Bachman's Sparrows even provided a nice concert for the group, singing and posing for photographers on a branch about 20 yards off the pathway.

From the Splinter Hill site the group headed for Meaher State Park on the Mobile Bay Causeway, where a short hike along the walkway over a section of the bay produced another 28 species, including an elusive Marsh Wren as well as Least and Gull-billed Terns.

The Meaher stop was followed by lunch at Felix's Fish Camp on the causeway. After lunch, the members of the group scattered to bird on their own. Most of the birders headed back to Dauphin Island, where a highlight for photographers in the group were the Painted Buntings mixed in with dozens of Indigo Buntings at the Shell Mounds.

The reports from the coast for the couple of weeks prior to the meeting held great promise for the meeting weekend—

lots of birds in the migrant traps as a result of inclement weather keeping them pinned down once they arrived on our shores. The Fort Morgan Banding Station, open the week immediately preceding the meeting, was also experiencing lots of birds in the nets – especially on the Friday of AOS!

The Friday Night Potluck at the Isle Dauphine Club (last minute change of venue!) was well attended and featured several members' bird photos and a buffet of wonderful food. Ken Wills also signed copies of his book, *Exploring Wild Alabama: A Guide to the State's Publicly Accessible Natural Areas*.

Saturday morning dawned with great hopes for continued good birding, and the day did not disappoint. Kap was

A Bachman's Sparrow sings for visitors to the Splinter Hill Bog during an AOS Spring Meeting field trip. (Ken Hare)





A Hooded Warbler in the Shell Mounds, one of 21 warbler species reported at the AOS spring meeting. (Bob Reed)

right! Scarlet Tanagers were seemingly everywhere! Summer Tanagers also were quite abundant and the Indigo Buntings and Blue Grosbeaks were bountiful at the Shell Mounds Park where seed had been scattered to attract them. Patient birders were rewarded by sightings of male Painted Buntings—such colorful birds and so worth the wait to see them! Bob and Lucy Duncan remarked to Greg when they crossed paths at the Shell Mounds that the conditions we were experiencing felt like the “good old days!” when birds were readily seen in multiple island locations and one had to dart from site to site to track down all the reports!

Those field trippers who explored the island with Woodrey were treated to the sight of an exhausted male Summer Tanager eating wasps a mere few feet from them—only to have a Laughing Gull attempt to attack the hapless tanager that was too weak to flee. The onlookers provided the necessary cover for the tanager to regain its strength. Other trip notes included reports of Bobolinks in the field behind Fort Gaines and American Avocets on Andrew Haffenden’s trip to Pelican Peninsula. Of course, the nestling Great Horned

Owls and almost fledged Bald Eagles were enjoyed by all during the course of the weekend!

Conversations at Saturday’s potluck lunch at Jennie Stowers’ home ran the gamut of topics, but certainly the abundance of birds was a common theme. And as always, it was a wonderful chance to catch up with old friends and make new acquaintances.

Dr. Woodrey’s presentation at the Saturday night banquet (featuring tasty seafood!) proved to be an enlightening talk about the Gulf of Mexico Avian Monitoring Network (GoMAMN), brought to the fore in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill that impacted the entire northern Gulf coast region. Populations of coastal bird species that had been surveyed only sporadically prior to the spill now needed regular and sustained surveys to determine whether the spill will impact them—along with the entire Gulf coast ecosystem. We thank Dr. Woodrey and his colleagues for their conservation efforts.

Sunday morning brought heavy cloud cover and intermittent rain showers, which necessitated the cancellation of the Blakely Mud Lakes field trip. Consequently, compilation was a soggy affair but no one was complaining with the birds that were reported from the weekend’s endeavors! And to no one’s great surprise, after the rains and front had passed by Monday morning, the excellent birding conditions returned yet again!

Welcome New Members!

Stephen and Sally Bru • Peter Carter
 James and Caroline Chandler • Becky Daley
 Laura Flowers • Cynthia Freeman
 Brenda and Martin Hall • Alice Harper
 Channing and Griffin Hornsby • Andrew Lydeard
 Stacey and Jared Sapp • Shelly Taliaferro
 Brenda and Bill Thornton

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Fall 2018

August 10, 2018

Winter 2018

November 10, 2018

*2018 AOS Spring Meeting Compilation List
Dauphin Island, Alabama, April 20–22*

NOTEWORTHY BIRDS of the weekend included Great Black-backed Gull and Warbling Vireo. Count total was 172 species.

Canada Goose
Blue-winged Teal
Mallard
American Black Duck
Mottled Duck
Bufflehead
Red-breasted Merganser
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
White-winged Dove
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Common Nighthawk
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Clapper Rail
Sora
Common Gallinule
American Coot
Black-necked Stilt
American Avocet
American Oystercatcher
Black-bellied Plover
Snowy Plover
Wilson's Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Piping Plover
Killdeer
Whimbrel
Ruddy Turnstone
Stilt Sandpiper
Sanderling
Dunlin
Least Sandpiper
White-rumped Sandpiper
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
Short-billed Dowitcher
Long-billed Dowitcher
Spotted Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper
Lesser Yellowlegs
Willet
Greater Yellowlegs
Laughing Gull

Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Least Tern
Gull-billed Tern
Caspian Tern
Forster's Tern
Royal Tern
Sandwich Tern
Black Skimmer
Common Loon
Double-crested Cormorant
Northern Gannet
Brown Pelican
Least Bittern
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Reddish Egret
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
White Ibis
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Swallow-tailed Kite
Mississippi Kite
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Cooper's Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Great Horned Owl
Barred Owl
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Pileated Woodpecker
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon

Eastern Wood-Pewee
Eastern Phoebe
Great-crested Flycatcher
Western Kingbird
Eastern Kingbird
Loggerhead Shrike
White-eyed Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Black-whiskered Vireo
Blue Jay
Fish Crow
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Brown-headed Nuthatch
House Wren
Winter Wren
Marsh Wren
Carolina Wren
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Gray-cheeked Thrush
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
House Sparrow
House Finch
American Goldfinch
Eastern Towhee
Bachman's Sparrow
Seaside Sparrow
Song Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Bobolink
Orchard Oriole
Baltimore Oriole
Red-winged Blackbird
Brown-headed Cowbird
Common Grackle

Boat-tailed Grackle
Ovenbird
Worm-eating Warbler
Louisiana Waterthrush
Northern Waterthrush
Black-and-white Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Kentucky Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
American Redstart
Cape May Warbler
Northern Parula
Yellow Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Palm Warbler
Pine Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Summer Tanager
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Painted Bunting
Dickcissel

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.

AOS SPRING MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, APRIL 20-22, 2018

Minutes of the AOS Spring Board Meeting

By JEAN FOLSOM, *Secretary*



THE AOS BOARD WINTER MEETING WAS HELD ON April 21, 2018, at the Isle Dauphine Supper Club, 100 Orleans Drive, Dauphin Island, Alabama 36528.

Approval of minutes (Jean Folsom)—Minutes of winter 2018 board meeting approved as written.

OFFICERS' REPORTS

Treasurer's Report (Joan Dixon)

Joan presented the AOS profit and loss statement and balance sheet for January–March 2018. The winter 2018 meeting income was \$3,375.00 and expenses were \$2,498.39, resulting in a winter meeting profit of \$876.61. The organization showed a 3-month total net income of \$5,062.77. Joan reported that registration for the 2018 spring meeting is at 110, and 104 have registered for the banquet.

President's Report (Harry Dean)

Harry stated that he felt we had a great winter meeting at St. Marks in Florida, with a good speaker. He suggested that the board consider holding a meeting there every three or four years.

Vice President's Report (Geoff Hill)

Harry reported that Geoff is still on sabbatical, but when he returns he will help find speakers for the meetings. As of yet a speaker for the fall meeting has not been secured.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Conservation (Greg Harber)

Greg reported that most of what has been happening with conservation programs is rollbacks of actions taken

during the Obama administration, but the 2018 budget was not as bad as anticipated for conservation programs. The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund saw increases in its budget.

Discussion was held about the letter a concerned citizen sent to Alabama Power about how their use of helicopters with giant cutting blades in the clearance of their rights of way had destroyed a heron rookery on Blue Creek of Lake Mitchell. The citizen had sent a copy of his letter to AOS and other conservation organizations. It was decided that AOS should not take a public position on this matter.

A question was raised about not seeing many butterflies this year at Dauphin Island. Concern was that insect life necessary for birds' refueling is possibly being compromised on Dauphin Island by spraying for insects.

Education (Shirley Farrell)

During the current school year 35 teachers have completed Flying Wild training in two workshops.

The Education Committee will not hold a silent auction this year as they have enough money to buy workbooks for future Flying Wild workshops.

AOS will continue to support the Green Ribbon schools. Don Self made bluebird houses that will be presented to the winners in May.

Membership Recruitment (Larry Gardella)

Larry was not present; Susan Barrow reported on Membership Services.

AOS currently has 419 members with ten new members at the winter 2018 meeting and 15 new members at the spring 2018 meeting. There are approximately 86 life members.

The need for sending dues reminder notices came up again; Greg Jackson suggested that an automated computer program for entering memberships, sending renewal notices, and thank you acknowledgements, etc., be researched by Larry and Susan.

Public Relations (Anne Miller and Ken Hare)

Anne has obtained 500 printed address labels for the membership brochures with outdated addresses. About a thousand additional brochures still need updating, and additional labels will be printed as they are needed.

Ken requests more content for updating the website and Facebook page, especially good pictures. He observed that as new content is added and promoted on social media, the number of hits increases on the website.

Social Media (Carrie Threadgill)

Ken said Carrie continues to keep the AOS Facebook page up to date, especially with meeting information; this may have helped with high registration for the last three meetings, which have been completely full.

Online Services (Kathy Hicks)

This committee is essentially defunct; its functions now being carried out by the Public Relations Committee.

The question was raised whether the board can terminate committees. Anne reported that the Bylaws authorize the board to specify committees. The board needs to follow up on this.

Yellowhammer (Bob Reed)

Bob reminded all that the *Yellowhammer* deadline for submitting content for the newsletter is the 10th of the month following the meeting month.

Bob requests content to be used as filler. Send it in and it will be used as needed.

Meetings (Kathryn Palmore)

The last minute change to meeting site for this meeting from Dauphin Island United Methodist Church to Isle Dauphin Supper Club was a one-time event.

Kathryn will meet with the new minister about AOS use of the church for the fall 2018 meeting.

The Meetings Committee needs more volunteers. The request can be added to the meeting registration.

Andrew suggested that our meetings need to be more of a birding meeting as it has been in the past and asked for permission to purchase a whiteboard where bird sightings during the meeting could be posted. The board approved this purchase.

Censusing/Bird Checklist/Fort Morgan (Greg Jackson)

One county count was completed Summer 2017—no counts in coastal area.

The next county for count, Limestone County, to include Tennessee Valley area—hope to get Ken Ward to help.

Fort Morgan has a new manager—hopes are she will follow the management plan drawn up between AOS and Fort Morgan. Joe Watts is currently working on an interpretative sign for Fort Morgan.

Bottlebrush plantings at the Ferry Landing; vegetation is regenerating after the fire.

Field Trips (Andrew Haffenden)

Andrew reiterated that we need to have sign-ups for all field trips now.

He requests a list of all people registered for the meeting to help with picking trip leaders.

Need emails of people signed up for field trips, to be used for communication by Andrew.

If field trip sign-up is connected with registration, the two means of registering, online and mail, present a coordination problem for the field trip chair.

DIBS/Dan C. Holliman Research (Greg Harber)

DIBS now owns 40 properties on Dauphin Island. Newest DIBS purchase is a lot at the end of General Gorgas.

The Holliman Fund will be advertised in the fall. All recipients of Holliman funds are required to submit a report about their research—it was suggested that future recipients present to AOS at the Friday night meeting.

NEW BUSINESS**AOS/eBird Project update** (Ken Hare)

Only six counties now remain that have not met the goal of a minimum of 150 birds reported to eBird: Bibb, Blount, Coffee, Crenshaw, Fayette, and Lamar.

Photography Contest (Harry Dean)

AOS would like to continue sponsoring the photography contest, but needs a photo contest chair. Harry is okay with AOS paying for prizes for winners. More discussion about prize money is needed.

Dry Tortugas National Park

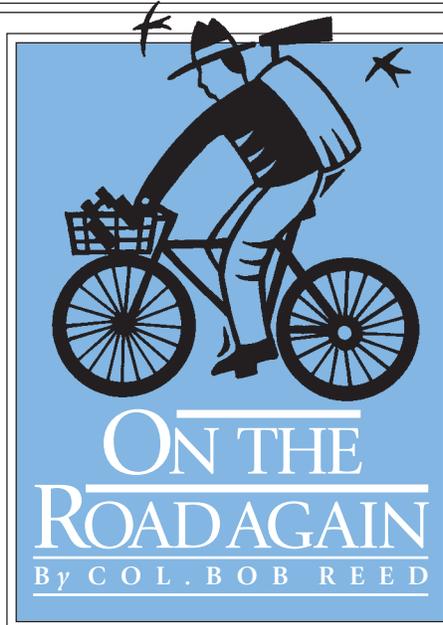


WE BOARDED THE *YANKEE Freedom III* for the 70-mile ride out to Fort Jefferson at a very civilized hour of 7:30 a.m. and arrived at Fort Jefferson about two and a quarter hours later. There were two groups of birders on board. I was with the Field Guides tour, and the American Birding Association had a group on-board. I choose the bow as usual, and my bow mate was obviously a gifted birder with excellent eyes, calling warblers passing by at 40+ mph. During a lull, we introduced ourselves, and I learned I was birding with Jeffrey Gordon, president of the ABA.

I had looked at the map, and expected there to be one or two keys between the mainland and Key West, with very long bridges in between. In reality, there are many keys connected by many bridges, the longest being only six miles long over very shallow water. And there were keys visible during the boat ride out to Fort Jefferson.

The *Yankee Freedom III* offered breakfast as soon as we boarded, so as we slipped out of Key West, we munched on tasty food. Lunch was also included in the fare, and we were invited to return to the boat any time between 11:00 and 1:00 for lunch of simple sandwiches, and fixings. All this for less than \$200.

Just before landing on Garden Key, where Fort Jefferson is located, we eased by a very small key about the size of my backyard, which was covered by Masked Boobies. Magnificent Frigatebirds, Brown Noddies, and Roseate and Bridled Terns escorted us in as the captain eased us gently into the dock, and we disembarked. The boat provided snorkeling gear to anyone who wanted it. Our goal was birds, of course, but snorkeling in the crystal-clear water was very tempting.



Ruddy Turnstones, grossly accustomed to human intrusion, barely parted for our feet as we walked to the bridge across the moat surrounding the fort. The fort is huge, about 775 feet by 600 feet inside, in a typical six-sided coastal fort configuration.

The inside is grass with more trees than I expected. We immediately saw a Merlin in the first tree. For the first day of May, there was a surprising number of warblers and other passerines. However, the first target was to go atop and search for terns and noddies. There was a nice group of Brown Noddies on the pilings to the northeast, and we spent considerable time sorting through them for a Black Noddy. With 20 sets of eyes, we finally found one when a Brown left and uncovered a Black right past him. Once it was visible, the differences, while subtle, were nonetheless apparent. After everybody had studied the Noddies to their heart's content, we took turns making pictures of each group and moved on downstairs to check out the parade field.





Opposite page: Begun in 1846, Fort Jefferson is the largest masonry structure in the Western Hemisphere. (National Park Service) *Above:* A female Magnificent Frigatebird. (Bob Reed)

There were nine species of warblers, including Cape May, American Redstarts, Hooded and Black-throated Blues. Cattle Egrets allowed for close approach, and Cliff, Bank, Barn and Northern Rough-winged Swallows hawked throughout the fort.

My favorite part came next. Bush Key is right next door, and currently is connected by a spit of sand, much like Dauphin Island's Pelican Island/Peninsula. Bush Key is a nursery for Roseate and Bridled Terns. The area is appropriately off-limits, but the allowed approach is within about 50 yards, which permitted us to get relatively close. Noddies were nesting on the far end of Bush Key, and I could barely see them with the scope through the brush and heat waves. But the sight of two life birds nesting in numbers right in front

of me was a treat. A Brown Pelican lit on the beach less than ten yards away. Magnificent Frigatebirds flew overhead constantly, mostly immature birds.

Despite two centuries of hurricanes and other weather, the fort is in remarkable shape. The only real evidence of two centuries wear and tear is that many of the windows are no longer rectangular, but more oval.

The 3:00 p.m. departure came too soon, but at the same time, we were getting tired from all the wonderful stimulation of sun, sand, birds, and wind. We were banned from the bow for the first half because we were heading into a 20 knot wind, and the catamaran was going 24 knots. So I staked out a spot on the aft deck, and watched people, which was fun. Eventually we were invited back to the bow, where I stood until we docked at 5:15.

Tired, sweaty, and exhilarated, we did make one stop to check out Antillean Nighthawks and Key Deer. We had no trouble falling asleep.

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