

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 39, NO. 4 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY WINTER 2019

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

FOUNDED 1952



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ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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

OFFICERS

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 TREASURER.....Joan Dixon
 SECRETARY.....Pat Reed
 IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT.....Harry Dean

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 THE YELLOWHAMMER.....Robert Reed
 ALABAMA BIRD RECORDS.....Greg Jackson
 NORTHWEST FLORIDA BIRD RECORDS....Bob Duncan
 AOS ARCHIVES CURATOR.....Scot Duncan

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 Scot Duncan, Damien Simbeck

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Tom Haggerty

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 Howard Horne, Steve McConnell,
 Damien Simbeck, Bill Summerour,
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 Annabel Markle, Ken Hare

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

Tom Haggerty

THE YELLOWHAMMER

Robert Reed
 Robin McDonald

CENSUSING

Greg Jackson
 Bob Duncan, Geoff Hill,
 Steve McConnell, Eric Soehren,
 Bill Summerour

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 Carol Alford,
 Stan and Dana Hamilton,
 Don Self

FIELD TRIPS

Andrew Haffenden

DAN C. HOLLIMAN RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Greg Harber
 Scot Duncan, Eric Soehren

MEETINGS

Kathryn Palmore
 Dana Timmons, Sue Timmons



WHEN THE GAVEL DROPPED TO end the fall 2019 meeting of the Alabama Ornithological Society, I succeeded Harry Dean as the AOS president. It is an exciting but challenging time to lead the group that promotes avian conservation, preservation, and education in Alabama. We have just learned from a widely disseminated scientific report that the US and Canada have lost 29% of their bird population since 1970. It was startling to see the decline quantified, but I doubt that the news came as a genuine surprise to most birders who have been chasing birds for more than a decade. We've all seen some of our favorite birding places drained, cut, or paved over, and with the habitat go the birds. If the landscape around my hometown of Auburn, Alabama, was projected over the whole continent, the loss of birds would be a lot more than 29%. The forests are coming down and the houses are going up fast in Lee County. On our beloved Dauphin Island, the loss of woodland has been thankfully slow in my 26 years in the state, but it is relentless and picking up pace of late.

The AOS can help slow the loss of birds. We can intervene directly on Dauphin Island by supporting the purchase of land parcels. Last year, the AOS donated \$10,000 to Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries (DIBS), to enable them to buy key wooded parcels on the east end of Dauphin Island. Birders are already enjoying the fruits of past DIBS land-purchase efforts in the forever-protected and now public woodlots around the Shell Mounds and the Goat Tree. Past successes are a reason to cheer, but future challenges loom. It is a perpetual race to acquire key properties such as forested wetlands before they are developed. Contributing to the AOS, which will continue to support DIBS, or to DIBS directly, is a fantastic means of helping migrant birds by preserving their critical stopover habitat.

Members of the AOS also help bird populations in Alabama by promoting environmental education. It is hard to find a homeowner or landowner in Alabama who doesn't enjoy the birds on their property. But most Alabamians are



ignorant about the diversity of birds that might use their land or how activities like removing dead trees that do not endanger human structures will impact their birds. I think that AOS is absolutely key in the promotion of better land use that will increase the numbers of birds in Alabama. AOS members become very knowledgeable about key topics like the diversity of birds in different parts of the state, the importance of cavities for nests, the need for wetlands for whole communities of birds, the risks that free-roaming cats pose to birds, and on and on. In turn, AOS members become a source of information about bird conservation throughout the state. Before most Alabama residents would think to ask a county agent or a university professor about the birds on

their property, they will ask their neighbors. If the neighbor is an AOS member, then they are likely to get accurate information about bird conservation that will be well received. We can each make a difference by sharing our knowledge about what our neighbors can do to benefit birds.

Another arena in which AOS members can make a difference to the conservation of birds in North America is by vocally supporting the regulations that protect birds. Two of the most significant national regulations that have had enormous positive impacts on wild bird populations are the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Endangered Species Act. It is hard to imagine that not all that long ago unlimited numbers of heron and egrets could be killed for plumes, songbirds could be netted by the thousands to serve as ornaments on women's hats, and Ivory-billed Woodpeckers could be shot for curio decorations. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act put a stop to the unregulated killing of birds and, just before the zero hour, preserved the avian diversity that surrounds us today. From a bird conservation perspective, the companion legislation to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act is the Endangered Species Act. Even when shielded from direct persecution, some birds had become so rare by the late twentieth century that they required a focused effort to pull them back from the brink of extinction. The Endangered Species Act has been fantastically successful in saving critically endangered birds

like the Kirtland's Warbler, California Condor, Whooping Crane, and Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Both of these cornerstone laws to protect birds are under increasing attack, and the loss or weakening of either of those acts would have very noticeable and rapid negative consequences for birds. As AOS members, we can support the preservation of avian diversity by explaining to fellow citizens why these environmental laws are so important for birds and by reminding everyone what Alabama and the southeast were like at the end of a century of exploitation without those regulations.

In my opinion, there is plenty of room for optimism. The news about loss of bird numbers arrives against a more positive backdrop of bird conservation news. While there has been a substantial overall loss of birds, some key groups increased since 1970. In particular, wetland species including rails and ducks increased substantially as better con-

servation of mid-continent wetlands is now bearing fruit. Birds of prey, particularly Bald Eagles, Ospreys, Peregrine Falcons, and accipiters, are much more abundant now than they were 40 years ago—a direct result of protection from shooting and the removal of DDT from the environment. Whooping Cranes are once again visiting Alabama each year. In the Continental US, as a result of half a century of positive conservation actions, no species of bird is under imminent threat of extinction. Most endangered species have populations that are stable or increasing due to the focused efforts of conservation and wildlife biologists working for state and federal agencies as well as private conservation organizations. So, we can protect birds. We did it for targeted, critically endangered species. We can do it for bird populations generally. As AOS members, let's be the voices for the birds that give us so much enjoyment.

IN MEMORIAM

Mary Flint Porter

IT IS WITH GREAT SADNESS THAT WE NOTE THE PASSING OF MARY Flint Porter, on Monday, November 18, 2019. Mary was pre-deceased (2016) by her husband, Dr. John F. Porter, who lost his first wife, Jacqueline Harbin Porter, in 2001.

Mary developed her passion for birding later in life, having been introduced to the joys of birdwatching in Paul Franklin's classes in the UAB Special Studies program. She soon became active in the Birmingham Audubon Society and was a regular participant on field trips, bird counts, and the monthly meetings. Mary was the assistant vice president of planning and agency relations at the United Way of Central Alabama, and thus her organizational skills were a great asset when she volunteered her time as registrar for the Birmingham Audubon Mountain Workshop (1998-2004) and chapter treasurer (1999-2006). Membership in the Alabama Ornithological Society and Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Inc. (DIBS) broadened her friendships and birding horizons even further.

In 2006, Mary and John Porter were married and thus began the Island Years chapter in her life. She embraced her new home and was especially fond of the sunsets from their waterside deck overlooking the Dauphin Island Airport Marsh. Mary devoted her time and energies to several entities on the island. She served as DIBS treasurer at the request of



her friend, Greg Harber, who was then president of the organization. (Dr. Porter was the executive director—a volunteer position John held from its inception in 1992 until his retirement in 2014.) Mary was a member of St. Francis Episcopal Church where she was the president of the Episcopal Church Women. One of her favorite places on the Island was

the Welcome Center, where Mary was a volunteer.

These lines from Mary's obituary seem especially appropriate as we remember her now: "Mary had a beautiful genuine spirit which touched everyone who knew her. She leaves an indelible mark on all who knew her. Although all wish they had more time to spend with Mary, she is now at peace with the Lord, and walking with her true love, John Porter."

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to DIBS, St. Francis Episcopal Church on Dauphin Island, or the charitable organization of your choice. DIBS is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to the continuing protection of important migratory bird habitat on the island. Donations there may be submitted by mail to P.O. Box 1295, Dauphin Island, AL 36528.

—With fond remembrance, Greg Harber

Membership Drive Bird Walk

IN SPRING 2019 AOS SPONSORED A MEMBERSHIP contest. We offered a guided bird trip to the person who could recruit the most new AOS members. Emma Mires, of Auburn, Alabama, joined AOS and then convinced five of her ornithology classmates to join. For her award bird walk she requested to go to Ruffner Mountain, and she invited two of her undergraduate friends to join her. On October 5, field trip guide Geoff Hill left Auburn with Emma Mires, Lexi Wiltfong, and Olivia Wilkes. They arrived at Ruffner around 7:30 a.m. and spent the next three hours looking at warblers, vireos, flycatchers, and thrushes. All of the participants saw at least three life birds, and they indicated that they will continue to get out birding. It was a fun morning.

—Geoff Hill and others



Left to right: AOS membership contest winner Emma Mires, friends Olivia Wilkes and Lexi Wiltfong, and Geoff Hill at Ruffner Mountain on Emma's prize-winning field trip.

Members Needed

AS OF THE END OF THE SPRING CONTEST, ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL Society had added 29 new members. Some are birders active on eBird and Birding Alabama, some have birded with AOS members (including me), some are students at Auburn, some have joined because of our activity on social media, and others have joined after being urged to do so by their friends. Welcome to all the new members (I have tried to send them all a welcoming email) and thank all of you who by your words or actions have helped encourage people to join us.

The contest also was a factor, at least in terms of getting some people who had been thinking about membership to join. Emma Mires, an Auburn student, was the contest winner. She became an AOS member and then got a bunch of her friends to join as well. Emma decided that she and her friends would have their private guided birding tour at Ruffner Mountain in Birmingham. See the article above.

There is room in AOS for more members, both students and adults. I appreciate all of you who are encouraging people

to join. All the amazing birds that have shown up this fall (including White-crowned Pigeon, Ruff, Sabine's Gull, Crested Caracara; and Black-headed Grosbeak) have me thinking that one thing members could do to encourage people to become members is to set up birding trips to see some of Alabama's special birds and then during the trips highlight your AOS membership. I will be happy to get anyone materials on AOS to distribute. I also solicit from all members ideas for a membership drive. I would love to hear from you all.

Please keep talking to your friends and colleagues about what you love about AOS and help us continue to grow with new members who share our love of birds.

—Larry Gardella, Membership Chairman

New Members

Mason Currier

AOS FALL MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, OCTOBER 11-13, 2019

AOS Fall Meeting Report

By KEN HARE



HE DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST COLLECTION of animal sound recordings outlined the importance of citizen-reported bird data at the Alabama Ornithological Society's fall meeting October 11-13, 2019 on Dauphin Island. Mike Webster is the Robert G. Engel Professor of Ornithology at Cornell University and director of its Macaulay Library, the world's largest collection of animal recordings.

Webster's slide show on Saturday evening featuring both photos and bird sounds had members oohing, aahing, and laughing, but his message also contained serious warnings about the plight of avian species and the importance of continuing research to guide conservation efforts to protect threatened birds.

The meeting kicked off Friday morning with a field trip to the Fort Morgan Peninsula and eastern Mobile Bay. One of the highlights was just getting there, via a ferry ride across Mobile Bay from historic Fort Gaines to historic Fort Morgan on a beautiful but windy morning. The ferry had an aerial escort of Sandwich Terns and Laughing Gulls, with Willets and cormorants in the distance; and a few playful dolphins were also spotted.

Once on the Fort Morgan site, participants had a bonus—the chance to see bird banding led by certified bander Emma Rhodes. Banding has returned to Fort Morgan in the spring (usually the same week as the AOS spring meeting) for the past couple of years, but the coalition that is leading the project is considering starting a fall component as well, and this smaller banding was gathering baseline data preparatory to the full-scale fall banding. Emma was a gracious host, but the group didn't linger because they did not want to distract from the research.

Field trip leader Andrew Haffenden led the group around the Fort Morgan site, getting good looks at Palm and Pine Warblers, American Kestrels, Cooper's Hawks, Downy and Red-headed Woodpeckers and a handsome Broad-winged Hawk. Lunch at Tacky Jacks overlooking Mobile Bay was

followed by a return ride to Dauphin Island on the ferry, leaving time for most people to get in some individual birding around the island before the evening meeting. Members shared hors d'oeuvres and refreshments Friday night, followed by slide presentations from Bala Chennupati, Dick Bruer, Harry Dean, Bob Reed, and Geoff Hill.

Saturday morning off-and-on rain meant that only a handful of birders tackled the beach walk, but the other field trip, led by Geoff Hill, director of the ornithological collection at Auburn University, and AOS speaker Mike Webster managed to get in outstanding birding early at the airport between showers. Highlights included a Virginia Rail that scampered through the undergrowth only six to eight feet from where the group stood. The group got good looks at Seaside Sparrows and Marsh Wrens in the reeds, and they also had flybys of Blue-winged Teal and Mottled Ducks. A quick stop behind Fort Gaines produced a Prairie Warbler and a nice selection of terns. At the Shell Mounds, birders saw a selection of warblers, including Redstart, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Black-and-white, Hooded, and Yellow. Other birders later added an Ovenbird to the list from the Shell Mounds.

Morning birding was followed by the usual outstanding lunch at Jennie Stowers' home. Jennie was out of town, but ever the consummate hostess, provided a contingent from the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries group who filled in admirably. The Saturday gathering overlooking a section of the Mississippi Sound is always a highlight of the weekend.

At the annual meeting Saturday evening, Geoff Hill was confirmed as the incoming AOS president, and Barry Fleming was chosen as president-elect. Joan Dixon will continue as treasurer, and Pat Reed will serve as secretary.

On Sunday morning, Larry Gardella led a group of a dozen AOS birders on a walk at Blakeley Mud Lakes. Right after they all went over or under the gate, they started finding warblers and recorded three species before they got up the hill to the start of the loop. Larry reports: "At the first pond, we found a large group of American Avocets (more than 100)

and a mix of ducks, shorebirds, egrets, ibis, swallows, wrens, and blackbirds. That first stop was particularly productive, but we added species throughout the walk, including four raptors (Osprey, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, and Red-shouldered Hawk.) Many on the trip recorded one or more species, such as Stilt Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, and Glossy Ibis, for the first time. My eBird list for the trip showed 57 species." While Larry's group was at the Mud Lakes, other birders explored Dauphin Island.

At noon Sunday, about 20 birders gathered for compilation, recording 125 species seen by AOS birders during the three-day weekend.

2019 AOS Fall Meeting Compilation List Dauphin Island, Alabama, October 11–13

NOTEWORTHY BIRD OF THE WEEKEND WAS A WHITE-FACED Ibis. Count total was 125 species.

Blue-winged Teal
Mallard
Mottled Duck
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
Common Ground-Dove
White-winged Dove
Mourning Dove
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Clapper Rail
Virginia Rail
Sora
American Oystercatcher
Black-bellied Plover
Snowy Plover
Wilson's Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Piping Plover
Killdeer
Marbled Godwit
Ruddy Turnstone
Sanderling
Dunlin
Least Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper

Short-billed Dowitcher
Wilson's Snipe
Spotted Sandpiper
Willet
Greater Yellowlegs
Laughing Gull
Herring Gull
Black-backed Gull Sp.
Caspian Tern
Forster's Tern
Royal Tern
Sandwich Tern
Black Skimmer
Double-crested Cormorant
Brown Pelican
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Tricolored Heron
Reddish Egret
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
White-faced Ibis
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle

Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Great-horned Owl
Barred Owl
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Pileated Woodpecker
American Kestrel
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Loggerhead Shrike
White-eyed Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
Barn Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Brown-headed Nuthatch
House Wren
Winter Wren
Marsh Wren
Carolina Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
House Sparrow
House Finch
American Goldfinch
Seaside Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Yellow-breasted Chat
Red-winged Blackbird

Brown-headed Cowbird
Boat-tailed Grackle
Ovenbird
Worm-eating Warbler
Louisiana Waterthrush
Golden-winged Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Kentucky Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
American Redstart
Northern Parula
Magnolia Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Palm Warbler
Pine Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Summer Tanager
Northern Cardinal
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.

AOS FALL MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, OCTOBER 11-13, 2019

Minutes of the AOS Board Meeting

By PAT REED, Secretary



THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF Directors met October 12, 2019, on Dauphin Island, Alabama. President Harry Dean called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Minutes of the Spring 2019 meeting were approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Jean Dixon reported for the period January through September, income of \$15,363.93 minus expenses of \$25,206.06 leaving a net income of minus \$9,842.13; however when added to existing assets the total assets are \$52,945.12. The report was approved as submitted.

PayPal costs, refunds and administrative fee charges were discussed. Bob Reed requested any wording relating to this be furnished him, in writing, for inclusion in *The Yellowhammer*.

President Dean stated Geoff Hill, as the new president, should be authorized to sign checks, etc. along with the treasurer. President Dean called attention to the CD, which matures effective January 27, 2020.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Dean presented a card, along with acknowledgment for official record of charitable contribution, from DIBS expressing the appreciation for the \$10,000 contribution.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Geoff Hill reported Lorna West can no longer travel and has requested the speakers' presentations be recorded. All agreed this to be a good idea and Geoff volunteered to see this accomplished. He agreed to move forward to have video and audio of the speakers' presentations recorded.

Geoff Hill stated Tom Haggerty is no longer editor of *Alabama Bird Life* as he has moved out of state, and presented an award to be given to Tom Haggerty. He also stated Eric

Sorenson would like to nominate Tom Haggerty for the Imhof Award. The board approved the Imhof Award be given to Tom Haggerty.

Geoff Hill reported Eric Soehren is interested in becoming editor of *Alabama Bird Life* with the remainder of the team continuing. He also reported Emma Mires received the award for the membership drive competition. He took Miss Mires and some of her college friends, who are just becoming interested in bird watching, on a bird walk. Bob Reed requested an article relating to this for publishing in *The Yellowhammer*, and Ken Hare asked for pictures for social media.

Geoff Hill reported the winter meeting will be held in Auburn. There will be field trips, skins on display, and skin preparation demonstrations, and a tour of the raptor center.

Geoff Hill noted a \$500 donation had been given for student memberships and stated a poster presentation campaign is planned for schools with \$250 for first prize, \$100 for second, and three \$50 prizes, and he would like to offer free registration and banquet tickets in hopes of communicating more about AOS and its functions. Bob Reed stated that in the past, AOS money has been given to students with the request they give a report; however, there had been little if any feedback from the recipients. Ken Hare suggested any future recipient come to an AOS meeting to give a report or give a written report for *The Yellowhammer*. Andrew Haffenden stated AOS needs some avenue to create interest for younger people.

Geoff Hill reported Chris Wood has been asked to be the spring speaker. Chris Wood is very involved with eBird and ways to make it better. Geoff Hill inquired if meetings could be held in other venues than Dauphin Island and was informed the Bylaws state all spring and fall meetings are to be held at Dauphin Island. He stated he will make every effort to work with John Dindo and the staff at the Shelby Center.

Andrew Haffenden reported on the proposed condo, marina, etc. planned near the RV park, stating the plans now are very good compared to the original.

EDUCATION

Shirley Farrell was not present but had sent information that there will be Flying Wild Workshops in the spring, and there will probably be another auction.

Anne Miller stated Jean Folsom was concerned some new members joined, sent in registration, and received no response. Larry reported the latest new members were sent an email or were called. Bob Reed reported there is a definite disconnect at some point. Joan Dixon reported the new member applications come to her, she makes a photo, and emails it to Susan Barrow. Bob Reed stated there is a place to check if one wants to volunteer and suggested this be taken off if we are not going to follow up. Also, he has been informed by some that they never received anything. He said the Bylaws state the method for handling new members, and we should not pick and choose how we are to follow the Bylaws. Geoff Hill suggested Larry Gardella, as membership chairman, be copied on every new membership or membership change, and he will take care of it from that point.

OTHER BUSINESS

Discussion of ALBirds and the AOS website followed. Ken Hare asked that Anne G. Miller be given any information such as our meeting program for the web site as soon as possible in order to keep it current.

Kathryn Palmore, Meetings Chair, stated the catered mixer Friday evening went well. The charge for this at the spring meeting will be \$18.00. Also she stated a good quality screen and audio speakers are needed. She also reported on future catering and gave instructions for cleanup.

Greg Jackson reported on censusing and the bird checklist. He inquired as to the need for a paper checklist. After discussion it was decided these may be of use and could be inserted in the new member packets. However, everyone should be encouraged to use eBird. Greg Jackson reported the habitat at Fort Morgan is coming back and no further AOS intervention is needed, and as of this date he did not know the exact status of the educational sign. He reported for the Records Committee, stating two new species have been accepted, the White-crowned Pigeon and Cassin's Kingbird, making the official list at this time 448.

Andrew Haffenden reported on field trips, stating it would be a help to have a list of those attending in order to arrange

leaders. Also, of help would be email addresses so that last minute changes could be communicated.

President Dean reviewed the following slate of officers to be presented, stating a quorum of 10% of the membership must be present for a vote.

President	Geoff Hill
Vice President	Barry Fleming
Treasurer	Joan Dixon
Secretary	Pat Reed

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

Have You Read a Good Bird Book Lately?

IF YOU HAVE READ A GOOD BIRD BOOK LATELY, PLEASE TELL US about it. It doesn't have to be about birds exclusively, but about conservation, nature in general, or other related topics. I'm not looking for a review, necessarily, but just recommendations of good books you've run across. Let the rest of us know, so we can read them too.

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Spring 2020	February 10, 2020
Summer 2020	May 10, 2020
Fall 2020	August 10, 2020

Upcoming Meetings

WINTER MEETING—January 24-26, 2020

Auburn, Alabama

SPRING MEETING—April 17-19, 2020

Dauphin Island, Alabama

FALL MEETING—October 9-12, 2020

Dauphin Island, Alabama

Alabama and Vicinity Audubon Christmas Bird Counts—2019-2020

1. **Dauphin Island, Alabama**—December 14, 2019, Howard Horne (251-605-9043, hhorne@bvaenviro.com) Teams cover Dauphin Island as well as part of the south Mobile County mainland.
2. **Wheeler NWR, Decatur, Alabama**—December 14, 2019, Dwight Cooley (256-565-6239, sabrewing@earthlink.net) See NABS schedule at www.northalbirding.com for more information.
3. **Pensacola, Florida**—December 14, 2019, Daniel Stangeland, (850-686-3502, dpstang71@hotmail.com)
4. **Waterloo, Alabama**—December 14, 2019, Damien Simbeck, Leader (256-856-3079; tnbarredowl@aol.com)
5. **Cullman, Alabama**—December 15, 2019, Vince Meleski (256-739-4589, vincemeleski@outlook.com) Counters meet at Culpepper Real Estate (601 7th Avenue 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 p.m. at Karma's Coffee House (103 1st Avenue NE, Cullman, Alabama 35055).
6. **Choctawatchee Bay, Florida**—December 16, 2019, Alan Knothe (850-208-1780, birdman6419@gmail.com; email is best)
7. **Buffalo River, Lawrenceburg, Tennessee**—December 17, 2019, Damien Simbeck (256-856-3079, tnbarredowl@aol.com)
8. **Tuscaloosa, Alabama**—December 21, 2019, David Arnold (205-792-0653, darnold@eng.ua.edu)
9. **Birmingham, Alabama**—December 21, 2019, Paul Franklin (205-542-7647, phfranklin36@gmail.com;) Compilation will begin at 5:30 p.m. at the Birmingham Audubon Society office, 3720 4th Avenue S, second floor (park and enter at the rear of the building).
10. **Eufaula NWR, Eufaula, Alabama**—December 22, 2019, 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 contact Mason directly.
11. **Auburn, Alabama**—December 23, 2019, Geoff Hill (334-332-4930; ghill@auburn.edu)
12. **Savannah, Tennessee**—December 23, 2019, Damien Simbeck (256-856-3079; tnbarredowl@aol.com) Meet at 5:30 a.m. at McDonalds in Savannah (corner of Hwy 64 and 128)
13. **Guntersville, Alabama**—December 26, 2019, Linda Reynolds (256-582-2970 or 256-298-1810, rreynolds@charter.net) We have 8 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 for more information; please contact Linda to choose a count party.
14. **Fort Morgan, Alabama**—December 28, 2019, Larry Gardella (334-450-9790, lfgardella@gmail.com)
15. **Montgomery, Alabama**—January 2, 2020, Carrie Threadgill (334-242-3864, carrie.threadgill@dcnr.alabama.gov)
16. **Wheeler Dam, Lauderdale/Lawrence Counties, Alabama**—January 2, 2020, Damien Simbeck, Leader (256-856-3079; tnbarredowl@aol.com). First year as an official count.
17. **Columbus, Georgia**—January 3, 2020, 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 contact Mason directly.
18. **Gulf Shores, Alabama**—January 4, 2020, Greg Jackson and Howard Horne (251-605-9043, hhorne@bvaenviro.com)

A Very Good Meal

By BOB REED

THE OSPREY HAD BEEN WATCHING THE FISH FOR several minutes. The blowing wind added a little chop to the water, making the image more difficult to follow. It had begun raining before daylight and had stopped only a half hour ago. He was hungry. He hadn't eaten in over a day, partly because of the weather and partly because the Osprey's foot was still tender from the near disaster yesterday.

The last time the Osprey had tried to catch a fish, early yesterday, not far from where he perched now, had nearly ended in disaster. He had waited patiently for the fish to rise close enough to the surface for him to snare. He had also waited for it to move around the old snag so that midmorning sun did not hamper his sight. The fish fed closer and closer to the old cypress tree, until it was feeding off the algae at the point where the tree entered the water. For a while an attack was impossible from this perch. There were other perches, but he frequented this one whenever his travels up and down the Tallapoosa River brought him to this particular pond. And, as most successful hunters, he was patient. Nothing would be gained by hasty action.

Finally, the fish had meandered to a spot the Osprey could see well enough for an attack. It was not the place the bird would have chosen if he'd been given the ability to evaluate such things. The fish was near one end of a mostly submerged log, but there were lily pads not too far away that might offer the fish sanctuary if the bird delayed. The time was right.

Judging the distance, and taking into account the slight zephyr, the Osprey had lifted off and down. Built into his mind was the single purpose of capturing his meal. Similarly built in was the idea that the best attack was sudden, and so, using a straight line, the fish hawk had blocked out all but the fish. If he hadn't, he might have seen the "log" begin to move toward the same fish at the same instant he lifted off and began to drop.

He dived feet-first for his prey, as Ospreys have done for eons. Just as he

reached the fish, only two or three seconds after leaving the snag, the seven foot alligator made a sideways slash of teeth and caught the fish. He also caught the terrified Osprey's foot, or rather a toe of the foot. The alligator, no less surprised than the bird, instinctively thrashed its head from side to side. In an insane moment of shrill screams, the Osprey left the toe in the alligator's mouth. It was over in an instant, except for the roiling water and the mud that remained as evidence of the struggle.

He had retreated to the far side of the pond, perhaps a hundred yards from the demon that had attacked him. The foot hurt, but not badly. He had inspected it rather coolly after the excitement of the moment had passed and his thoughts, as much as Ospreys have thoughts, had returned to normal. He flexed the foot, pulling it open and letting it relax back to the closed position. He dispassionately removed a bit of dangling skin. He peered at the foot from time to time, as if trying to figure out what had happened. He would have less gripping power in that foot from now on, which might rule out the largest fish, but if he realized this, it made no difference in his appearance. He was alive to hunt again, and that is what mattered in his realm of existence.

So, after a day-long fast, he was hunting again—from the same dead cypress tree as yesterday. He was wiser and perhaps a bit more cautious than before. The fish he was eyeing today was smaller than yesterday's, although his hunger called for a larger one.

He lifted off, and dropped for the fish. As his feet made contact with his prey, they closed without conscious thought, and he flapped hard to escape the water's drag.

As soon as he was airborne, he maneuvered the fish so that it was facing forward, parallel to his flight, reducing the air's drag on the fish. He did not fly far. His foot hurt, and he was hungry.

He lit on a horizontal limb of another dead cypress and began eating his catch. It was a very good meal.



AOS WINTER MEETING, AUBURN UNIVERSITY, JANUARY 24–26, 2020

AOS Winter Meeting Schedule



HE WINTER AOS MEETING WILL BE HELD IN THE Rouse Life Sciences Building on the campus of Auburn University, at the corner of Samford Avenue and College Avenue, Auburn.

Unless noted elsewhere, all activities will take place or start at the Rouse Life Sciences Building.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24

- 2:00 p.m.** Tour Southeastern Raptor Center, Auburn Campus (\$4 per person)
- 4:00 p.m.** Happy hour, Amsterdam Cafe, 410 S. Gay Street, Auburn
- 5:00 p.m.** Registration—Foyer, Rouse Life Sciences Building. (We will also register members who arrive in time for the raptor center tour)
- 5:00 p.m.** AOS Student Posters and Social Hour, Foyer, Rouse Life Science Building, corner of Samford and College Avenue. Light dinner/heavy hors d'oeuvres served
- 7:00 p.m.** Member Slides

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25

- 6:30 a.m.** **FIELD TRIP 1:** Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, departs Rouse Life Sciences Building
- 7:30 a.m.** **FIELD TRIP 2:** West Point Dam and vicinity, departs Rouse Life Sciences Building
- 2:00 p.m.** **Auburn Museum of Natural History Tour,** study skins, bird skin preparation (2 hours) Meet at Rouse Life Sciences Building
- 3:00 p.m.** Board Meeting—302 Funchess Hall (building across the parking lot from Rouse Life Sciences Building).
- 5:00 p.m.** Registration—Rouse Life Sciences Building
- 5:00 p.m.** Social Hour—Rouse Life Sciences Building
- 6:30 p.m.** **BANQUET**—Rouse Life Sciences Building
- 7:15 p.m.** Announcements/mid-meeting compilation

7:30 p.m. KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Chris Wood, Lab of Ornithology, Cornell University

9:00 p.m. Adjourn

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26

5:30 a.m. FIELD TRIP: Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Sehoy Quail Plantation, Depart Rouse Life Science Building. Coffee and doughnuts at 5 a.m., Foyer, Rouse Life Sciences Building.

Noon Compilation—Rouse Life Sciences Building

12:30 p.m. Adjourn

ACCOMMODATIONS

15 rooms have been blocked for Auburn Hotel and Conference Center, \$149/double occupancy (auhcc.com) (334-821-8200)(mention block 200124Orin). This is two blocks away from the Rouse Life Sciences Building. There are many cheaper hotels (\$65–\$105) per night just south of venue on College Avenue. There is abundant and free parking adjacent to the Rouse Life Sciences Building on Friday after 5 p.m. and all day Saturday and Sunday.

A campus map is available at: <https://cws.auburn.edu/map/Content/files/pdf/CampusMapPrint.pdf>

AOS 2020 Winter Meeting Field Trips

Friday, January 24, 2020

SOUTHEASTERN RAPTOR CENTER

Trip Leader: Geoff Hill

Departure Time: 2 p.m.

Meeting Place: Southeastern Raptor Center

1350 Pratt-Carden Drive, Auburn, Alabama 36849

The raptor center is only a couple of miles from our meeting venue on the main campus. The raptor center requests

that we each donate \$4, and we will get a guided, behind-the-scenes tour of one of the biggest raptor centers in the southeast. We'll see a variety of species of hawks, eagles, kites, owls, and vultures being rehabbed. We'll also get to meet educational animals including a Bald Eagle, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Peregrine Falcon. It is a unique opportunity to get up close to species we typically only view from a distance. The program will conclude before 4 pm.

Saturday, January 25, 2020

EUFULA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Trip Leader: Geoff Hill

Departure Time: 6:30 a.m.

Meeting Place: Rouse Life Sciences Building, north entrance (Funchess Hall loading dock)

Eufaula is the premier wetland bird habitat in central Alabama. We will have driving access to the Kennedy Unit, which is typically locked. We will spend the morning birding the Kennedy and Upland Units. Duck numbers are small compared to former years when cereal crops were planted for birds, but the diversity of wetland birds remains impressive. We will target hard-to-find species including King Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, LeConte's Sparrows, American Bittern, and Brewer's Blackbird. We won't find all of these species in one morning, but they winter in the area each year. We are sure to run up a long list of sparrows, hawks, ducks, herons, and warblers. We'll eat lunch at the Blue Moon Café in Eufaula before we head back to Auburn (about a one hour drive) in time for the 2:30 pm museum workshop.

Saturday, January 25, 2020

WEST POINT LAKE

Trip Leader: Barry Fleming

Departure Time: 7:30 a.m.

Meeting Place: Rouse Life Sciences Building, north entrance (Funchess Hall loading dock)

West Point Dam forms a large reservoir on the Chattahoochee River in Chambers County. The dam and much of the lake immediately behind the dam is in Georgia, so this is a chance to work on your Georgia as well as Alabama eBird lists. The group will be aware of whether

birds are spotted in Alabama or Georgia. West Point Lake is characterized by a mud and rock shoreline with deep water. It often hosts huge aggregations of grebes, gulls, Forster's Terns, loons, and diving ducks in the winter. The only Ivory Gull in the history of the state was here and over the years it has hosted in the winter Red-throated and Pacific Loons, Iceland and Black-headed Gulls, and Long-tailed Duck. Any fish-eating winter species is possible at West Point Lake. Aside from rarities, Bald Eagles are always around the lake shore, and the forests and fields near the lake host an interesting variety of winter birds. We'll eat lunch in West Point, Georgia, before coming back to Auburn by about 1p.m.

Sunday, January 26

SEHOY QUAIL PLANTATION

Trip Leader: Geoff Hill

Departure Time: 5:30 a.m. Rouse Life Science Building

For this field trip, we'll drive an hour south of Auburn to the border of Macon and Bullock Counties. We have been granted permission to visit a private quail plantation that hosts a recovering population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (RCWs). The habitat here is primarily loblolly and shortleaf pine, making it atypical RCW habitat. Longleaf Pine savannah is the typical habitat of RCWs. But, the woodpeckers are doing well here. The population has expanded greatly in the past decade so that Sehoey and adjacent quail plantations now support a population of several dozen clusters that continues to expand. We are leaving Auburn early to be at the woodpecker cavity trees at first light when the woodpeckers come out and hang around for a while before flying off to feed for the day. Feeding flocks can be very hard to locate. In the spring, this site rings with the calls of Northern Bobwhite and the songs of Bachman's Sparrows. We'll look for both of those species on this trip but they can be hard to find in the winter. We'll also look for Common Ground-dove, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and other winter birds of southern pine woods. We'll be back to Auburn by around 11a.m.

Be advised, there are no bathroom facilities at this birding site. We can stop at gas stations for rest rooms in Hurtsboro before starting the birding trip and on our way out.

A O S W I N T E R M E E T I N G , A U B U R N U N I V E R S I T Y , J A N U A R Y 2 4 – 2 6 , 2 0 2 0

Meet the Speaker: Chris Wood

CHRIS WOOD is the director of eBird at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. During this time eBird has grown into one of the largest citizen science projects in the world with observations from every country in the world, and more than 500,000 users, 700 million records, and more than 300 peer-reviewed publications. Chris is widely recognized as a leading authority on bird identification and distribution and has written and consulted on various books, popular literature, and scientific literature on birds.

eBird: The Intersection of Birding, Science, and Conservation at Local and Global Scales

By CHRIS WOOD, Cornell University



EVERY TIME YOU SEE AND IDENTIFY A BIRD, YOU ARE holding a piece of a puzzle. Whether you are casually watching birds in your backyard, or looking for rare species around the world you can help put this puzzle together. It might be a personal puzzle. For example, you might wonder when Prothonotary Warblers appear in your backyard each spring or what time of day the Mourning Doves take a bath in your neighborhood fountain. Each time that you see and identify one of these birds—so long as you note the time and date—another piece of the puzzle falls into place.

Or it might be a regional puzzle. Scientists might need to understand the spread of Eurasian Collared-Doves across North America, or how rapidly Henslow's Sparrows are declining. Each time you identify and count the numbers of these species, you are piecing together a part of that puzzle.

Or it might be an international puzzle. Each year during migration, hundreds of species fly from southern wintering grounds to northern breeding grounds, following the flush of summer insects. When do they leave? Where do they breed? And when do they return home? Whether recording common birds in your backyard or searching for rarities

along the Alabama coastline, your sightings of these birds—with time, date, and location included—are pieces that can help ornithologists solve this huge puzzle.

Unfortunately, just like puzzle pieces, these observations lose their value if they remain separate. The sightings tucked away in your memory, or your desk drawer, leave gaps in a partially painted picture. The only way that all these bird sightings make a contribution to our understanding of nature is when they are collected and organized into a central database.

eBird is that database. With hundreds of thousands of bird-watchers across the world helping to construct it by contributing their sightings, eBird has developed into a vast source of bird and environmental information useful not only to bird watchers but to scientists and conservationists the world over. Want to know the closest spot to find a Least Bittern? Want to learn what potential life birds you could see in Costa Rica? Perhaps you want to do a big day in Mobile County, and need to see where and when to find the most species in 24 hours.

But the core reason for eBird is to advance science and conservation. With more than 700 million records and data from every country in the world, eBird accounts for nearly half of the biodiversity information available in the world. In the last two years, there have been major advances in our ability to use these data to model bird distribution. We are now at the point where we can see the abundance of birds across the Americas every week of the year. And these results and raw data are available to anyone.

By keeping track of your bird observations and entering them into the eBird database, you'll benefit too. You can access your own bird records any time you want, allowing you an easy way to look at your observations in new ways and also allowing you to answer your personal questions about what birds you saw and when and where you saw them.

If you use the eBird website to enter all your birding information—and get your friends, family members, students, and colleagues to use it as well—before long the answers to the never ending questions about birds will be found in the eBird database, for use now and for generations that will follow.

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

Joan Dixon, 1059 Palmetto Street, Mobile, AL 36604

Name(s) _____

Street Address _____

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AOS WINTER MEETING 2020 REGISTRATION FORM

Complete and return to:

Joan Dixon, 1059 Palmetto Street, Mobile, AL 36604

Telephone: (251) 605-4276 • Email: joanwsdixon@gmail.com

Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by January 14, 2020

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Registration @ \$25 per person	\$
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