

# THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 37, NO. 4 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY WINTER 2017

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

FOUNDED 1952



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

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#### MEETINGS

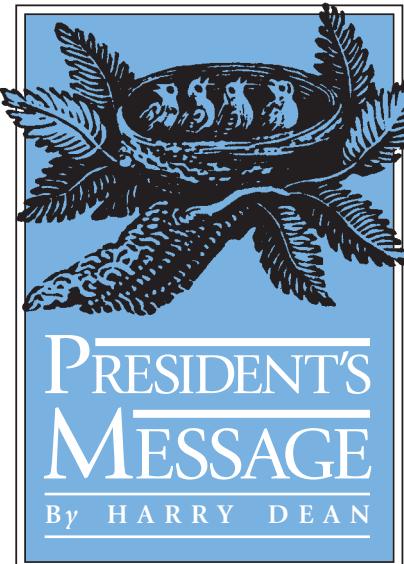
**Kathryn Palmore**

Susan Barrow, Priscilla Tubbs

**L**ET ME BEGIN MY FIRST MESSAGE by saying what an honor it is to serve as your AOS president, and I hope I can live up to your expectations. Have you ever seen the poster by William Hampton of the grizzled old cowboy (sometimes with a cigarette just hanging from his lips) with the quote at the bottom, "There's a heckava lot of things they didn't tell me when I hired on with this outfit"? Well I thought of that poster on Monday morning after the fall meeting as I realized that there was truly a lot I didn't know. Fortunately my leadership team, and too many AOS members to mention, have pulled me through.

You have a great Board made up of the officers and standing committee leads. Geoff Hill is the new vice president. Geoff has a commitment that will cause him to miss the winter and spring 2018 meetings but he will join us in the fall 2018. The office of treasurer is probably one of the most challenging positions and I was excited when Joan Dixon agreed to serve in that position and Jean Folsom volunteered to be our secretary. Anne G. Miller, our past president, has moved to chair the Public Relations Committee and Kathryn Palmore assumed the lead for the Meetings Committee. The remaining committee leads remained the same. I am looking forward to working with this team, and I know I can count on you to support them.

I would like to recognize Anne G. Miller, our immediate past president, for her initiative and leadership in moving AOS forward. Anne stepped up very late in the process to fill the void without the benefit of the two year vice president term. She was dedicated to fully implementing the PayPal system for dues and meeting registration. As more and more people use this system, the treasurer's job will be easier. She directed a total revamp of the AOS website. As a result, we now have a world class site that is useful for our members as well as the general public. Anne initiated the AOS Photo contest. In the second contest, the number of entries greatly increased over the first. The eBird initiative to fill in major gaps in the Alabama eBird database got off to a great start. This database, managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology



and the National Audubon Society, has already changed our understanding of bird behavior, and scientists and wildlife managers are now using the eBird database to determine bird conservation priorities. It is very important that we continue this initiative to document Alabama birds.

AOS celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2002. In conjunction with this milestone, a history of the organization was developed. It can be found on the AOS website under the "About Us" tab. Perhaps I was the last person to discover this gem. If not, it is worth a read to understand how and why AOS was created, learn about some of the pioneers who got us to where we are, and

get a glimpse of what the author thinks the future might hold for AOS. An excerpt from Dan Holliman's "The Beginning" gives us a glimpse of that first meeting as documented by Blanche Dean. In her book, *Let's Learn The Birds In Alabama* (May 1958), she spells out the mission of the Society:

*April 5, 1952, after a field trip to Lake Purdy, twenty-two people who were interested in birds met at Britling's for supper and organized an Ornithological Society. Morton Perry, geologist with the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company, was elected the first president. This group, known as AOS, meets twice a year in a different part of the state. The meetings are for fun as well as learning more about birds over the state. They have a field trip, some kind of 'get-together' as a dinner or banquet, and talks on some pertinent problem or findings. The membership is open to students as well as adults. The dues are very low. The purposes of AOS are:*

- a. To promote scientific and educational activities.
- b. To promote legislation to protect birds.
- c. To stimulate interest in the study of birds.
- d. To bring together those interested in birds.
- e. To make available for the public the findings of such observations.

When AOS was incorporated, the purpose statements were expanded but remained essentially in line with the original. This information is in the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws and can be found on the AOS web page under the "About Us" tab.

I can't ever remember a fall meeting when the temperature and humidity were so high. I think that had some influence on the number of birds seen. The tutorial by Bob and Lucy Duncan on Friday was excellent and generated a number of questions. Dr. Moore's presentation on migration fit in nicely with the tutorial. Again, there was an excellent interchange with numerous questions and comments.

I am already looking forward to the winter meeting on January 26–28, 2018. We will gather in Crawfordville, Florida—a little far afield from our normal areas. The field trips in St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge and surrounding areas will be exciting and provide an opportunity to see birds that we might not normally see. Just remember that the birds, as I have heard many a learned birder say, don't know whether

they are in Alabama or Florida. Our speaker on Saturday evening will be Denver Holt. I know you will enjoy his presentation on "Adaptation in Owls," and I look forward to seeing you there.

Finally, I would like to thank Dick and Linda Reynolds for encouraging my birding career and talking me into going to an AOS meeting. I don't recall exactly when that first year for me was but I do recall that the roof of the Bayview Motel caught on fire around one o'clock in the morning. But most of all, I recall going into the old community center on Dauphin Island and finding a large room full of friendly and welcoming people; people who shared the common vision of AOS. That is when I knew I needed to be a part of the Alabama Ornithological Society.

A O S   F A L L   M E E T I N G ,   D A U P H I N   I S L A N D ,   O C T O B E R   1 3 - 1 5 ,   2 0 1 7

## *Actions of the AOS Fall Board Meeting*

By KEN WARD



HE AOS BOARD FALL MEETING WAS HELD ON October 14, 2017, at the Dauphin Island United Methodist Church. In attendance were Harry Dean, Joan Dixon, Shirley Farrell,

Larry Gardella, Andrew Haffenden, Stan Hamilton, Ken Hare, Greg Harber, Geoff Hill, Anne G. Miller (presiding), Sue Moske, Kathryn Palmore, Bob Reed, Ken Ward (recording), and Rufina Ward.

Call to order, 2:05 p.m.

### Actions:

1. Spring 2017 AOS Board Meeting minutes (Ken Ward). Unanimously approved by the Board.
2. Treasurer's report (Elberta Reid, not present). Unanimously approved by the Board.
3. Point of Business—A motion was made and seconded to provide \$200 to Joe Watts toward ongoing work on the website. Unanimously approved by the Board.
4. Point of Business—Holliman Awards

A motion was made and seconded to support one scholarship in support of student research on birds/

ornithology for 2018, at \$1,000. Unanimously approved by the Board.

### Other Items:

- Hard copies of the new Field Checklists of Alabama Birds are now available, provided by Alabama Ornithological Society and Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division. Checklists should be available on the AOS website soon.
- Dedication ceremony honoring Bob and Martha Sargent was held on Friday, October 13, during the Fort Morgan field trip. A plaque and benches were dedicated, with comments from Bob Reed and a Fort Morgan representative.
- Field trips—Need to consider new sites for field trips during AOS meetings, especially on Dauphin Island; boat trips are one possibility. Sign-ups preceding field trips, especially the Friday field trip during Dauphin Island meetings, should be strongly considered.
- DIBS—There have been several new acquisitions, towards the island interior; there are now 35 parcels in DIBS.

Meeting adjourned, 3:55 p.m.

A O S F A L L M E E T I N G , D A U P H I N I S L A N D , O C T O B E R 1 3 - 1 5 , 2 0 1 7

# AOS Fall Meeting Report

By GREGORY J. HARBER

**I**HAD BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS MEETING since the moment I learned that Bob and Lucy Duncan and Dr. Frank Moore would be our speakers on Friday and Saturday nights, respectively. Add a special field trip to Fort Morgan for the dedication of a bench in honor of the late Bob Sargent and his wife, Martha, and one has the framework for an excellent meeting.

The Fort Morgan trip was held on Friday morning and was attended by many AOS members who fondly remembered the Sargents and their years of dedicated service operating the Hummer/Bird Study Group banding station at the historic fort. We are grateful to Col. Bob Reed for his words of remembrance, and to Dr. Greg D. Jackson who oversaw the installation of the bench and plaque.

Weather and bird migration is a topic that Bob and Lucy Duncan know well, based on their many years of observation. AOS members and guests attending the Friday night potluck supper enjoyed hearing their presentation, in addition to seeing the stellar photographs during the slide program accompanying the announcement of the winners of the AOS Photography Competition.

Field trips to Pelican Bay Peninsula, led by local birding expert Andrew Haffenden, and exploration of Dauphin Island with Dr. Moore, were in order Saturday morning. Birding activity was somewhat slow at times during the weekend, as is sometimes the case at fall meetings on Dauphin Island. Still, 170 species of birds were reported at compilation, which was held at noon on Sunday at the Goat Trees. Highlights included American Oystercatchers (East End), Wilson's Phalarope (Blakely Island Mud Lakes on the Sunday morning field trip), Lesser Black-backed Gull and Magnificent Frigatebirds (Pelican Peninsula) and Golden-winged Warbler (Audubon Bird Sanctuary).

Jennie Stowers once again graciously opened her home to all the meeting attendees for lunch on Saturday. Surely the camaraderie that is shared among her guests helps to ensure

that AOS meetings are a cut above other state ornithological society meetings! Thank you, Jennie!

Following the Saturday night buffet dinner, which featured tasty fare and was excellent as always, Dr. Frank Moore, distinguished professor emeritus from the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Southern Mississippi, gave his presentation on *The Importance of Stopovers for Neotropical Migrants*. This has always been an interest of mine, and so I listened with rapt attention. The navigational feats of neotropical migrant songbirds never ceases to amaze me—they are wondrous, indeed. Dr. Moore took what could have been an esoteric subject and made it both exceptionally interesting and understandable.

I was especially pleased to hear Dr. Moore speak to the conservation value of protecting small parcels of suitable habitat at migrant traps on the northern Gulf Coast, for this is precisely the approach that Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries has been pursuing for years (I serve on their board of directors as vice president for conservation). Indeed, DIBS properties stretch from the Gulf of Mexico to Mississippi Sound, in swaths of wetland tupelo gum swamps and forested uplands that includes the Gorgas Swamp, Tupelo Gum Swamp, Goat Trees, Steiner Block, Sto's Woods, and lots adjacent to Shell Mounds Park.

AOS members should be especially proud of their role in permanently protecting these parcels, through their long-standing donations to DIBS via special donations when they register for AOS meetings, including six individuals who donated when registering for the 2017 winter meeting, and 20 for the spring meeting. I am forever grateful for their generous donations; DIBS strives to use these funds wisely in our efforts to protect the most crucial habitat on the island.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Anne G. Miller for her two years as AOS president. Her thoroughness and attention to detail were most appreciated by meeting attendees, and her choice of speakers always ensured a good learning experience. Harry Dean, our newly elected president, assumed his duties at compilation on Sunday.

**2017 AOS Fall Meeting Compilation List  
Dauphin Island, Alabama, October 13–15**

**N**oteworthy birds of the weekend included Alder/Willow Flycatcher. Count total was 170 species.

Black-bellied Whistling Duck  
Canada Goose  
Blue-winged Teal  
Northern Shoveler  
Gadwall  
American Wigeon  
Mallard  
Mottled Duck  
Northern Pintail  
Green-winged Teal  
Pied-billed Grebe  
Rock Pigeon  
Eurasian Collared-Dove  
White-winged Dove  
Mourning Dove  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo  
Common Nighthawk  
Chimney Swift  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
Clapper Rail  
Virginia Rail  
Sora  
Common Gallinule  
American Coot  
Black-necked Stilt  
American Avocet  
American Oystercatcher  
Black-bellied Plover  
Snowy Plover  
Semipalmated Plover  
Piping Plover  
Killdeer  
Ruddy Turnstone  
Red Knot  
Stilt Sandpiper  
Sanderling  
Dunlin  
Least Sandpiper  
Pectoral Sandpiper  
Semipalmated Sandpiper  
Western Sandpiper  
Short-billed Dowitcher  
Long-billed Dowitcher  
Wilson's Snipe  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Lesser Yellowlegs  
Willet  
Greater Yellowlegs  
**Wilson's Phalarope**  
Laughing Gull  
Herring Gull  
Lesser Black-backed Gull  
Caspian Tern

Common Tern  
Forster's Tern  
Royal Tern  
Sandwich Tern  
Black Skimmer  
Common Loon  
Magnificent Frigatebird  
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  
Glossy Ibis  
Roseate Spoonbill  
Black Vulture  
Turkey Vulture  
Osprey  
Bald Eagle  
Northern Harrier  
Cooper's Hawk  
Red-shouldered Hawk  
Broad-winged Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Barred Owl  
Belted Kingfisher  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
Downy Woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
Pileated Woodpecker  
American Kestrel  
Merlin  
Peregrine Falcon  
Eastern Wood-Pewee  
*Alder/Willow Flycatcher*  
Least Flycatcher  
Eastern Phoebe  
**Eastern Kingbird**  
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  
Loggerhead Shrike  
White-eyed Vireo  
Yellow-throated Vireo  
Blue-headed Vireo  
Philadelphia Vireo  
Red-eyed Vireo

Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Fish Crow  
Tree Swallow  
Northern Rough-winged Swallow  
Bank Swallow  
Barn Swallow  
Carolina Chickadee  
Tufted Titmouse  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Brown-headed Nuthatch  
House Wren  
Sedge Wren  
Marsh Wren  
Carolina Wren  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
Eastern Bluebird  
Veery  
Swainson's Thrush  
Wood Thrush  
Gray Catbird  
Brown Thrasher  
Northern Mockingbird  
European Starling  
House Sparrow  
House Finch  
American Goldfinch  
Eastern Towhee  
Savannah Sparrow  
Nelson's Sparrow  
Seaside Sparrow  
Swamp Sparrow  
Baltimore Oriole  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Common Grackle  
Boat-tailed Grackle  
Worm-eating Warbler  
Northern Waterthrush  
Golden-winged Warbler  
Black-and-white Warbler

Tennessee Warbler  
Orange-crowned Warbler  
Common Yellowthroat  
Hooded Warbler  
American Redstart  
Cape May Warbler  
Northern Parula  
Magnolia Warbler  
Bay-breasted Warbler  
Blackburnian Warbler  
Yellow Warbler  
Chestnut-sided Warbler  
Palm Warbler  
Pine Warbler  
Prairie Warbler  
Black-throated Green Warbler  
Summer Tanager  
Scarlet Tanager  
Northern Cardinal  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
Blue Grosbeak  
Indigo Bunting

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 **bold-faced**, 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.

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**Membership Dues Reminder**

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**R**EMEMBER THAT DUES ARE FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR, MEANING that they are due January 1, 2018. Please check your mailing label, which should include the year through which you membership is paid. If it is before 2018, please send your dues to our treasurer, **Joan Dixon, 1059 Palmetto Street, Mobile, AL 36604**, soon so we don't miss you. You can also renew online at **aosbirds.org**. Also, while you are doing this, please consider a life membership, and forget paying dues again. The membership form is on the inside back cover.

# Bobcats and Eagles

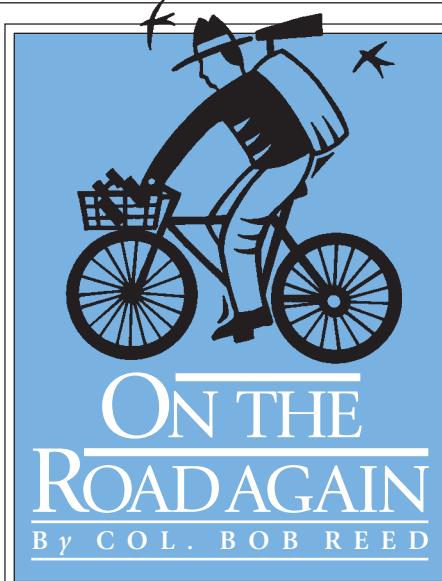


AT AND I WENT DOWN TO ST. Marks National Wildlife Refuge just below Tallahassee to look at wintering ducks, eagles, and sparrows. We were on one of the dikes that the US Fish & Wildlife Service has built to impound water for the ducks. We were watching ducks—sixteen species—as they dabbled for food and as they lined up on the runway and took off, with great fanfare. Often, they would fly around in a great circle, and land, again with great fanfare, twenty yards from where they'd started.

A lady who had stood up on a bumper to see over the nearby reeds spotted the bobcat first. He was skulking through the reeds on the bank about 50 yards from us. As we watched, it entered the water, wading in about 10 to 12 inches of water, working toward several ducks. The water became deeper, forcing him to swim. He swam to within three or four yards of the ducks, who kept him in sight, but otherwise appeared to be unconcerned about his presence. Apparently giving up the hunt, he disappeared into the reeds on the other side of the pond. Ten minutes later, we saw a second bobcat emerge from roughly the same place as the first cat, and repeat the process. They were obviously a pair, although my skills at determining the sex of bobcats at a distance are weak.

The truly remarkable thing is that not 48 hours later, as I was pulling out of my driveway here in Tallahassee, a bobcat emerged from the brush, and started across the road at a deliberate walk. As a car approached, he accelerated to a charge, and barely escaped with his hide. Three bobcats in 48 hours; that's a record for me. All in broad daylight.

Walking along a path in the refuge, we watched an immature Bald Eagle fly over, not 30 feet from us. As he flew into some very tall longleaf pines, he was suddenly beset by a pair of adult Bald Eagles who had clearly been there but out of sight. With much screaming and aerial acrobatics, they repelled the interloper, who took only about 60 seconds to



yield the field. Their screams filled the air, echoing off the pines and lingering in the air, primeval, stirring something deep within us. After he left, we spotted the very large nest, as big as a VW Beetle, in one of the pines. The pair had been defending their territory. It was one of the most exhilarating minutes of my life.

Tommy Pratt, of Prattville, who saw this spectacle with us, told me of seeing 16 Bald Eagles at once just below Martin Dam, about 10 years ago. Pat and I have seen one here and there in Elmore County, but never that many, and never from our yard, which would

be a special treat. We will be richer for the two days.

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: I wrote this several years ago, and thought it might be of interest to those planning on attending the fall meeting. Mary Francis, BJ, and others saw several bobcats at St. Marks the last time we met there, so keep your eyes peeled.*

## Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Spring 2018

February 10, 2018

Summer 2018

May 10, 2018

## Upcoming Meetings

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**WINTER MEETING**—January 26-28, 2018  
St. Mark's NWR, Crawfordville, Florida

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**SPRING MEETING**—April 20-22, 2018  
Dauphin Island, Alabama

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

# Second Annual AOS Photo Contest

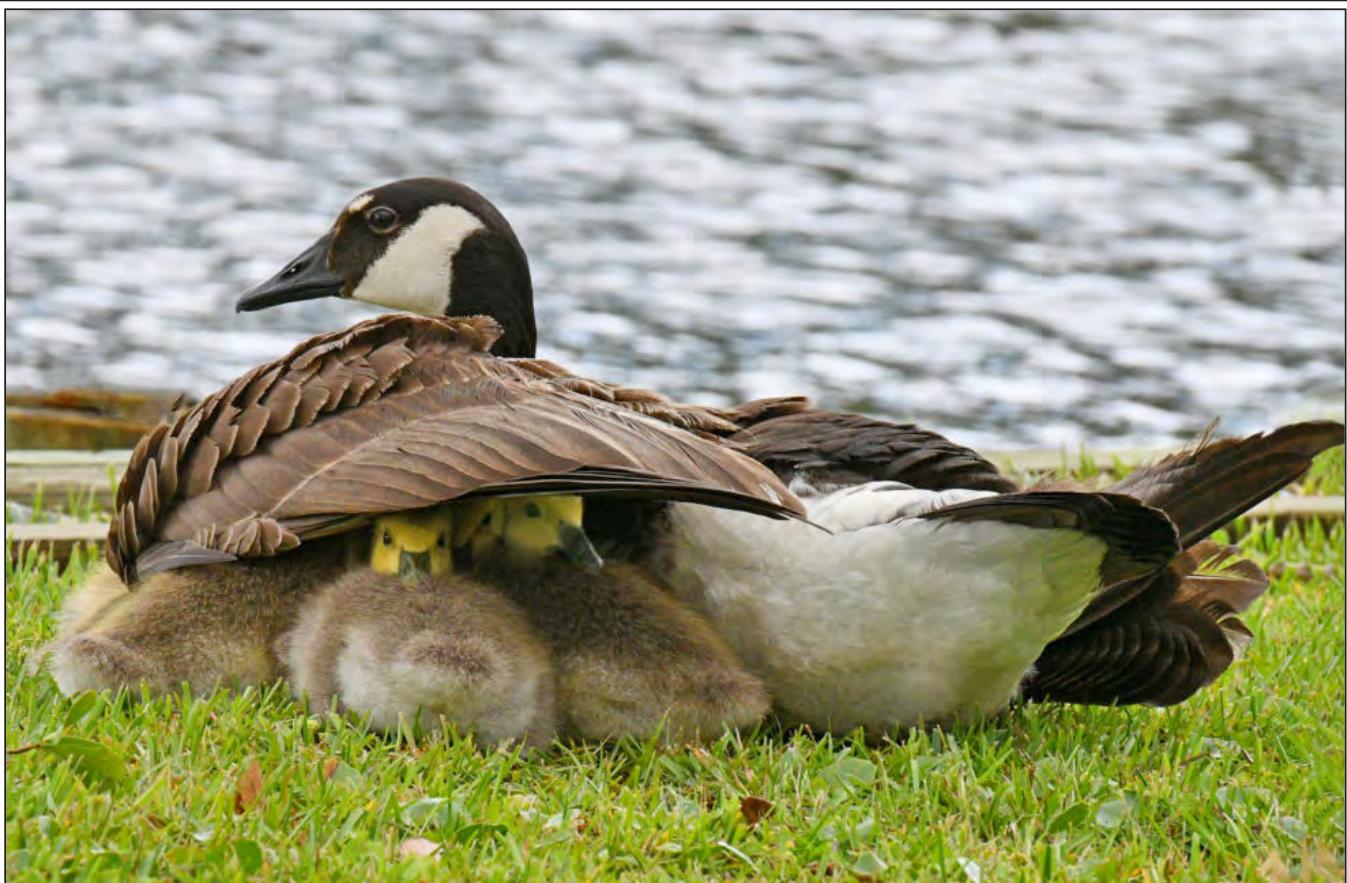
By KEN WARD

**T**HE 2017 AOS PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS WERE presented during the Friday potluck/mixer at the fall meeting on October 13. There were 17 entrants and 71 photos submitted, pretty evenly distributed among three categories: Backyard, Flight and Habitat. This was roughly twice the number of contestants and four times the number of entries we had in 2016, our first contest. Four winners were chosen, one for each category, and best overall; additionally, four honorable mentions were recognized. Our judges were Mark Almond, Bob Farley and Bala Chennupati. Mark and Bob are professional photographers, while Bala has become well-known the past few years for his outstanding bird photos, especially among Alabama birders. The efforts of our

judges are much appreciated. Prizes were \$75 for each of the best-in-category and \$125 for best overall. The results:

- Best-in-Show—Miranda Johnson Studstill for her photo of a Northern Flicker (Yellowhammer) in flight (*see cover*);
- Best Backyard—Rick Dowling for his photo of an adult Northern Cardinal feeding a young adult;
- Best Flight—Susi Stroud for her photo of an Osprey;
- Best Habitat—Mark Watts, for his photo of a Snowy Egret feeding on a rather large fish.
- Our 4 honorable mention winners were Rick Dowling, Mark Watts, Bob Quarles and Susan Rouillier.

The results and winning photos/honorable mentions now appear on the AOS website ([www.aosbirds.org](http://www.aosbirds.org)) and





Facebook page. We have also added all the submitted contest photos to our media library for future use, per the permissions given by contestants. In addition to winners and honorable mentions, all contestants had at least one of their photos shown at the award presentation. The presentation was very well received—so many beautiful, interesting photos.

AOS wishes to express its sincere appreciation to all contestants for their participation and we hope you'll consider entering again next year. For those of you who haven't competed, the contest is open to all AOS members in good standing, who can submit photos of birds taken in Alabama and the Florida panhandle during the year between closing dates for submission (probably September 1). Please keep us in mind while you're out there looking for that great next shot.



Susi Stroud's photo of an Osprey (opposite page); Mark Watts's photo of a Snowy Egret (top); and Rick Dowling's photo of an adult Northern Cardinal feeding a young adult (above).

# Audubon Christmas Bird Counts in Alabama and Surrounding States, 2017–2018

## 1. Waterloo, Alabama—December 16, 2017

Paul Kittle: 256-627-2376; pdkittle@una.edu

## 2. Dauphin Island, Alabama—December 16, 2017

Howard Horne: hhorne@bvaenviro.com

*Teams cover Dauphin Island as well as part of the south Mobile County mainland.*

## 3. Montgomery, Alabama—January 2, 2018

Carrie Threadgill: 334-242-3864; carrie.threadgill@dcnr.alabama.gov

## 4. Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Decatur, Alabama—December 16, 2017

Dwight Cooley: 256-565-6239; sabrewing@earthlink.net

*See NABS schedule at [www.northalbirding.com](http://www.northalbirding.com) for more information*

## 5. Birmingham, Alabama—December 23, 2017

David George: (home) 205-477-5074,  
(cell) 205-401-8111; dpsageorge@bellsouth.net

## 6. Pensacola, Florida—December 16, 2017

Bill Bremser: billbremser@gmail.com;  
828-733-7444

## 7. Auburn, Alabama—December 15, 2017

Geoff Hill: 334-332-4930; ghill@auburn.edu

## 8. Guntersville, Alabama—December 26, 2017

Linda Reynolds: 256-582-2970; rreynolds@charter.net  
*We have eight parties and the area covers a lot of lakeshore as well as upland and woodland terrain. We usually start around 7 a.m. and conclude with a supper compilation around 5 p.m. at the Guntersville Library. See NABS schedule at [www.northalbirding.com](http://www.northalbirding.com) for more information.*

## 9. Gulf Shores, Alabama—December 30, 2017

Greg Jackson and Howard Horne: hhorne@bvaenviro.com

## 10. Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Eufaula, Alabama—December 22, 2017

Mason Jarrett: beltedkingfisher2000@yahoo.com  
*Interested parties can either sign up on the CBC website at <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbc/public/>, or email Mason Jarrett.*

## 11. Columbus, Georgia—January 3, 2018

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

*Interested parties can either sign up on the CBC website at <http://netapp.audubon.org/cbc/public/>, or email Mason Jarrett.*

## 12. Choctawatchee Bay, Florida—December 18, 2017

Alan Knothe: 850-208-1780, birdman6419@gmail.com (email is best)

## 13. Cullman, Alabama—December 17, 2017

Vince Meleski: 256-739-4589, vmeleski@charter.net or vincemeleski@outlook.com

*Counters meet at Culpepper Real Estate (601 7th Ave. SW, Cullman, Alabama 35055, close to the Post Office) to assign areas to be covered. This count is frequently short-handed, so we hope some of you will consider helping out. Those who want to help for part of the day (morning or afternoon) can also participate. We will re-meet for compilation at 5:00 pm at Karma's Coffee House (103 1st Ave. NE, Cullman, Alabama 35055).*

## 14. Savannah, Tennessee—January 2-5, 2018 (tentative)

Damien Simbeck: 256-856-3079; tnbarredowl@aol.com

*Meet at 5:30 a.m. at McDonalds in Savannah (corner of Hwy 64 and 128)*

## 15. Buffalo River, Lawrenceburg, Tennessee— December 14, 2017

Damien Simbeck: 256-856-3079; tnbarredowl@aol.com

## 16. Fort Morgan, Alabama—TBA

*(any information on date and contact is most appreciated; send to phinken@wouway.com)*

## 17. Tuscaloosa, Alabama—TBA

*(any information on date and contact is most appreciated; send to phinken@wouway.com)*

A O S W I N T E R M E E T I N G , S T . M A R K S N W R , J A N U A R Y 2 6 - 2 8 , 2 0 1 8

# AOS Winter Meeting Schedule



NLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL ACTIVITIES BEGIN or occur at the Wildwood Inn Hotel, 3896 Coastal Highway, Crawfordville, FL 32327

To register online for the Winter Meeting, go to: <http://www.aosbirds.org/aos-meeting-registration/>

## **FRIDAY, January 26, 2018**

- 7:45 a.m.** Field Trip—Bald Point State Park and Wakulla Springs (Edward Ball State Park)  
Trip Leaders: TBD  
See field trip descriptions opposite for details.
- 5:00 p.m.** Registration, Social Hour
- 6:00 p.m.** Announcements
- 6:30 p.m.** About the area and plan for tomorrow
- 7:00 p.m.** Member's Slides

## **SATURDAY, January 27, 2018**

- 7:00 a.m.** Field Trip—St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge  
Trip Leaders: Bob and Lucy Duncan  
See field trip descriptions opposite for details.
- 3:00 p.m.** AOS Board Meeting
- 5:00 p.m.** Registration

## **5:30 p.m. BANQUET AND KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

- 5:30 p.m.** Social Hour
- 6:30 p.m.** Banquet
- 7:15 p.m.** Announcements
- 7:30 p.m.** Keynote Speaker: Denver Holt, founder and president of the Owl Research Institute and the Ninepipes Wildlife Research Center, speaking on "Adaptations in Owls."

## **SUNDAY, January 28, 2018**

- 7:30 a.m.** Field Trip—Return trip to Wakulla Springs  
Trip Leader: TBD  
See field trip description on page 12 for details.
- 12:00 p.m.** Compilation
- 1:00 p.m.** Adjourn

## **Winter Meeting Field Trips**

### **FRIDAY, January 26, 2018**

Bald Point State Park and Wakulla Springs (Edward Ball State Park)

Trip Leaders: TBD

Meeting Time: 7:45 a.m.

Meeting Place: Wildwood Inn parking lot

**8 a.m.** departure from hotel. Please arrive by 7.45a.m. for directions and carpooling. We head down to Bald Point State Park for waders, shorebirds, gulls and terns, ducks—seven or eight species are possible, more if it's a good sea duck year—sparrows, and general coastal winter birds. We'll also stop at the Mashes Sands area, and scan Ochlockonee Bay from the shore. We then head for Wakulla Springs for lunch at the Edward Ball State Park. Wakulla Springs has several trails that can provide winter birds, then after lunch we'll take the famous Wakulla Springs boat tour (\$8). We return to the hotel at our leisure after the boat ride.

### **SATURDAY, January 27, 2018**

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

Trip Leaders: Bob and Lucy Duncan

Meeting Time: 7:00 a.m.

Meeting Place: Wildwood Inn parking lot

**Note:** There is a \$5 daily pass charge per car for entrance to St. Marks. A Senior Pass or a National Parks Pass is acceptable for entry. Other passes are acceptable as well. See the St. Marks website for inclusive and the latest information.

**7:30 a.m.** departure from hotel. Please arrive by 7:00 a.m. for directions and carpooling. Today is spent exploring St. Marks Wildlife Refuge, one of the panhandle's best birding areas. The refuge was established in 1931 to provide wintering habitat for migratory birds, and is one of the oldest refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System. It encompasses over 70,000 acres and includes coastal marshes, islands, tidal creeks, and estuaries of seven north Florida

rivers, and is home to a diverse community of plant and animal life. Ducks, sparrows, western rarities, Red-cockaded Woodpecker and many others can be found here—the refuge has an ebird count of 259 species. We will be mostly walking the trails and levees, but we are also arranging a tram tour with the Friends of St Marks. Final details yet to come in, but there will be a set donation cost to help this all-volunteer organization with their efforts in the refuge, as well as the actual costs. The tour will be led by a seasoned St. Marks volunteer who will be up to date on which birds are currently on the refuge, and the best places to see them. Given the many miles of trails, this is the best way to get to out-of-reach areas that are closed to vehicles. Lunch will be bring your own, as there is nowhere to buy lunch at the refuge. We'll include a visit to the historic lighthouse, built in 1842 and still operating.

#### SUNDAY, January 28, 2018

Field Trip: Wakulla Springs (Edward Ball State Park)

Trip Leader: TBA or on your own

Meeting Time: 7:30 a.m.

Meeting Place: Wildwood Inn

A return trip to Wakulla Springs if you missed it on Friday. The boat tours start at 9:40 a.m. and the temperature must be at least 40 degrees for them to run. Plan to be back at the Wildwood Inn in time for Compilation at noon.

#### ACCOMMODATIONS

Unless otherwise noted, all activities will be at the Wildwood Inn Hotel, 3896 Coastal Highway, Crawfordville, Florida 32327. A block of rooms at the Wildwood Inn has been reserved at a rate of \$77, which includes tax. Reservations must be made by January 12, 2018 (two weeks prior) to get this rate as part of the block.

#### Websites:

[https://www.fws.gov/refuge/St\\_Marks/visit/plan\\_your\\_visit.html](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/St_Marks/visit/plan_your_visit.html)

[www.visitwakulla.com/Communities/Crawfordville](http://www.visitwakulla.com/Communities/Crawfordville)

#### Motels (Crawfordville):

Wildwood Inn: 850-926-4455

Best Western: 850-926-3737

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## Meet the Speaker: Denver Holt

DENVER HOLT is a wildlife researcher and graduate of the University of Montana. He is founder and president of the Owl Research Institute and the Ninepipes Wildlife Research Center, a nonprofit organization located in Charlo, Montana. As a dedicated field researcher, Holt believes that long-term field studies are the primary means to understanding trends in wildlife populations.

Since 1978, Holt's research focus has been owls and their ecology. He has published more than ninety papers and technical documents, including four species accounts for the Birds of North America project. He was team leader for the Strigidae Family owl species accounts for The Handbook of the Birds of the World, volume 5, covering 189 species of the world's owls. In collaboration with elementary school teachers, he has co-authored two children's science books on owls: *Owls Whoo Are They?*, and *Snowy Owls*

*Whoo Are They?* In 2006, he was a chapter author on owls for the book; *Arctic Wings*, highlighting the birds of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska. The forward was written by former United States President Jimmy Carter. The book won the National Outdoor Book Award for Design and Artistic Merit.

In 2000, he was named Montana's "Wildlife Biologist of the Year" by the Wildlife Society of North America. Holt's research was the cover story for National Geographic magazine in December 2002. His work has been the subject of many television bites on ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and Disney, as well as featured on Audubon's Up-Close series, PBS's Bird Watch, and David Attenborough's *Life of Birds*, among others. His research on Snowy Owls has been showcased on documentaries for National Geographic Explorer, NHK Natural History Unit of Japan, and the Norwegian Broadcasting Company Natural History Unit. His *Snowy Owl*

research has been the focus of the British Broadcasting Company's (BBC) documentary series called *Frozen Earth*, a sequel to the *Planet Earth* series. In May 2011, Holt's research was featured in the New York Times ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)). In 2011, Holt has worked closely with a PBS Documentary film crew featuring the breeding ecology of the Snowy Owl at his research site in Barrow, Alaska. The film, 'The Magic of the Snowy Owl' aired in 2012. The New York Times again cited Holt's research in January 2012, highlighting the 2012 Snowy Owl irruption to the United States. In 2014 Holt advised and assisted on BBC Natural History film looking at predator prey relationships in Snowy Owls. In March 2015 GEO magazine of Germany (considered the National Geographic of Europe) featured Holt's Snowy Owl research. And in April 2015, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology featured Holt's research on Snowy Owl in their prestigious Living Bird magazine. Also in December 2015, Holt's research was featured in The Financial Times, London. Holt also has been the keynote speaker for several major bird festivals in the United States, and abroad.

When not researching owls, Holt is involved in wildlife watching tourism as a natural history tour guide and co-owner of Wild Planet Nature Tours ([www.wildplanetnaturetours.com](http://www.wildplanetnaturetours.com)). He also guides private natural history tours, and is a part-time trip leader for Victor Emanuel Nature Tour Company ([www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com)), the largest nature tour company in the world. To learn more about Holt and his efforts in wildlife research, education, and conservation, visit [www.owlinstitute.org](http://www.owlinstitute.org).

## Adaptations in Owls

By DENVER HOLT

Owls are arguably the most widely recognized group of animals in the world. They occur on all continents except Antarctica and have populated the most remote groups of islands in the world, including Hawaii. Owl lore, myth, and stories have been verbally passed along in many native cultures throughout the world. Indeed, cave paintings dated to the Paleolithic period in France depict a Snowy Owl. This is perhaps the oldest bird art known, dating to about 15,000 years ago.

The Little Owl appears on Greek coins dating to about 400 B.C., and represents Athena, the goddess of wisdom, and

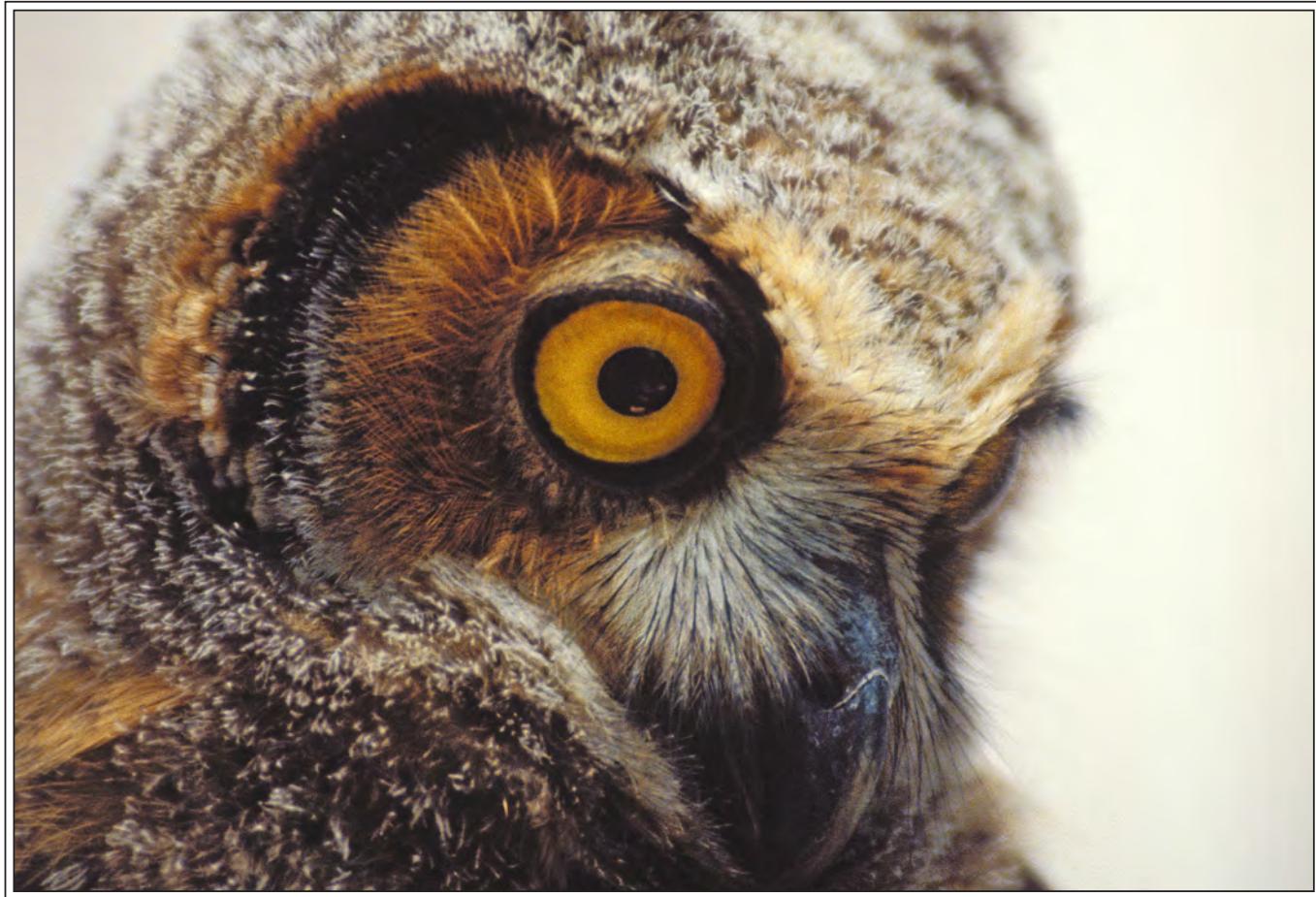
patron of Athens. Owls have been mentioned in the writings of Aristotle and Pliny. Owls occur in the art of Michelangelo, Dürer, Picasso and others. Owls have been referenced in numerous short stories and poems, such as Edward Lear's "Owl and the Pussy Cat." Today, owls are used as sport mascots or corporate logos. Even human behaviors have been referenced to a person being a bit owly, owlish, or owl-eyed. It's interesting to note, a group of owls is referred to as a parliament, believed to reflect these birds wisdom in thought and council, similar to human legislative bodies.

Fossil owls date back to the Paleocene, about 54-65 million years ago. Some of our modern genera however, can be dated to the Pleistocene, about 10,000 to 1.6 million years ago. There is even indication of gigantic, three-foot tall flightless owls living mostly on predator free islands, also during the Pleistocene. Today we recognize about 250 species worldwide. These numbers are based largely upon results from paleontological records, and morphological and molecular data. In recent years however, these numbers seem to change annually as new molecular methods for defining species arise. Occasionally, a new species is discovered by observation, or even rediscovered after years without being seen. All owls fall under the order Strigiformes, and are further divided into two families, the Tytonidae, about 25 species, and the Strigidae, about 225 species. Further groupings suggest three sub-families and six tribes. The Tytonidae (Barn and Bay owls) appear to be the older group, while the Strigidae (all others owls) are the younger group. In the United States and Canada there have been 24 species of owls recorded with about 20 species known to breed.

As one might guess, the greatest diversity of owl species occurs in the tropical zone, generally between the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn. There are small species such as pygmy owls at 2-3 ounces, and large species such as eagle owls at 5-8 pounds.

Of the world's owls, few (about 2%) look round-headed, but can also erect feather tufts on the top of their heads; others are permanently round-headed (52%); and still others have permanent feather tufts on the top of their heads (about 46%). The world's owls seem to have three basic eye colors: yellow (about 61%), brown (about 33%) and orange (about 6%). It is unclear what function these iris colors has evolved for.

Owls are predatory and eat a wide range of prey, including insects, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals.



An immature Great Horned Owl, Alabama's largest breeding owl, photographed at the Alabama Wildlife Center at Oak Mountain State Park in Pelham. (Robin McDonald)

There are not true carrion eaters, yet under certain circumstances some species will eat carrion. Most species do not build nests, and need natural or woodpecker holes in trees, stick platform nests in trees made by other species, a place on the ground, and even underground, to nest.

Yet, despite their worldwide distribution owls can be rather difficult to find. Thus we still know little about most species of owls in the world. Many species are nocturnal or nearly so, and perhaps somewhat secretive. These behaviors have led most species to evolve traits that render them rather inconspicuous. For example, owls that roost during the day usually choose a hiding place that makes them less likely to be seen. Furthermore, they remain somewhat motionless while in their roosts. Additionally, they have cryptic color-

ation and plumage patterning that further enhances their hiding. And finally, if a threat is nearby, owls can employ behaviors such as raising their feather tufts on their heads, or compressing body plumage to enhance their camouflage. If you combine a good hiding place, plumage coloration and patterning, and behaviors, finding owls can be rather exhausting.

Aside from the difficulty in finding owls, if you know the relative breeding seasons, and the vocalizations, you can pinpoint areas where owls may be breeding and locate them for yourself. Owl have a wide repertoire of vocalizations, and if you remember as a general rule, the large ones tend to hoot and the small ones toot—with few exceptions.

Join Denver Holt for an exciting lecture on adaptations in owls. How well can they see at night? How well can they hear? Do they really fly silently? Why are they so difficult to find? And, why do people recognize and admire owls so much?

## AOS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

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**Joan Dixon, 1059 Palmetto Street, Mobile, AL 36604**

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## AOS WINTER MEETING 2018 REGISTRATION FORM

*Complete and return to:*

**Joan Dixon, 1059 Palmetto Street, Mobile, AL 36604**

Telephone: (205) 879-1935 • Email: [joanwsdixon@gmail.com](mailto:joanwsdixon@gmail.com)

*Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by January 16, 2018*

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Registration @ \$25 per person	\$
Banquet Buffet @ \$25 per person	\$
AOS 2018 Dues	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution	\$
<b>TOTAL ENCLOSED</b>	\$

# ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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