

# THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 32, NO. 3 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY FALL 2012

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

FOUNDED 1952



## IN THIS ISSUE

3

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

*by Bianca J. Allen*

4

**ON THE ROAD AGAIN**

**BARROW IN JUNE**

*by Col. Bob Reed*

6

**JULY 23-24, 2012**

**THIRD ALABAMA NONGAME**

**WILDLIFE CONFERENCE**

**PRELIMINARY REPORT**

*by Bianca J. Allen*

9

**AOS FALL MEETING**

**MEET THE SPEAKER:**

**CONNIE TOOPS**

**MIDWAY—IT'S FOR**

**THE BIRDS**

*by Connie Toops*

*A Red-footed Booby near its nest  
on Eastern Island, Midway Atoll.*

*Photograph © Connie Toops*

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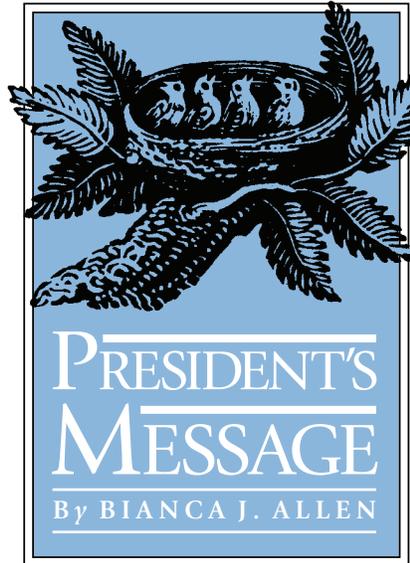
Don Self  
 Tom and Joan Siegwald, Charlotte Fanz, Pat Reed,  
 Priscilla Tubbs, Mike Wilson

**H**OPEFULLY BY THE TIME YOU receive this newsletter the temperatures will be cooler, and fall migration will be under way. It's been a long, hot summer with a severe drought over most of the state, but the heartiest of birders have braved the heat for the reward of seeing some of the most beautiful birds—those graceful Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites soar through the air with the greatest of ease. It was fun to find the Purple Gallinules again at the Leroy swamp, and finding them with young at the Jackson Water Treatment Plant was an added treat. You can only imagine my glee

upon seeing three pairs of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers during a one-day trip through the Black Belt. These birds are becoming more common breeders in our fair state. Trying to count hundreds of Wood Storks along the banks of the catfish and farm ponds was frustrating but encouraging. It might be hot and uncomfortable but birders always seem to make the best of the situation by finding some great "hole-in-the-wall" eating establishments and sharing a lot of good food and fellowship.

Now we transition from those fairly easy to identify summer birds like Swallow-tailed Kites, White Pelicans, Wood Storks, Mississippi Kites, etc. to those confusing fall warblers (CFWs). Now is the time to start reviewing how to make an accurate identification of those nondescript fall warblers. It's always encouraging to me that even Roger Tory Peterson labeled an entire plate of his drawings as CFWs. Maybe I'm not the only one who still suffers some confusion while admiring those fall warblers.

In July, Frank Farrell, Ty Keith, and I represented AOS at the third Nongame Wildlife Conference at Auburn, AL. This conference is held every ten years to determine the conservation status of all wildlife in Alabama. It was very heartening to see so many people who care about and study our wildlife give of their time to attend this conference. Our very own Eric Soehren chaired the Bird Committee. AOS was a sponsor of this conference and the only sponsor to have an on-site exhibit. We had lots of visitors to our exhibit and enrolled two new members and three new youth birders. I have included



my informal report of the conference in this newsletter for your information. I encourage you to read the entire report to learn what is happening in Alabama in regards to our wildlife. There is exciting news on the mammal and amphibian front near the end of the report. There are some species of concern but there are also some success stories, e.g., the Bewick's Wren has not been seen in Alabama in the past ten years whereas the House Wren has shown a slight increase in population. Even our state bird, the Northern Flicker has experienced a significant population decline.

Our speaker at the fall meeting will be photojournalist Connie Toops from North Carolina. Her account of being evacuated from Midway Atoll due to the tsunami that struck Japan on March 11, 2011, has been published in various magazines, and she will be here to tell us more about that magical place known as Midway Atoll. More information on Connie can be found in this newsletter.

The area in the Shelby Center we have been using for dining was never designed for that purpose. It has carpet, which spills will damage. We have been asked before to be careful, and we are now required to pay a refundable deposit to cover possible damage to the carpet. So, please, do be careful; if we have to abandon the Shelby Center, it will be very difficult to locate another suitable meeting facility on the island.

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you at Dauphin Island for our fall meeting, October 12-14, 2012.

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### *New Members*

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Jera Allison B. Cochran

Tim & Dianna Hurley

Robert H. Mount

Harold Peterson

Michael C. Rogers (Life)

Betty Sweet

## Barrow in June

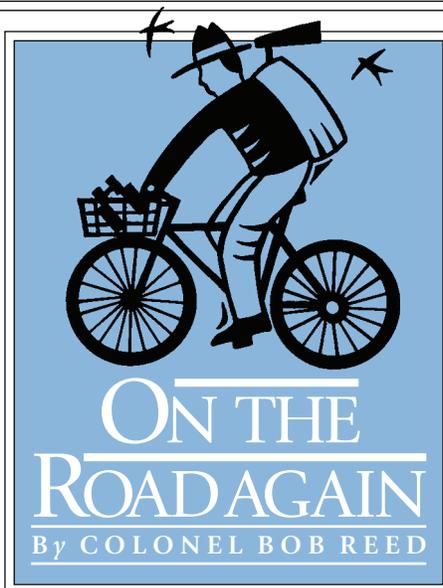
**P**AT AND I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY to take two open seats on a Field Guides trip to Alaska this summer. Our guides were Megan and George. The leg I had anticipated the most was Barrow, above the Arctic Circle, always cold, the northernmost city in the United States.

We arrived in Barrow, landing at the Wiley Post-Will Rogers Memorial Airport at about 10 a.m., and after the logistics of getting settled in the Top of the World hotel, we went next door to Pepe's North of the Border Restaurant. This little place was a ray of sunshine.

The food was a cut above, and considering that everything served must be flown in, the prices were reasonable, and the service was superior. The restaurant is run by the remarkable Fran Tate, who presented each of us with a certificate indicating that we had crossed the Arctic Circle.

We headed across Stevenson Street to the Arctic Ocean beach, which was raked by a 36 mph west wind, to see what we could see. George immediately spotted a distant Providence Petrel, a bird of the open Pacific Ocean, and one that is very rare in Alaska. While I saw the bird, and could tell it was different, I cannot do more than that, as I have no experience with petrels at all, but the sighting set the stage for more interesting birds. We watched three King Eiders in a break in the ice offshore and a Long-tailed Jaeger flying over the ice. But the conditions frankly were miserable, and we didn't stay long.

We loaded up and headed southwest to look for whatever the area offered. Number one on the list was Snowy Owl. Pectoral Sandpipers and Red Phalaropes were common, nesting everywhere. We watched a magnificent Pomarine Jaeger, with its unique twisted tail feather that Megan said looked like a spoon. Little birds froze as it flew over. We saw a pair of American Golden Plovers mating. And then we spotted a Snowy Owl! This was the bird that was on



my must have list, the bird that, in my mind, epitomizes the Arctic. It was several hundred feet away, and between the wind and heat shimmer, the view was less than satisfying, so we set out to walk closer, no little task in the very soggy tundra of Barrow. With each step, my foot would sink down three to six inches, and the suction more than once threatened to retain my boot. We managed to get within 100 yards, but quit because we didn't want to pressure the bird.

We decided to go the other direction, and headed east. We ended up with a four-eider day, having seen well the

Pacific race of Common Eider, Steller's, King, and Spectacled Eiders, and the owl, four life birds in three hours. They were not without work, as we had to hike through some very soggy tundra for the Steller's and Spectacled Eiders, with the Spectacled being through eight- to twelve-inch-deep soggy moss.

We woke the next morning at 6 a.m. and were about to dress when we received a call to go to the second floor and look out the window at the Polar Bear. We donned the absolute minimum clothing to be decent and ran upstairs. Across the street a Polar Bear walked regally northeast up the sea ice.

This was the day to go to Point Barrow, the northernmost point in the United States. It's four miles out of town, and, when we learned early in the trip that there were transportation challenges in Barrow, I had asked if we could walk it. The answer was an unequivocal no; it is too dangerous. After seeing the Polar Bear right outside the hotel, I understood, but I still didn't fully appreciate the challenge of reaching the Point. The map indicated a road; I thought *just drive up there*. For one thing, the presence of a road on the map is a gross overstatement, clearly more wishful thinking than reality. We had two four-wheel-drive vehicles. When we got to a certain point, the drivers let most of the air out of the tires and we proceeded at a snail's pace. After close to an hour as we switched back and forth from track to track, we got to the

Point. The point separates the Arctic Ocean into the Beaufort Sea on the east and the Chukchi Sea on the west.

We took pictures, I waded in the Arctic Ocean, and we drove around the pile of whale bones deposited out of town where the bears that clean them would not be attracted into town. The townspeople had harvested 17 whales so far of the 22 allowed for their subsistence living.

On the way back, we stopped to look at Baird's Sandpipers in some of the pools, then went to Pepe's for lunch. After a wonderful tamale, we went back to birding, driving right by the Summer Solstice festival in town. This was the longest day of the year; the sun made a full circuit around the sky, at about the level of 10 o'clock in Alabama. We found more eiders, all closer than the ones yesterday. It was a good afternoon.

The wind had been steady out of the west all day, with gusts in the 40 to 45 mph range, and as we drove back to the Chukchi Sea beach, I was amazed that the shoreline, which had been free of any but one small layer of ice during the morning, was now clogged with ice. As we drove back, the ice was piled up in huge chunks, reaching far above the van, so that we could not see past them. And not only were they piled up, but they had been pushed up onto the shore, with wheelbarrow amounts of black volcanic sand mounded up before them. The force that had been exerted by wind was almost incomprehensible to me. Blocks weighing a ton or more were pushed up on the beach!

The west wind brought another surprise: a Gray-tailed Tattler was feeding on the beach side of these blocks. Encouraged by this sighting, we began to wander around in the fishing shacks to see if anything else had been blown in. Some people thought they saw a thrush, perhaps a Varied Thrush, but we did not get close enough to tell before it flew away, carried on the same wind. While we wandered around, we found a Snowy Owl much closer, no more than 70 yards away. We also saw a Hoary Redpoll snuggle down into a nest in the grass right on the edge of the road.

For the three weeks in Alaska, Pat added 61 birds to her life list for a total of 506, and I added 52 for a total of 528. These do not count the possible Providence Petrel, which we saw, but cannot independently identify. Pat and I saw a total of 171 species of birds, plus both sooty and red races of Fox Sparrow, which I counted as one species, and 20 species of mammals.

JANUARY 1, 2012 - JUNE 30, 2012

## 2012 AOS Financial Report

By MARY FRANCES STAYTON, *Treasurer*

BEGINNING BALANCE: January 1, 2012 \$17,552.66

### **Income**

AOS Dues	3,075.00
CBA Dues	225.00
DIBS Contributions	1,332.00
Winter & Spring Meeting 2012	
Registration	4,525.00
Dauphin Island Sea Lab	820.00
Banquet	3,576.00
AOS Meeting Sales Winter & Spring	656.11

TOTAL INCOME \$ 14,209.11

### **Expenses**

CBA Disbursement	245.00
DIBS Disbursement	1,332.00
Printing <i>Yellowhammer</i>	1,486.17
Workshops, Inc	423.60
<i>Alabama Birdlife</i>	1,438.33
Scout Project—Bill Summerour	177.74
Website	439.64
USPS	164.00
Liability Insurance with The Harford	425.00
Holliman Research Fund Award	2,000.00
Misc Expenses	130.00
DISL Deposits	400.00
Joe Wheeler State Park Deposit	400.00
Non-Game Wildlife Conference	1,000.00
Winter & Spring Meeting 2011	
Lake Pointe Resort	1,284.53
Dauphin Island Sea Lab	935.00
Banquet	2,875.20
Speaker Fee & Expenses	709.85
Items for Spring Meeting Sale	23.75
Misc. Items for Winter & Spring Meeting	324.38
Refunds	390.00

TOTAL EXPENSES \$16,604.19

ENDING BALANCE: June 30, 2012 \$15,157.58

THIRD ALABAMA NONGAME WILDLIFE CONFERENCE, AUBURN, ALABAMA, JULY 23–24, 2012

## Preliminary Report

By BIANCA (BJ) ALLEN \*



THE CONFERENCE WAS MODERATED BY GARY H. Moody, Chief of the Wildlife Section, Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division. Attendees were welcomed by Dr. James P. Shepard, Dean, School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, Auburn University. Comments were made by Fred R. Harders, Acting Director of the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division; Dr. Ralph E. Mirarchi, Professor Emeritus of Wildlife in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, Auburn University. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Jim Lacefield, (retired) adjunct Professor of Biology and Earth Science, University of North Alabama, who presented the "History of Forests in Alabama."

Members of the general public were encouraged to attend committee meetings of their interest. Those members that had potentially useful information of a wildlife species under consideration in the various committee meetings were encouraged to share pertinent information. Each committee chair provided the opportunity for such input during each session.

Sponsors of the conference were: Alabama Ornithological Society, Birmingham Audubon Society, The Alabama Chapter of The Wildlife Society, Alabama Wildlife Federation, Weyerhaeuser, The Nature Conservancy, School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences—Auburn University, the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, and Sybil and Carroll Deschaines in memory of Keith Deschaines.

The Alabama Ornithological Society (AOS) was the only sponsor with an exhibit. Ty Keith, Frank Farrell, and BJ Allen attended the conference as representatives of AOS. All three took turns manning the exhibit and attending the Bird Committee sessions. Greg Moody, moderator of the conference and Mark Sasser, conference coordinator, expressed their appreciation for the AOS sponsorship and participation numerous

times. AOS signed up two new members and four new youth birders. AOS conducted a drawing for a nice birdfeeder, which attracted a good bit of attention by both attendees and coordinators. Thanks go to Shirley Farrell, Don Self, and Priscilla Tubbs, who are on the AOS Education committee, for providing the majority of the display used at the conference.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) Checklist of Alabama Birds for 2012 includes 445 species (+4 subspecies)—63 Families—9 threatened and endangered species. The 2002 checklist included 420 species.

The bird committee members included:

- Eric Soehren—Chairman
  - Dr. Robert Carter (Associate Professor, Jacksonville State University)
  - Roger Clay (Alabama DCNR—WFFD)
  - Dwight Cooley (Leader, USFWS—Wheeler NWR)
  - Dr. Barry Grand (Leader, USGS—Alabama Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit, Auburn University)
  - Dr. Geoff Hill (Professor, Auburn University)
  - Howard Horne (Barry A. Vittor & Associates, Inc.)
  - Dr. Greg Jackson (AOS—Records Compiler)
  - Carrie Johnson (Alabama DCNR—WFFD)
  - Dr. Paul Kittle (Professor, University of North Alabama)
  - Dr. Ralph Mirarchi (Professor Emeritus, Auburn University)
  - Catherine Rideout (Coordinator—East Gulf Coastal Plain Joint Venture)
  - Dr. Scott Rush (Assistant Professor, Mississippi State University)
  - Eric Spadgenske (State Coordinator—USFWS, Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program)
  - Dr. Bill Summerour (Professor Emeritus, Jacksonville State University)
  - John Trent (Alabama DCNR—State Lands Division)
  - Dr. James Tucker, Jr. (Research Ornithologist, Cullman)
- And many other noted ornithologists in Alabama.

\*Based on my personal notes and observations—official reports will be published at a later date.

The Bird Committee members ranked 254 of the 445 species (57%) on the official state checklist prior to the conference, but the floor was open for any comments from committee members and members of the audience which included many knowledgeable birders. Some rankings were changed as a result of the discussion. The remaining 191 species were not ranked because they were either considered accidental, introduced, pelagic, or temporary migrants in the state.

The rankings were based on defined vulnerability parameters that included:

- Rarity
- Distribution of population within the state
- Threats to habitat/populations
- Trends in population

Rankings are defined as:

- P1 = Priority 1 (Highest Conservation Concern/Imperiled): Possesses four of four vulnerability parameters
- P2 = Priority 2 (High Conservation Concern): Possesses three of four vulnerability parameters
- P3 = Priority 3 (Moderate Conservation Concern/Watchlist): Possesses two of four vulnerability parameters or Insufficient Data
- P4 = Priority 4 (Low Conservation Concern): Possesses one of four vulnerability parameters
- P5 = Priority 5 (Lowest Conservation Concern/Demonstrably Secure): No vulnerability parameters

The following was reported by Eric Soehren at the conclusion of the conference:

Ranked P1: 2002—7 species; 2012—8 species

- Snowy Plover
- Wilson's Plover
- Piping Plover
- American Oystercatcher—elevated from P2 to P1 ranking
- Red-cockaded Woodpecker
- Bewick's Wren
- Cerulean Warbler
- Henslow's Sparrow

Ranked P2: 2002—19 species; 2012—19 species

- American Black Duck
- Mottled Duck—elevated from P3 to P2 ranking
- Wood Stork
- Least Bittern
- Reddish Egret
- Swallow-tailed Kite
- Golden Eagle—elevated from P3 to P2 ranking
- Southeastern American Kestrel
- Yellow Rail
- Black Rail
- King Rail—elevated from P3 to P2 ranking
- Red Knot—elevated from P4 to P2 ranking
- Gull-billed Tern—elevated from P4 to P2 ranking
- Short-eared Owl
- Loggerhead Shrike—elevated from P3 to P2 ranking
- Bachman's Sparrow
- Nelson's Sparrow
- Seaside Sparrow
- Rusty Blackbird—elevated from P3 to P2 ranking

7 species were down-listed from P2, including:

- Northern Harrier—moved from P2 to P3
- American Kestrel (n nominate race)—moved from P2 to P3
- American Woodcock—moved from P2 to P3
- Wood Thrush—moved from P2 to P3
- Worm-eating Warbler—moved from P2 to P4
- Swainson's Warbler—moved from P2 to P4
- Kentucky Warbler—moved from P2 to P4

Several birds were ranked for the first time. Those include:

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck
- Long-billed Dowitcher
- Sooty Tern
- Northern Saw-whet Owl
- Willow Flycatcher
- Orange-crowned Warbler
- Chestnut-sided Warbler
- Vesper Sparrow
- Blue Grosbeak
- Painted Bunting

Some notes from discussion in committee:

- Northern Bobwhite—90% decline since 1966
- Green Heron—population declining
- Black and Turkey Vulture—population increasing
- Killdeer—population declining
- Red Knot—moved from P4 to P2
- Gull-billed Tern—moved from P4 to P2
- Common Tern—moved from P4 to P3
- Black Skimmer—moved from P4 to P3
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo—showing significant decline in population
- Common Nighthawk—bird in trouble
- Chimney Swift—moved from P4 to P3—population decline, threat to habitat
- Red-bellied Woodpecker—most common woodpecker in Alabama
- Northern Flicker—moved from P4 to P3—significant population decline—Non-native fire ants appear to be edging out many species of native ants. This bird does not eat non-native fire ants.
- Eastern Wood-Pewee—significant population decline
- Loggerhead Shrike—moved from P3 to P2—threats to habitat, significant population declines
- Blue Jay—population declining in Alabama
- Purple Martin—moved from P5 to P4—declining population
- Cliff Swallow—moved from P4 to P5—significant increase in population
- White-breasted Nuthatch—moved from P4 to P5—significant increase in population
- Brown-headed Nuthatch—moved from P3 to P4
- Brown Creeper—moved from P3 to P4—seeing more in winter
- American Robin—moved from P5 to P4—significant decline in population
- Gray Catbird—moved from P5 to P4—significant decline in population possibly due to house cat predation
- Blue-winged Warbler—ranked P3—population decline—worrisome
- Black-and-white Warbler—ranked P4—long term decline
- Hooded Warbler—ranked P5—increase in population;

not found in Black Belt but found everywhere else in Alabama

- Eastern Towhee—ranked P4—declining due to house cats, loss of habitat, pesticides in yards
- Field Sparrow—moved from P4 to P3—significant population decline due to fire ants
- Grasshopper Sparrow—ranked P3—May/June harvesting of hay destroys nests, loss of habitat
- Red-winged Blackbird—significant population decline in Alabama
- Eastern Meadowlark—ranked P3—declining population
- Boat-tailed Grackle—moved from P4 to P3—population decline, loss of habitat
- Red Crossbill—moved from P4 to P3—due to insufficient information regarding this species in Alabama, 1 breeding population in Alabama

Other Committee reports were:

- Crayfish, Andrew Henderson, Chairman—85 species in Alabama; 42 are ranked either P2 (32) or P1 (10)
- Mussels and Snails, Dr. Paul Johnson, Chairman—74 Freshwater mussel species are ranked either P1 or P2; about 120 snail species are ranked either P1 or P2
- Fish, Steve Rider, Chairman—2 species extinct, 5 species extirpated, 31 species ranked P1, 14 species ranked P2, 2 new species discovered
- Mammals, Keith Hudson, Chairman—74 species considered for ranking, 20 species ranked either P1 or P2, 6 species increased in priority, 2 species decreased in priority, 1 new species was noted in the state, the smoky shrew. A breeding population of black bear is confirmed for North Alabama.
- Amphibians and Reptiles, Roger Clay, Chairman  
Frogs—32 species—5 ranked either P1 or P2  
Salamanders—44 species—12 ranked either P1 or P2  
Turtles—33 species—11 species ranked either P1 or P2  
Lizards—15 species—5 species ranked either P1 or P2  
Snakes—45 species—7 species ranked either P1 or P2  
For the first time in 40 years, a Southern Hognose Snake was documented in Alabama.

The next (fourth) Nongame Wildlife Conference will be held in 2022. (Conferences are held every 10 years.)

AOS FALL MEETING, OCTOBER 12-14, 2012

## Meet the Speaker: Connie Toops

CONNIE TOOPS is an accomplished nature writer and photographer with more than three decades of experience documenting natural history subjects. She is the author and a principal photographer of ten books, including *Midway: A Guide to the Atoll and Its Inhabitants*,

*Hummingbirds: Jewels in Flight*, *Bluebirds Forever*, *Florida Everglades*, and *Great Smoky Mountains*. One of Connie's essays appears in the popular book, *Good Birders Don't Wear White: 50 Tips from North America's Top Birders*. She also teamed with Bill Thompson III to co-author *Attracting Hummingbirds and Butterflies*.

Connie is a skilled naturalist. Before beginning her career in photojournalism, she worked at Colonial, Rocky Mountain, Shenandoah, Everglades, and Crater Lake National Parks. Her husband Pat was a career park ranger for 28 years. In 2002 the Toops moved to Lost Cove Farm, a 128-acre mountain side in western North

Carolina, where they grow much of their own food and invite wildlife into their big backyard.

Connie has birded and photographed in Africa, Australia, Belize, Costa Rica, Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands, Mexico, Trinidad, Tobago, and throughout the United States. Her articles and photos have appeared in dozens of conservation-oriented magazines. Her stock photography has graced trade and textbooks, advertising, annual reports, calendars, cards, and museum exhibits. Connie writes and provides photos for several birding magazines and travels the country speaking on birding, wildlife gardening, and nature photography subjects.

Toops' and Greenberg's book, *Midway: A Guide to the Atoll and Its Inhabitants*, is available at [www.LasAves.biz](http://www.LasAves.biz).

LEFT: Fall meeting speaker Connie Toops on Midway Atoll.



## Midway—It's for the Birds

By CONNIE TOOPS



**M**IDWAY... EVEN THE WORD IS MYSTERIOUS. WHERE is it? Midway between what? Does anyone actually live there?

For birders, the answer is simple—Midway is a seabird haven. There is no place on the 1,498 sandy acres of this atoll in the Northwestern Hawaiian Archipelago not occupied by birds. Midway boasts the world's largest breeding populations of Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses. During nesting season, they are packed wingtip-to-wingtip on accessible bits of dry land. Bonin Petrels, Great Frigatebirds, Red-footed Boobies, Black Noddies, Brown

Noddies, and White, Sooty Terns, and Gray-backed Terns also nest on the atoll. Nearly 3 million individuals representing 19 seabird species gather here annually to raise chicks.

Birds come and go at will, but humans seldom pop in for casual visits. The atoll lies in the North Pacific Ocean, halfway between San Francisco and Tokyo. About 300 people make the trip to Midway annually, most arriving with tours, college, and scientific research groups, or to attend an annual event honoring the World War II Battle of Midway.

For three weeks in March 2011, I was incredibly fortunate to call this one-of-a-kind wildlife destination my home while

photographer Phyllis Greenberg and I prepared a guidebook for the refuge.

Soon after arriving, Phyllis and I took a short boat ride to Eastern Island, where albatross nests obscure an abandoned airstrip pivotal in the June 1942 Battle of Midway. Great Frigatebirds build stick nests in gnarly tree heliotropes. Males, distinguished by glossy black plumage, inflate balloon-like red throat pouches, flutter their wings, and croon ghostly tremolos to woo females. Some 500 pairs of Red-footed Boobies nest in nearby shrubs. Sleek Sooty Terns feed for months at sea, but flocks return each spring, loudly screeching *kree-a-reek, kree-a-reek*. The eerie din was recorded during nesting season at Midway to provide spine-tingling clamor in Alfred Hitchcock's film *The Birds*.

During 2004 and 2005, 42 Laysan Ducks—the world's most endangered waterfowl species—were relocated from Laysan Island (400 miles southeast) to Midway as an "insurance" population. Numbers of the petite teal have increased to about 400 individuals, about half of which use ponds on Eastern Island.

For the past two years, Midway's newest nesting species—Short-tailed Albatrosses—have settled at the far end of Eastern Island. Six decades ago, short-tails were believed extinct after feather poaching eliminated five million adults from their primary breeding ground on Japan's Torishima Island. Juveniles spend years at sea before courting, so ten young pairs actually survived. Careful management of these largest, most endangered seabirds in the Northern Hemisphere has increased the population to about 2,750. Short-tails occasionally visit Midway, so decoys were placed on Eastern Island and taped calls are played during nesting season. A pair of short-tails first courted there in 2007 and fledged Midway's first chick in 2011. Another chick fledged in June 2012.

After one exceptionally busy day snorkeling and photographing on Midway, I retreated to my room after dinner. An urgent knock on the door came moments later. "There's been a magnitude-9 earthquake in Japan. We're in the tsunami's path," a refuge worker explained. "Grab your passport and essentials. Go to the third floor and wait for instructions."

Along with 80 other employees and guests (Midway's entire population), I traipsed upstairs. We gathered around a TV, sobered by devastating scenes from Japan. At 11:36 p.m., the moment predicted by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Cen-

ter, the first wave hit the tide gauge in Midway's harbor. We peered into the darkness, pondering the refuge's fate.

Needless to say we survived, but there was significant impact to the atoll's wildlife. Along with refuge workers and other visitors, I joined several days of triage efforts. We crawled under dense shrubs to free flip-flopped albatrosses and scooped wet sand looking for Bonin Petrels with newly-hatched chicks entombed in collapsed burrows.

Space precludes sharing all the details of my Midway adventure in the newsletter, so bring your curiosity and questions to the Fall AOS meeting on Dauphin Island. I'll be offering a program of images, anecdotes, and video clips from the most unique of America's National Wildlife Refuges. And yes, I'll introduce you to Wisdom, a 61-year old Laysan Albatross who is the world's oldest known banded bird.

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### *Electronic Yellowhammer?*

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IT COSTS WELL OVER \$1.50 TO PRINT AND MAIL *The Yellowhammer*. We are delivering, on a totally voluntary basis, *The Yellowhammer* via the Internet.

If you would like to receive your *Yellowhammer*, in color, electronically, as a PDF file, please email the editor at Robert.Reed@psc.alabama.gov.

### *Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions*

Winter 2012	November 10, 2012
Spring 2013	February 10, 2013
Summer 2013	June 10, 2013

### *Important Dates*

**FOURTH FRIDAY**—January 25–27, 2013

Winter Meeting, Joe Wheeler State Park

**THIRD FRIDAY**—April 19–21, 2013

Spring Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

**SECOND FRIDAY**—October 11–13, 2013

Fall Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

## AOS FALL MEETING 2012

*Dauphin Island, Alabama, October 12-14, 2012*

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12**

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

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13**

6:00 a.m. Complimentary Danish and coffee at Sea Lab  
 7:00 a.m. Field trips—Meet at Sea Lab  
 11:30 a.m. Lunch at the Stowers' house, 1618 Cadillac Ave.  
 2:30 p.m. Board meeting—Galathea Hall  
 6:00 p.m. Open bar social at Shelby Center  
 6:45 p.m. Banquet at Sea Lab  
 7:45 p.m. Program—Connie Toops

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14**

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

**ACCOMMODATIONS AND INFORMATION**

**Motels**

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

**Rentals—**

Boardwalk Realty, Inc: (877) 861-3992  
 Dauphin Island Real Estate: (888) 707-6444  
 Tyson Real Estate: (251) 861-8312  
 Pickett Real Estate: (800) 861-3646  
 Island Resort Management: (877) 219-7392  
 ACP Real Estate, Inc.: (866) 861-3311

**Websites**

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

**FRIDAY NIGHT POT LUCK IS BACK!!!**

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

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

### AOS FALL MEETING 2012 REGISTRATION FORM

*Complete and return to:*

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

*Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by October 2, 2012.*

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

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

**Accommodations:**

**Sea Lab Challenger Hall**

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

Registration @ \$25 per person	\$
Banquet @ \$21 per person	\$
Sea Lab @ \$20 per person per night	\$
AOS 2013 Dues	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution	\$
Coastal Birding Association 2013 Dues (\$5)	\$
<b>TOTAL ENCLOSED</b>	<b>\$</b>

**ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**  
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Mary Frances Stayton, Treasurer  
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Leeds, Alabama, 35094  
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Sustaining: \$50 • Life (individual): \$350  
Life (family): \$550



**AOS ONLINE**  
<http://www.aosbirds.org>  
**AOS RARE BIRD ALERT**  
**TELEPHONE HOTLINE:**  
**256-773-8560**

**ALABAMA WILDLIFE CENTER**  
<http://www.awrc.org>

**BIRMINGHAM AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
<http://www.birminghamaudubon.org>

**DAUPHIN ISLAND BIRD SANCTUARIES**  
<http://www.coastalbirding.org>

**FRANCIS M. WESTON AUDUBON SOCIETY (PENSACOLA)**  
<http://www.fmwaudubon.org>

**THE HUMMER/BIRD STUDY GROUP**  
<http://www.hummingbirdsplus.org>

**MOBILE BAY AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
<http://www.mobilebayaudubon.org>

**SOUTH ALABAMA BIRDING ASSOCIATION**  
<http://www.bamabirds.com>

**SOUTHEASTERN RAPTOR REHAB CENTER**  
<http://www.vetmed.auburn.edu/raptor>

**TENNESSEE VALLEY AUDUBON**  
<http://www.tvas.org>