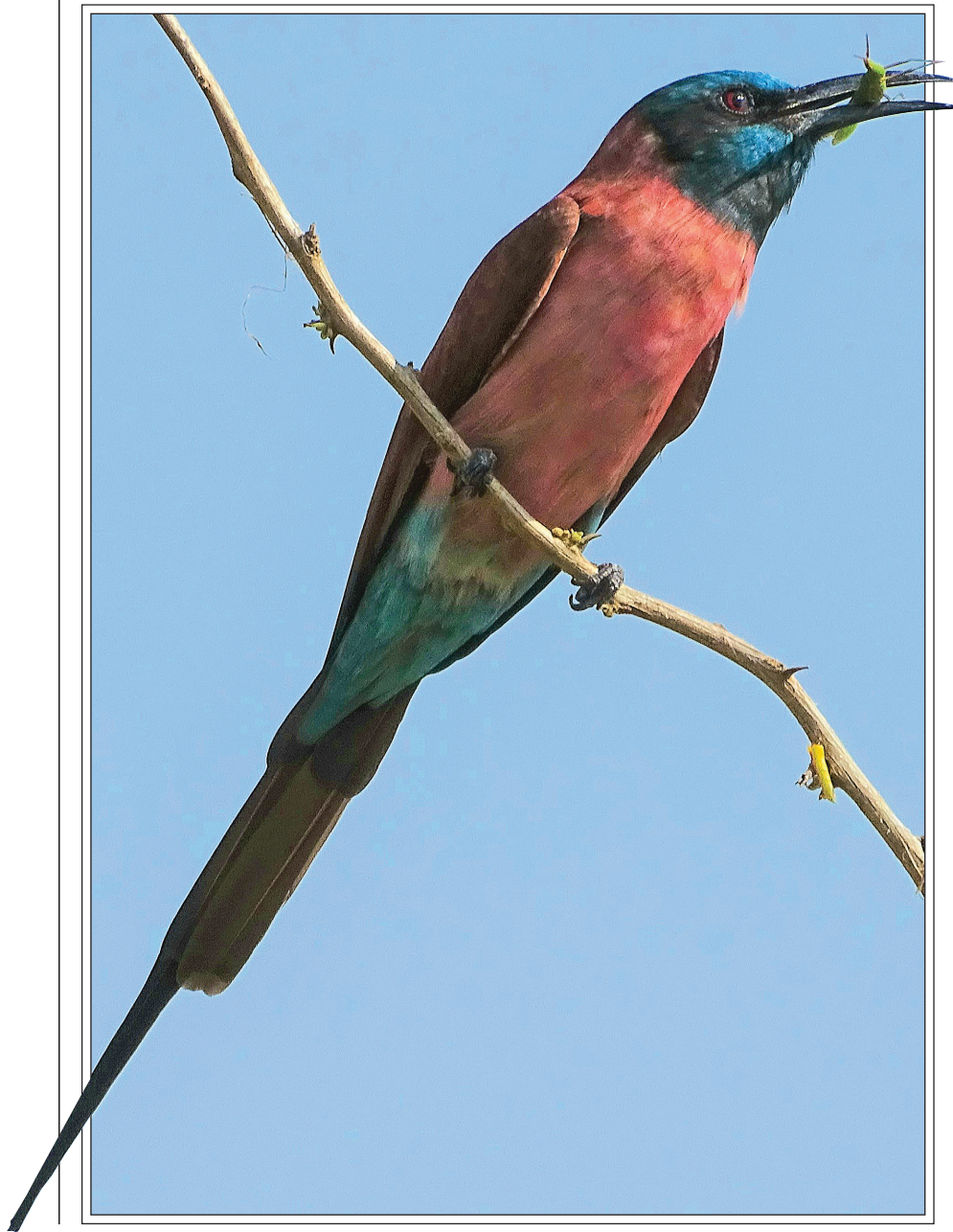


# THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 41, NO. 3 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY FALL 2021

...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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WHEN THE GAVEL SOUNDS AT the end of the fall meeting in October, my term as president of the Alabama Ornithological Society will come to an end. I don't think I'm exaggerating if I state that my two years as AOS president have been exceptional. My presidency began routinely enough—we had a successful and fun Winter 2020 meeting at Auburn University. We were all set to have our spring meeting on Dauphin Island in April 2020 with adventure birder Noah Stryker as our keynote speaker when the Covid-19 pandemic slammed into us. Overnight, the world, the United States, and Alabama shut down. No travel. No eating at restaurants. Certainly no large meetings on Dauphin Island. My initial thought, which I think was shared by many, was that this would pass pretty quickly, and we'd soon be back to normal. But of course the great pandemic of the spring of 2020 became the even greater pandemic of that fall and winter. By mid-summer 2020, it was clear that an in-person October meeting at Dauphin Island was out of the question. So, with the aid of our on-line wizard Shirley Farrell, we set up and ran the first ever virtual AOS meeting in October 2020. It was nice to get together, but a Zoom connection was not the same as gathering on Dauphin Island.

I was elated by news of positive clinical trials of newly developed vaccines at the very end of 2020, but there was no hope of holding an in-person winter meeting with the pandemic raging and vaccine distribution just beginning. So, in January 2021 we held our second virtual meeting when we convened the winter AOS meeting on Zoom. I was (probably naively) optimistic for an in-person spring AOS meeting in April 2021, but as we moved through the winter of 2021, vaccines were still not widely available, and the AOS board made the decision to have yet another virtual meeting. I think I speak for pretty much everyone when I say that I'm tired of staring at a computer screen during our seasonal meetings instead of gathering in person.

Finally, for the fall AOS meeting in October 2021, we will get back together for our first in-person meeting in nearly two



years. It is my opinion, which is supported by the AOS board, that an in-person meeting can be run safely, but only among vaccinated people. Unvaccinated individuals are currently—and likely will still be in October—at very high risk of contracting Covid-19 in Alabama. Conversely, vaccinated folks are at very low risk of developing the disease or of potentially spreading Covid-19. As a research scientist who has worked extensively with RNA and DNA, studied pandemics in birds (they are called zoonotics when they occur outside of human populations), and even worked a bit on developing vaccines for poultry, I can state with confidence that there is nothing to fear from any of the Covid-19 vaccines being distributed in the US. In terms of their potential to do good

and save lives, these vaccines are among the greatest inventions in human history. The Covid vaccines sit at the apex of a trillion dollars of investment in biomedical research by United States citizens over a 70-year period beginning at the end of World War II. These high-tech vaccines are remarkably effective at preventing disease from the Covid-19 virus with virtually no chance of side effects. (A swollen arm and brief flu-like symptoms are EFFECTS of the vaccine, not side effects). The protection provided by vaccination gives the members of the Alabama Ornithological Society a chance to meet again safely in person. Therefore, for the safety of all of us, **we are strictly requiring that everyone who attends an AOS event during the fall 2021 meeting is fully vaccinated** (two Moderna shots, two Pfizer shots, or a Johnson & Johnson shot). Events at which we are requiring that attendees be vaccinated include the Friday night social, the Saturday board meeting, Saturday banquet, Sunday compiling of bird species recorded, or any of the AOS field trips. In addition to requiring vaccination, we are requesting that everyone wear masks when at indoor events and not eating, drinking, or addressing an audience.

A vaccinated person attending an event with other vaccinated people is at very low risk of getting sick from Covid-19. It is very important to remember, however, that the vaccine *per se* does not protect an individual from infection. An

individual is protected from Covid-19 disease by his or her own immune system. The vaccine simply trains the immune system so that it is ready should an individual be exposed to Covid-19. This means that if your immune system is not functioning well, you can be vaccinated and still get sick from Covid. I hope that each member will weigh their individual risk from Covid based on their health and mitigating factors

when deciding whether to attend our in-person meeting. And finally, although we can gather safely as a group of fully vaccinated friends, when we leave our meeting, we step into a world with very low vaccination rates and very high circulating virus. To stay as safe as possible, vigilance will be needed.

I'm looking forward to fun and much-needed reconnection of the Alabama birding community this October.

## *Alabama Christmas Bird Count 2020-21*

By LARRY GARDELLA



THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT HAS A WONDERFUL history, one that most of us are familiar with, and we will not restate it, except to say that it is one of the best citizen science projects going. Kudos to all who participate. Larry Gardella is the state coordinator for the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This is a summary of his report.

Overall, duck numbers were down in Alabama's 2020-21 CBCs, but Gulf Shores again had Alabama's only Black-bellied Whistling Ducks. Not surprising, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge had most of the ducks, with over 26,000 Gadwalls, most of the American Wigeon, American Black Ducks, Northern Shovelers, Northern Pintails, Green-winged Teals, Canvasbacks, Redheads, Ring-necked Ducks, Surf Scoters, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneyes, Hooded Mergansers, and Mallards.

South Alabama had a few neat finds, including Alabama's first-ever CBC Cinnamon Teal at Gulf Shores and two Mottled Ducks on Dauphin Island. Only twenty Greater Scaup were recorded, split between Wheeler and the Gulf, and Lesser Scaup were divided among Auburn, Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Gulf Shores, Guntersville, Wheeler Dam, and Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge.

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge had most of the Snow, Ross's, and Greater White-fronted Geese, and the sole Tundra Swan.

Wild Turkeys are tricky to find on CBCs, but 77 were recorded at Waterloo.

Dauphin Island had all 37 Snowy Egrets, the only two Tricolored Herons, and the only eight Reddish Egrets. The only six White Ibis were found at Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge. One of the major rarities for this year was a Golden

Eagle at Wheeler Dam. Virginia Rails were spread between Eufaula, Fort Morgan, Gulf Shores, Guntersville and Wheeler Dam. Only Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge counted any Common Gallinules.

For shorebirds, Dauphin Island had the only American Oystercatcher, the only fifteen Semipalmated Plovers, five Piping Plovers, two Marbled Godwits, two Red Knots, and sixteen Short-billed Dowitchers.

The only Inca Dove was found at a regular site in Gulf Shores.

Lone Black-chinned Hummingbirds were recorded in Gulf Shores and Montgomery. Single Rufous Hummingbirds turned up in Auburn and Montgomery and three were in Gulf Shores.

Seven Merlins were spread statewide. Dauphin Island and Wheeler Dam each recorded three Peregrine Falcons, while Fort Morgan and Waterloo at one each.

A rare Say's Phoebe was in a field at Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge. Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge and Gulf Shores each also found lone Vermilion Flycatchers. The only Western Kingbird was at Gulf Shores. Fort Morgan did not find any White-eyed Vireos, but five sites did: Dauphin Island, Eufaula, Gulf Shores, Montgomery, and Tuscaloosa. Four counts recorded Horned Larks: Eufaula, Gulf Shores, Wheeler Dam, and Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. Red-breasted Nuthatches were much less common than last winter, but Fort Morgan had three, Guntersville ten, Waterloo twenty, Wheeler Dam three, and Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge twelve. Two winter birds were unusually widespread across Alabama, with only Fort Morgan failing to record a Winter Wren, and only Gulf Shores missing Golden-crowned Kinglet. In addition

to the expected Gray Catbirds at Dauphin Island, Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge (five was a low count), Fort Morgan, and Gulf Shores, there were singles at Auburn, Guntersville, and Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. Montgomery found the only Lapland Longspur. Gulf Shores tallied three Black-and-white Warblers, and Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge an amazing eight. Every count had at least one Orange-crowned Warbler. Fort Morgan recorded a Yellow-throated Warbler, and Gulf Shores two. Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge located two Prairie Warblers. It also recorded a Bachman's Sparrow. Gulf Shores found the only Grasshopper Sparrow and the only Henslow's Sparrow. Both Leconte's Sparrows were at Wheeler Dam. A lone Clay-colored Sparrow was at Gulf Shores. A single Lark Sparrow was far north at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Fort Morgan, and Gulf Shores each tallied a single Lincoln's Sparrow. Gulf Shores found the only count-day Indigo and Painted Buntings. A single Bullock's Oriole came to a feeder in Gulf Shores. The only Baltimore Oriole was far north at Wheeler Dam. As expected during an irruption year, Purple Finches and Pine Siskins were widespread; Pine Siskins were found on every count, and Purple Finches on every one but Fort Morgan. Scaly-breasted Munias are not (yet) on the official Alabama list; Gulf Shores tallied 32.

So, you see that the CBCs are an excellent opportunity to see birds; consider joining one or more this winter.

In honor of Bob Reid, I also note that American Coot had the highest number (94,715—including a high count of 69,251 for Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge), and Red-winged Blackbirds were next at 67,645.

### *Safety in Numbers*

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS I HAVE WATCHED A SPOTTED SAND-piper, Semipalmated Plover, and Sanderling forage together on the narrow strip of sand on the point at the end of the Gulf Breeze peninsula. They are always within a couple of yards of each other and they fly out together to avoid potential predators or change feeding locations. The Sanderling probes the sand, the plover picks and the sandpiper works the wrack line of seaweed washed ashore. Safety in numbers and co-existence par excellence.

—Bob Duncan, Gulf Breeze

THAT IS A VERY INTERESTING OBSERVATION, BOB, AND A WEIRD coincidence. Yesterday (August 12, 2021), I went to a couple of small stretches along Biloxi Beach. At three different spots, I had two shorebirds working together. Each time the two birds together were a Sanderling and a Semipalmated Plover. I thought it was very interesting that the two species were together at three different areas. They must complement each other, and like you said, safety in numbers. I did not flush any of these six birds but they stayed right together along the beach. We have arriving Spotted Sandpipers but I did not see any yesterday in Biloxi.

—Brian Johnston, Pascagoula, MS

THERE IS CONSIDERABLE OVERLAP IN THE PREY TAKEN BY Sanderlings and Semipalmated Plovers, but although there is a little overlap, the prey-finding technique of the two is different, as mentioned. A well-disturbed surface, as caused by Sanderlings, will expose more prey for the more surface feeding plover, and given the overlap in prey the other species can be a guide to a rich food site. At the same time the difference in foraging style, for the most part, reduces competition for food, so the pluses of foraging in the same area outweigh this disadvantage.

—Drew Haffenden, Dauphin Island

### *Upcoming Meetings*

**WINTER MEETING**—January 28–30, 2022

Lake Guntersville State Park

**SPRING MEETING**—April 15–17, 2022

Dauphin Island, Alabama

**FALL MEETING**—October 14–16, 2022

Dauphin Island, Alabama

### *Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions*

Winter 2021

November 10, 2021

Spring 2022

February 10, 2022

Summer 2022

May 10, 2022

# *Bwindi Impenetrable National Park*



N JUNE 2021, ANDREA AND I left Alabama for the first time since February 2020 and along with Eric Haskell

spent 23 days in Uganda on a birding tour led by Johnnie Kamugisha. We saw more than 500 birds (including Shoebill and African Finfoot), ten primates (including Mountain Gorillas and a chimpanzee), lions and leopards, many large mammals, three chameleons, and a bunch of butterflies, dragonflies, and damselflies. Instead of doing an overall trip report, I am giving a bit more detail for what we all considered the best part of the trip: our visit to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. I would like to return to Uganda and would love to spend more time at Bwindi.

In line with the presidential decree issued just as we were arriving in Uganda, travel between almost all the districts was banned except for truckers and tourist vehicles. We were sometimes stopped and questioned at checkpoints, but we were always able to proceed. On Saturday, June 19, we left Queen Elizabeth National Park and headed over very muddy dirt roads toward Bwindi. Many of the truckers were stuck in the mud, but we were able to get around them. It just took a while. As we were nearing Bwindi, we stopped a few times for new birds: where the road crossed a small river, a Little Rush Warbler was singing in the vegetation, and a little farther up the road we saw some MacKinnon's Shrikes on the wire. It was late afternoon when we reached Bwindi and checked into our accommodations, Ride 4 a Woman, which also included a craft workshop. (Ride 4 a Woman is a charitable organization set up to support women struggling with poverty, HIV, and domestic violence.)

The next morning, we drove to the park headquarters for a health screening and an orientation and then headed on foot uphill toward the gorillas. Andrea and I decided each to make the small payment for support staff people,



who both carried our backpacks and helped along the path with a stabilizing hand or a pull. Johnnie got to go up with us, and he spotted a few birds for the entire group, including the only Grauer's Warbler that we ever saw, one of the Albertine Rift endemics. We enjoyed our first Bar-tailed Trogons and encountered some other birds, but our focus was on getting to the gorillas. We started up along a switch-backing trail up a forested mountain, but after 90 minutes or so, the local guide said that the trackers were with our group of gorillas, and that we would have to go straight up the side of the mountain to get to them. After making our way through bushwhacked vegetation and

slippery mud, we got on the same level as the group, and we could hear them. We had a last drink and put up our backpacks, since no food or drink could be brought near the gorillas. We also secured our masks to protect the gorillas from any of our germs. We passed one little copse and noted that "our" gorillas were inside, the nearest individual just a few feet away from us. The trackers cut away much of the vegetation so that we could see the silverback male, his females and their young, all from a closer distance than we had expected. For an hour we got to take some photos but mainly just enjoy their presence, watching the adults eat and the young ones both eat and play, including swinging from some overhanging branches. Their facial expressions were mesmerizing, as was the way that they moved their hands.

The hour passed quickly, and we then started back down the same paths that we had gone up. When we got down, Andrea took a few hours off, while the rest of us went back near the entrance area to look for birds. We started with some Chubb's Cisticolas and a Western Citril in a garden, moved a bit down the street where we saw an African Wood-Owl up in a tree, and then made our way into the forest. There, we added some new woodpeckers (Tullberg's and Buff-spot-

ted), new weavers (Black-necked Weaver and Red-headed Malimbe), new flycatchers (White-eyed Slaty-flycatcher and Dusky Blue Flycatcher), and some Gray-winged Robin-Chats before heading back to Ride 4 a Woman to meet Andrea for dinner.

Monday morning, Andrea opted not to take the all-day hike along the main trail from the entrance road toward the waterfalls, a hike that yielded many birds. Highlights included Equatorial Akalat, White-bellied Robin-Chat, the Albertine Rift endemic Neumann's Warbler, Red-faced Woodland Warbler, and a very obliging African Broadbill, a bird I had only heard when Andrea saw one years ago, but that I was able this time to study at leisure. And I got to see a White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, which Eric had seen the day before. We had lunch out on the trail and pushed on a bit farther, finding such birds as Willard's Sooty Boubou before heading back to the vehicle. The sharp rocks on the dirt roads had punctured one of Johnnie's tires, so we were a bit late getting back for dinner; changing the tire required some elaborate steps, including Johnnie digging a trench.

We left the village of Bwindi the next morning to make a transfer over to the other side of the park at Ruhija. Part of the drive was through open roads where we stopped for some raptors, including Augur Buzzard and Great Sparrowhawk. The best part came when we reached the area where the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest crosses the road: The Neck. We walked stretches of the road and took a break by one river for lunch. Birds included a pair of Mountain Wagtails right at that small river, Elliot's Woodpecker, Banded Prinia, White-browed Crombec, and Petit's Cuckooshrike.

When we reached the outskirts of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park near Ruhija, we pulled off on a side road and started looking for birds. They came fast and furiously. Johnnie was calling out species, and we were all working to see them before they flew away. In just a few minutes we saw Stripe-breasted Tit, Slender-billed Starling, Black-faced and

Rwenzori Apalis, and a Gray Cuckooshrike. The others saw at least one Yellow-throated Apalis, but I missed it—and ended the trip never seeing it, though I later heard it well. It was amazing how quickly all the birds vanished. When we reached Ruhija we could not stay at the Ugandi Inn, because it had been vandalized while closed down for COVID, so we had to stay at a village lodge.

Another all-day walk the next morning, Andrea slept in a bit, and then took a morning-only walk with a local birding guide who told her Johnnie had arranged for it. The rest of us got over to the Ruhija to Broadbill trail for an early start to maximize our chance of seeing Grauer's Broadbill. The trail is approximately three miles long—mainly straight down—and then the same three miles back up. Despite a stellar effort we did not see the broadbill, but we did get to enjoy a fine assortment of special



*Male Regal Sunbird (Nectarinia regia)*

birds new for the trip, several of which were Albertine Rift endemics: Rwenzori Batis, Albertine Boubou, White-bellied Crested-Flycatcher (found by Eric while answering a call to nature), White-headed Wood-hoopoe, Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo, Grauer's Swamp Warbler, Eastern Mountain Greenbul, Rwenzori Hill Babbler, Strange Weaver (at a nest), Abyssinian Thrush, Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher, Archer's Robin-Chat, several White-starred Robins, and some Thick-billed Seed eaters. Eric also managed to find us a Rwenzori three-horned Chameleon up in a tree. The local guide said it was only the third he has seen in ten years of working at the park. At the end of the walk we were treated to possibly the most spectacular of the sunbirds: Regal Sunbird.

Our last morning, we stopped on the road in the forest and had wonderful views of the Regal Sunbird and got to see Dusky Crimsonwing, Doherty's Bush-shrike, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, and Mountain Yellow Warbler and Andrea got to see many of the birds she had missed the day before.

With so many great birding locations in the world, I rarely leave a place planning to return. I have to go back to Bwindi.

AOS FALL MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, OCTOBER 8–10, 2021

# AOS Fall Meeting Schedule



UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL ACTIVITIES FOR the AOS fall meeting begin or occur at the Church of the Island, 302 Key Street, Dauphin Island, Alabama 36528.

To register online for the Fall Meeting, go to:

**[www.aosbirds.org](http://www.aosbirds.org)**

## FRIDAY, October 8, 2021

- 5:00 p.m. Registration—Church of the Island
- 5:45 p.m. Social Hour—Light hors d'oeuvres
- 6:45 p.m. Announcements
- 7:00 p.m. Members Photography Slide Show
- 8:00 p.m. Discussion of Weekend Field Trips
- 8:15 p.m. Adjourn

## SATURDAY, October 9, 2021

- 7:00 a.m. Field Trip: Birds of Pelican Bay Peninsula (see note below)
- 1:30 p.m. Board Meeting—Church of the Island
- 5:00 p.m. Registration

## Annual Meeting, Banquet and Keynote Speaker

**Where: Church of the Island**

- 5:30 p.m. Social Hour
- 6:30 p.m. Banquet
- 7:15 p.m. Annual Meeting/Announcements
- 7:30 p.m. Keynote Speaker: Dr. Scott Robinson  
Birdwatching and Science: A Personal Journey
- 9:00 p.m. Adjourn

## SUNDAY, October 10, 2021

- 12:00 p.m. Compilation at the Goat Trees  
(Includes all bird sightings in Mobile and Baldwin Counties from noon, Friday, October 8, to noon Sunday, October 10, 2021.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations are limited, so be sure to make reservations early for AOS meetings on Dauphin Island.

### Websites:

[www.gulfinfo.com](http://www.gulfinfo.com)

[www.dauphinislandchamberofcommerce.com](http://www.dauphinislandchamberofcommerce.com)

### Motels:

Gulf Breeze Motel: 251-861-7344 or 1-800-286-0296

### Rentals:

Boardwalk Realty, Inc.: 877-861-3992

Dauphin Island Real Estate: 888-707-6444

Tyson Real Estate: 800-865-8312

ACP Real Estate, Inc.: 866-861-3311

### Camping:

Dauphin Island Park and Beach Board: 251-861-2742  
(fully equipped for both camper and tent camping)

**Air BnB** has lots of rentals! [www.airbnb.com](http://www.airbnb.com)

## Fall Meeting Activities

**F**OR THE FRIDAY NIGHT SOCIAL LIGHT HORS D'OEUVRES WILL BE provided for a donation (to AOS) and will consist of boiled shrimp, fruit/cheese/vegs trays, chips and dip. The DIBS cash bar will provide sodas and sparkling waters for a donation (to DIBS).

### Field Trip: Birds of Pelican Bay Peninsula

Drew Haffenden will be running the usual Pelican Island outing. Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the Public Beach parking lot (between the school and the condos, on Bienville Blvd.) for a 7:10 a.m. departure. We will be walking on sand for up to 2.5 miles round trip. It will be a leisurely walk looking for birds

along the way, though the majority will be about 0.75 miles out to the end. Shorebirds, terns, gulls, herons, and egrets will be our main focus, but we will look for other dune birds and sparrows as we return. Social distancing and vaccinated status are required for all AOS functions including outings.

### ***Bird On Your Own***

Due to the narrow paths and need to closely gather to see woodland birds and the Covid risk this entails when in a group, there is no "Around the Island" outing for this meet-

ing. We are sorry about this but the health of our members and guests is paramount. There will be a number of AOS members out and about who will be more than happy to share sightings and point out birds. AOS is, given the resurgence of new Covid variants and the low vaccination rate, unwilling to ask our normal guides to lead close groupings of birders. We look forward to seeing everyone in October, especially on the beach!

Also, because of the new Covid threat, there will be no gathering at Jennie's house. Hopefully next year.

## *Meet the Speaker: Dr. Scott Robinson*

DR. SCOTT ROBINSON *has been a professor at the University of Florida since 1993 and the Ordway Professor since 2003. Before that he was a wildlife ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey from 1984 to 1993. Scott's career in avian ecology has spanned many disciplines, including community ecology, landscape ecology, demography, and behavior. Much of his work has occurred in temperate forests of New England and the Midwest and tropical rainforests in Peru. As director of the Ordway Lab of Ecosystem Conservation he oversees a large group of graduate students pursuing research in tropical landscapes throughout the world.*

### *Birdwatching and Science: A Personal Journey*

By DR. SCOTT ROBINSON



S WITH MANY OF US WHO STUDY BIRDS PROFESSIONALLY, I started as a birder. My father was a skilled birdwatcher and took me on many trips around North America where I developed my life-long passion for bird listing. When I discovered that it was possible to have a career studying birds, I dropped my plans to finance my birding habit by becoming a physician and went to graduate school to work with John Terborgh, who was doing some of the most exciting work in tropical ecology in tropical Peru. As a dedicated lister, I was irresistibly drawn to the world's most diverse bird communities.

Early in my career, I tried to suppress the purely competitive side of my interest in birding because it seemed so unscientific. When I started graduate school, I hid my bird listing past, only to be uncovered by a Wall Street Journal article about Jim Vardaman, who had just broken my North American Big Year record and surpassed 700 species. I expected to be shunned and mocked by the faculty and my fellow students but was surprised when our most famous faculty member, the mathematical ecologist Robert May (later elevated to the peerage as Lord May as a codeveloper of chaos theory), started treating me as a favored student even though I was practically a mathematical illiterate.

Even though I cut down on my hard-core birding early in my academic career, I still did some occasional listing. When the late Ted Parker came to my field site in Amazonian Peru in 1982, we hatched a plan to break the world Big Day record, which then stood at 272 species from Kenya. On our first attempt, we hit 332 species in an area of less than a square mile, which we covered on foot and by dugout canoe. This record stood for more than 35 years and still may be the top team record involving no internal combustion engines.

The connection between birdwatching and science has been central to my career. Birdwatching skills are great for censusing birds, and the ability to master bird identification, especially songs, has been extremely useful in my primary subdiscipline, community ecology of hyper-diverse tropical lowland and montane ecosystems. When I started studying Amazonian birds, for example, there were essentially no field guides or accessible sources of bird recordings. Only a very few of us could even dream of

identifying more than a handful of the species in any tropical community. Thanks to the pioneering work of ornithologist/birdwatchers such as Ted Parker, John Terborgh, and John Fitzpatrick, we learned enough to begin to understand and measure the enormous diversity of bird communities in seemingly uniform lowland tropical forests.

My own graduate students have continued this tradition of filling giant gaps in our knowledge of the natural history of birds in remote areas of South America, Africa, and Asia. One of my graduate students, Gustavo Londono, has described the nests of more than 70 species that were previously unknown to science. Many of the most important papers that have emerged from my lab group at both the universities of Florida and Illinois have documented the effects of habitat disturbance, elevation, and fragmentation on nesting success. Our methods are simple—we hire and train large crews of birdwatchers, many recruited from the sites where we work, and turn them loose to find nests, census birds, gather foraging data, and run mist-net lines to band birds.

I had long avoided eBird because I knew it was a slippery slope for someone with my personality type. When I finally succumbed, my listing obsession returned with a vengeance. I was able to pursue my hobby, compete for both local and global lists, and feel as if I were contributing useful data. eBird is at the vanguard of citizen science and has elevated birds to an even greater level of prominence as harbingers of environmental change. My students mine eBird data regularly, and it always gives me a little thrill when they use some of the data I have contributed. I credit eBird with my new passion for yard listing, which helped me get through the pandemic period when travel was severely curtailed.

The rise of technology such as Automated Recording Units and the Machine Learning needed to interpret these recordings will eventually make some kinds of field work obsolete. Scientists are no longer overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data generated by such platforms as eBird, and it is just a matter of time before computers will be able to identify all bird songs automatically. Modern graduate students can expect to spend far more time analyzing data than they do gathering it. I feel very lucky that I was able to make a career out of being one of the first to be able to identify tropical birds by their sounds and to describe for the first time just how diverse many communities are. Virtually everything I have contributed to science has come from direct observa-

tions and censuses of birds in nature, and these were skills that I developed while birdwatching as a youth.

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### Alabama Birdlife Mailout Problems

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TWO ISSUES OF *ALABAMA BIRDLIFE*—VOLUME 66, JUNE AND December 2020—were mailed out simultaneously to the membership in late July. Everyone should have received them electronically, and those who requested hardcopies should have received both issues in the mail. However, some members reported receiving two copies of the same issue instead of one of each. The Herald Quickprint, who handles our hardcopy mailouts, inadvertently mixed up copies of the two issues during the labeling process resulting in the mailing errors, which affected at least 14 members. The Herald has been working with me to correct the problem and has been mailing out the missing issue to members that received two of the same issues. If you are one of those affected and you haven't received the other issue yet, please let me know, and I'll mail one of our extras to you. Thanks, and I apologize for any inconvenience.

—Eric Soehren, editor, *Alabama Birdlife*  
esoehren@gmail.com

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### New Members

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Debby Bourque • Christine Cameron  
David George • Allison Graves  
Amelia Grider • Margaret Hildick-Pytte  
Susan Hubley • Steve Jordan  
Herb and Terry Lewis  
Linda Love • Beth Ann Morpeth  
Christina Norris • Lisa Palmieri  
Jeff and Beth Reinert  
Patricia Reville • Dee Scott  
Val Webb • Mary Wells  
Steve Wheat • Mark Woodley

NEW LIFE MEMBER  
Michelle Reynolds

DONATIONS  
Greg Jackson: Fort Morgan Project

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\_\_\_\_ Life (individual) \$350 \_\_\_\_ Life (family\*) \$550 \*Number of family members \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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Friday Night Hors d'oeuvre Buffet: Yes/No	
Banquet Buffet @ \$27 per person	\$
<b>2022 DUES</b>	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution	\$
<b>TOTAL ENCLOSED</b>	\$

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EDITOR.....Bob Reed  
DESIGN.....Robin McDonald  
ILLUSTRATIONS.....Annabel Markle

### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Greg Harber  
Geoff Hill  
Ken Hare  
Larry Gardella

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Address correspondence concerning membership to:  
Joan Dixon, Treasurer  
1059 Palmetto Street,  
Mobile, AL 36604  
e-mail: joanwsdixon@gmail.com

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