

# THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 42, NO. 4 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY WINTER 2022

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

FOUNDED 1952



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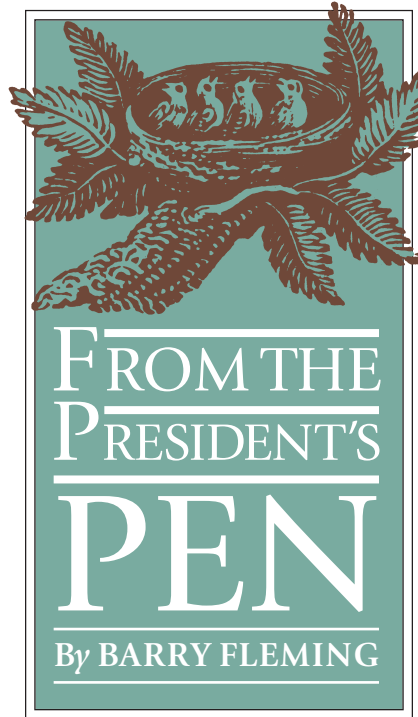
**I**'M SITTING IN A VIEWING BLIND instead of turning in this President's Pen on time, waiting on a Painted Bunting a young man found five miles from my house in mid-November. Allow me to go sideways and thank Bob Reed for his patience and for consistently producing a spectacular newsletter, and to Robin McDonald for design! According to eBird, there are two more Painted Buntings far inland in the country at this time, one in Pinzy Swamp, Georgia, and one at the ranch in Death Valley, California. It's the rarity and unusual time of year that pulled me here, but mostly because this bird is in my patch, and I want to know everything about the birds in my patch.

What or where is your patch, or patches? I met another young man in this same blind that was excited about the twenty-four species he has submitted from his student apartment, his temporary patch, to "My Yard" for "Yard Totals" on eBird. I have 123 birds, after thirty-five years, including twenty-nine species of warblers, on my yard list but am now anxious to be part of the "Yard Totals" crowd, kind of like a new on-line bird patch for me.

Wayne Flynt, who has a new book on Harper Lee, told me recently that the last ten or so years of her life she often sat in one chair looking out of a large plate glass window at a perfectly placed bird feeding station. "She loved her birds" he said. Near the end, he, and his wife Dartie, would need to help her with identification. That was Nelle's patch, and she knew it well.

Many of our members have birded all over the world, so their patch is world-wide. Still, they probably have locations they think of as their home patch. I'm listed on eBird as having reported more birds than anyone on top of Mt. LeConte, along the Tennessee/North Carolina border, just because I happened to go there and keep records years before eBird. The screech owl record there is the highest elevation of one reported in the east. I haven't been in ten years, and if I never go back again that mountain top will always be my patch.

eBird places the hotspot, county, state, and country as commonly understood patches. We have a new AOS member that



recently moved to Lee County, a historically heavily birded county. She has added two county records, several birds not seen this century, and has recorded over 175 species in six months. She has re-defined this patch. We have one member that studies the Loggerhead Shrike. She has country, city, and beach patches. Anywhere she sees a shrike is her patch. Greg Harbor routinely inspects Railroad Park, Birmingham, as his workplace is close by. He was the first one to report over half of the over one hundred species seen in this urban park. The city of Montgomery just opened an urban nature park downtown by the river called Shady Street, which will certainly be an eBird hotspot soon. So, if you live nearby, you could adopt this place as your patch and have your name listed forever for each 'first seen' species you record there.

Some patches stay the same and other patches change. I would encourage you to find a new patch for you and keep an open mind for what that might be. It could be a place, an idea, a creative force, a group activity. Perhaps you will find ways to share your patch, but there is also nothing wrong with having your very own secret patch.

AOS invites you to participate in the new speakers and writers bureau. We are seeking people knowledgeable about a patch that would be willing to write and speak about it. The idea is, in addition to inviting people down to Dauphin Island, a most wonderful patch, or our roaming winter meeting location, we could send out AOS expertise to speak at schools and nature groups all over the state. The Department of Tourism has designated next year to be the "Year of the Bird" in Alabama. In fact, it will extend through 2024, providing many opportunities for us to spread our mission. In five years, it will be the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the beginning of AOS. If you haven't read our first 50 Year History Publication, find in on the website under History. We will certainly need to collect written stories for the upcoming publication.

A big thank you goes out to Ken Hare and Anne Miller of the public relations committee for years of work to bring our social media and web presence to professional standards. A

big welcome goes out to Molly Folkerts Caldwell and Curt Burney for taking over those two roles. Stay tuned to the new innovations that will result when these two put their heads together. Another welcome is to Dee Gertler, our new secretary, with thanks to Pat Reed for years of flawless recording of the minutes. Pat has also graciously agreed to assume Acting Treasurer duties as we search for a permanent treasurer.

As you receive this newsletter it will be time to register for our winter meeting at Guntersville State Park, 27–29 January, 2023.

This is Alabama's premier state park and one of the premier winter birding locations. We are very fortunate to have Tiffany Kersten as our keynote speaker. Her speaking schedule is tight since she set a new lower 48 Big Year record of 726 species in 2021. She will bring us the many interesting stories during her big year quest and speak to her work on behalf of women's issues. So, get those pesky annual dues behind you, grab your warmest clothes, and we'll see you at the lodge.

AOS FALL MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, OCTOBER 14–16, 2022

## *AOS Fall 2022 Meeting Report*

By BARRY FLEMING & LARRY GARDELLA

**T**HE WEATHER FOR THE AOS FALL MEETING WAS sunny, just a little cool in the morning and warm in the afternoon, just about perfect. Friday morning involves birders descending on Dauphin Island from all directions. It is a time when members "pick up" birds in the counties of Mobile and Baldwin that are unlikely to be encountered on the island, like Carolina Chickadee, Black Vulture, and Scaly-breasted Munia.

Ken Hare stopped at Splinter Hill Bog and was lucky to see a Bachman's Sparrow, which is harder to find in the fall and winter when not singing. Geoff Hill came over on the ferry and found and photographed a Red Phalarope, the only bird listed in the rare, bold type on the compilation list. And keynote speaker Neil Gilbert spotted a Black-throated Blue Warbler as his first bird upon arriving at Shell Mounds from the Mobile airport. The bird hung around for many to see and photograph in the afternoon but was not seen the following day.

This was our second in-person meeting since the pandemic and the second one at the new and improved Shelby Center at Dauphin Island Sea Lab. The Friday night social hour was again hosted by Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, which offered soft drinks, beer, and wine. The large screen served well the members photography show as folks snacked on a large Skinner's shrimp bowl and assorted fruits and vegetables.



Geoff Hill, Bob Reed, Chuck Estes, and Patsy Russo presented wonderful commentary as they showed recent photographs.

Saturday morning a small group met at the public beach parking lot and ventured out together onto Pelican Island. Sabrina Cobb and Larry Gardella were joined by Scot Duncan—and his parents, Bob and Lucy Duncan, arrived not long after we started. So, the group had plenty of leaders, which



*The 2022 AOS fall meeting on Dauphin Island resulted in a compilation list of 172 species, including a sun-bathing Anhinga in the Audubon Sanctuary (above), and a Black-crowned Night-Heron (opposite page). (Photos by Bob Reed)*

helped all the participants get a great opportunity to learn to differentiate the various terns, plovers and sandpipers.

As we started out, Scot spotted an American Avocet at the shore just below the pier. We walked on down to it, and everybody ended up getting great looks of this beauty. Everyone got to see Piping, Snowy and Semipalmated Plovers through a scope. Scope views also helped demonstrate key differences between Dunlin, Least Sandpiper and Western Sandpiper. Blue-winged Teal flew over, and near the end of our walk, we scoped a group of early Green-winged Teal in the marsh. Of the more than 40 birds we saw, the highlight was the small group of Franklin's Gulls mixed in with some Laughing Gulls on the beach. Everyone learned some tips on

spotting Franklin's in a mass of gulls and then got to study the half-hood, eye arcs, smallish bill and other features of at least one Franklin's. And we didn't even have to walk to the end of Pelican Island.

The Dauphin Island field trip benefitted from the eagle eyes of leader Neil Gilbert. The first stop at the airport yielded thirty-two species. Everyone enjoyed good looks of flying Mottled Ducks and a Reddish Egret. Also seen flying low and slow was a Northern Harrier. Clapper and Sora Rails sounded off with the occasional sighting of a Clapper. Nelson's Sparrows were plentiful. One bird circled the group almost too close to focus binoculars. Then a Marsh Wren took over and repeated the routine.

The field trip moved to Shell Mound Park and featured warblers including American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Orange-crowned, Palm, and Magnolia. Two Philadelphia Vireos, one a tad more yellow than the other, offered great looks. One Rose-breasted Grosbeak did not. It gave the

distinctive call note and flew away. The Audubon Sanctuary offered an Anhinga, a gulf coast softshell turtle and mating cottonmouths.

Upon arriving at the banquet in the evening, members were greeted by a White-winged Dove perched above the front door, and then to a beautiful set up of tables, clothed, and with beautiful fall flowers, thanks to Patsy Russo. Chef Wilton's catering service once again provided a tasty dinner that was more than plenty. The Bananas Foster and Blackberry Cobbler were spot on. And as always thanks to Gulf Breeze Motel for housing the guest speaker.

Ken Hare began the meeting by asking for assistance with the new AOS Speakers and Writers Bureau. We are assembling individuals willing to write about birding locations, information, and topics and those that could speak to school, civic, and other groups. Get with Ken or President Barry Fleming if you can help. Betsy Eager gave an exciting talk about all that is happening with DIBS and SALT. After much work in the past few years, monies are now being transferred to purchase quite a few lots. A more formal presentation will be given at an upcoming meeting. Again, thanks to all members who donate as they register for each meeting or pay yearly dues. We have a singularly unique and successful collaboration for the birds on the island.

Keynote speaker Dr. Neil Gilbert, who had left snow the day before in Duluth, Minnesota, began by relating how much he was appreciating the weather, the food, and seeing old friends from his time in graduate school in Alabama. His illustrated talk was titled, "The Science and Art of Pishing." In an unassuming, conversational tone, Neil spoke to the age-old question—to pish or not to pish, when, where, and why. He addressed what conditions or predators cause birds to mob and hassle and what conditions make it not rewarding to do so.

He spoke to the ethical responsibility of the pish, squeak, or trill sound of a small owl. Neil demonstrated his acquired skills, or the art of pishing, and gave tips on the techniques of how, but the ease of his delivery and effectiveness of his communication belied the deep amount of research and field work in behavioral ecology it took to assemble this knowledge base. He was able to pepper in a lot of detailed information mixed with personal stories and humor.

The Sunday morning field trip was tentatively scheduled for Blakeley Islands if any news was heard about it being full

of birds. As we did not, the group decided instead to take a leisurely stroll down Albright Drive on the bay side where Ken Hare had photographed a Gray Kingbird the day before. The kingbird had moved on, but it was a lovely day to walk and see birds such as Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Yellow-throated Warbler, and American Kestrel, hanging around modern architecture in high end landscaping. Overhead, a low quick buzz, "zeet," and Neil Gilbert says, "Dickcissel." Not exactly the dry, brushy, upstate farm country I see them breeding in, but happily our birdy little island can assist them on their migration route. Just before compilation Neil also spotted the only Red Knot of the weekend, bringing the total species recorded at compilation to 172.

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### *Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs)*

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**I**F YOU ARE INTERESTED AND AVAILABLE, CLICK ON THE LINK below for all the information you will need to participate in the 123rd CBC. These are fun, often turn up rarities, and always add to the citizen science database from the previous 122 Christmas Bird Counts.

**<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>**

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### *New Members*

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Elizabeth French

Larry Palmer

Lynn Risser

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### *Honoraria and Acknowledgments*

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DIBS DONATIONS  
Linda Reynolds • Lynn Risser

AOS DONATION  
Linda Reynolds

AOS SCHOLARSHIP  
Bianca (B.J.) Allen

## 2022 AOS Fall Meeting Compilation List Dauphin Island, Alabama, October 14–16

**N**OTEWORTHY BIRDS OF THE WEEKEND WERE INCA DOVE, Groove-billed Ani, and Red Phalarope. Count total was 172 species plus one species not yet countable.<sup>1</sup>

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck  
Canada Goose  
Blue-winged Teal  
Mallard  
Mottled Duck  
Green-winged Teal  
Wild Turkey  
Pied-billed Grebe  
Rock Pigeon  
Eurasian Collared-Dove  
*Inca Dove*  
White-winged Dove  
Mourning Dove  
*Groove-billed Ani*  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo  
Black-billed Cuckoo  
Common Nighthawk  
Chimney Swift  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
Clapper Rail  
Virginia Rail  
Sora  
American Coot  
American Avocet  
American Oystercatcher  
Black-bellied Plover  
Killdeer  
Semipalmated Plover  
Piping Plover  
Snowy Plover  
Marbled Godwit  
Ruddy Turnstone  
Red Knot  
Sanderling  
Dunlin  
Baird's Sandpiper  
Least Sandpiper  
White-rumped Sandpiper  
Buff-breasted Sandpiper  
Pectoral Sandpiper  
Semipalmated Sandpiper  
Western Sandpiper  
Short-billed Dowitcher  
Wilson's Snipe  
Spotted Sandpiper

Willet  
Greater Yellowlegs  
**Red Phalarope**  
Laughing Gull  
*Franklin's Gull*  
Ring-billed Gull  
Herring Gull  
Great Black-backed Gull  
Caspian Tern  
Forster's Tern  
Royal Tern  
Sandwich Tern  
Black Skimmer  
Common Loon  
Anhinga  
Double-crested Cormorant  
American White Pelican  
Brown Pelican  
Great Blue Heron  
Great Egret  
Snowy Egret  
Little Blue Heron  
Tricolored Heron  
Reddish Egret  
Cattle Egret  
Green Heron  
Black-crowned Night-Heron  
White Ibis  
*Plegadis Ibis species*  
Black Vulture  
Turkey Vulture  
Osprey  
Northern Harrier  
Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Cooper's Hawk  
Bald Eagle  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Great-horned Owl  
Barred Owl  
Belted Kingfisher  
Red-headed Woodpecker  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
Downy Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker

Northern Flicker  
American Kestrel  
Merlin  
Peregrine Falcon  
Eastern Kingbird  
Gray Kingbird  
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  
Eastern Wood-Pewee  
Acadian Flycatcher  
Least Flycatcher  
Eastern Phoebe  
White-eyed Vireo  
Philadelphia Vireo  
Red-eyed Vireo  
Loggerhead Shrike  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Fish Crow  
Carolina Chickadee  
Tree Swallow  
Barn Swallow  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
Cedar Waxwing  
Brown-headed Nuthatch  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
Carolina Wren  
House Wren  
Sedge Wren  
Marsh Wren  
Gray Catbird  
Brown Thrasher  
Northern Mockingbird  
European Starling  
Eastern Bluebird  
Gray-cheeked Thrush  
Swainson's Thrush  
Hermit Thrush  
Wood Thrush  
House Sparrow  
House Finch  
Bachman's Sparrow  
Lark Sparrow  
Seaside Sparrow  
Nelson's Sparrow  
Savannah Sparrow  
Swamp Sparrow  
Eastern Towhee  
Yellow-breasted Chat  
Eastern Meadowlark  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Common Grackle  
Boat-tailed Grackle

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

Also seen:  
Scaley-breasted Munia<sup>1</sup>

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, ALABAMA, OCTOBER 14-16, 2022

# Minutes of the AOS Board Meeting

By DEE GERTLER, *Secretary*



RESIDENT BARRY FLEMING OPENED THE FALL meeting of the Alabama Ornithological Society Board of Directors at 6:00 pm, October 7, 2022, via Webex.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Fleming asked the board to help find a new treasurer. Discussion concerning possible candidates—professional or volunteer or adding a paid bookkeeper ensued. Ken Hare will discuss bookkeeper role with his church bookkeeper. A bookkeeper could possibly handle the technical aspects of the job. Shirley Farrell recommended a Google list, a “living” document, with inputs added by treasurer but accessibility for membership committee and others requiring the information. Then membership could send out renewal requests as necessary. She is willing to help train folks on the program—to print labels and digitize information. She can also help with registration at the meetings. Larry Gardella will resume membership role.

President Fleming restated that we should think about an assistant to the treasurer, try to find someone to assume treasurer duties, continue an e-mail discussion about the membership list as per Shirley Farrell's suggestion and have someone to help with registration available at meetings.

President Fleming introduced the board's new members. Molly Folkerts Caldwell and Dr. Curt Burney will serve on the Public Relations Committee replacing Ken Hare and Anne Miller respectively. In addition to revitalizing our Facebook presence, Ken Hare and Drew Haffenden urged the addition of Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok to our social media outreach as these appeal to younger audiences.

Dee Gertler will serve as secretary replacing Pat Reed.

The board wanted to thank Pat Reed, Anne Miller and Ken Hare for their tireless, and hopefully continuing, efforts on behalf of AOS.

President Fleming met with Beth Drake of Alabama Beautiful Online magazine to discuss Alabama Tourism's

promotion—the Year of the Bird. He will contact the head of Alabama Tourism to push AOS's role in planning and development for this event. Ken Hare said we need promotional items like the AOS bird checklist. Shirley Farrell suggested tee shirts and stickers. Annabel Markle suggested smaller posters as used in previous Alabama Tourism promotions.

All board members will serve on ad hoc committee for the Year of the Bird.

## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Drew Haffenden reported on DIBS. Acquisitions continue, and goals are being met with the help of the town of Dauphin Island and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). NFWF has assigned an environmental lawyer from Venable Law Firm (one of the world's leading law firms for non-profits, with its own real estate law section). AOS donations helped spark this surge and DIBS thanks AOS for these. DIBS is expecting a check for \$454,000 from NFWF for repayment of lots previously bought; DIBS will be able to use this money for new properties for which there are sales agreements, and for new purchases. Twenty-three properties have been, or are being, added to the DIBS fold. The Gorgas Swamp area from Hernando across to General Gorgas and the entire Steiner block minus one lot are being acquired. Drew added that without the Town of Dauphin Island's help this would not have been possible and that we are very grateful to Mayor Collier and the Council for doing this. The block acquisition was a goal in 1996.

Drew also requested someone take over the duties of Field Trip Coordinator at the AOS meetings as his conservation for DIBS, guiding and future AOS responsibilities have increased and leave little time.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Shelly Taliaferro, not present, submitted a report. Checking Account Balance was \$23,632.80, PayPal balance \$500.00 and CD balance \$29,378.56 with 1/27/25 maturity.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

*THE YELLOWHAMMER*—Bob Reed stated *The Yellowhammer* deadline is November 10, 2022.

**CENSUSING COMMITTEE**—Greg Jackson reported that 12 quads of Pickens County were surveyed in June for the Summer Bird Count. Plans are to continue this annual count.

**RECORDS COMMITTEE**—In his role as State Compiler, Greg Jackson just reissued the AOS Field Checklist with an official state tally of 450. Ken Hare will promote the new list on social media. Greg Jackson also wanted to thank Janice Neitzel for her work as AOS Liaison to Fort Morgan State Historical Park. Michael Jordan will succeed her as AOS Liaison and was welcomed by the board.

**DAN C. HOLLIMAN RESEARCH COMMITTEE**—Greg Harber needed a decision from the board to authorize the Dan C. Holliman Research Fund grants for 2023. Greg Harber will proceed if given authorization, and the board will vote on submissions at the January meeting. Ken Hare moved and Shirley Farrell seconded a motion to authorize two \$1000.00 grants. It was unanimously approved.

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**—Shirley Farrell presented Flying Wild Training to 36 gifted specialists in Baldwin County and gave each participant one of Jim Wilson's books (donated to AOS). She invited the specialists to Dauphin Island to bird on Saturday, October 15. A trainer is doing a session with 25 pre-service teachers in the near future. Shirley Farrell will collaborate with Legacy Environmental Education partners to present Flying Wild Training next spring or summer.

**MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**—Larry Gardella stated we need to implement our current plan. We need to recruit those who say they want to volunteer and give them specific tasks. He and Ken Hare want to establish a speakers bureau, a classroom outreach (in consultation with Shirley Farrell) and organize regional birding trips. They need help with recruiting and liaison and they need writers who can write for a general audience.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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*Membership Committee Update*


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**I**N THE LAST *YELLOWHAMMER*, I TALKED ABOUT INCREASING OUR outreach to possible new members by using a writer's group to produce regular columns to post on the AOS Facebook page and website. I said the columns could include photos as well as text and should be aimed at new birders and the general public, but I did not give any examples. And no one has submitted anything.

Have you seen an unusual bird? Have you encountered a bird engaging in interesting behavior? Sabrina and I have written an article on a Great Egret's use of tools that you should find in the next *Alabama Birdlife*. But you may well have observed behavior that would be more of interest to the general public. I can think of the Groove-billed Ani that has walked between people on the wall at Fort Morgan and was recently videotaped feeding on insects a birder kicked up off some low vegetation.

Ken Hare (kmhare46@knology.net) and I (lfgardella@gmail.com) welcome your articles and will be happy to help you edit any that we might be able to use on Facebook, Instagram, or the AOS website. Please keep an eye out for the interesting and then get a write-up (alone or with photos or video) to Ken and me.

Also, please remember that dues are for the calendar year, so as we approach the new year, don't forget to renew your membership.

Send your membership to Pat Reed, 88838 Tallassee Highway, Tallassee, AL 36078, or online at AOSbirds.org.

—Larry Gardella

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*Upcoming Meetings*


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**WINTER MEETING**—January 27–29, 2023  
Lake Guntersville State Park

**SPRING MEETING**—April 21–23, 2023  
Dauphin Island, Alabama

**FALL MEETING**—October 13–15, 2023  
Dauphin Island, Alabama

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AOS WINTER MEETING, LAKE GUNTERSVILLE STATE PARK, JANUARY 27-29, 2023

# AOS Winter Meeting Schedule



UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL ACTIVITIES FOR AOS Winter Meeting begin or occur at the Guntersville State Park Lodge, 1155 Lodge Drive, Guntersville, AL 35976.

To register online for the AOS Winter Meeting, go to [www.aosbirds.org](http://www.aosbirds.org).

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 20

**6:00pm** AOS Board meeting: Via Zoom

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 27

**5:15pm** Registration in the Goldenrod Room

**6:00pm** Member Social

**6:45pm** Announcements/Discussion of Weekend Field Trips

**7:00pm** Members Photography Show

**8:00pm** Adjourn

## SATURDAY, JANUARY 28

### FIELD TRIP 1

#### LAKE GUNTERSVILLE WATERFRONT

**6:45am Meeting Place:** Boat ramp parking area on the north-east end of the Hwy 69 bridge

Explore the waterfront along Sunset Drive and other locations around the lake looking for ducks, grebes, loons and gulls with a local guide. An early start will be made to look for uncommon loons and grebes from the Hwy 69 bridge before traffic pushes birds further back into the lake. We'll meet at 6.45am at the boat ramp parking area on the north-east (Guntersville) end of the Hwy 69 bridge and make stops as we cross the bridge. For this outing a scope is very useful. Due to restricted room on the bridge and elsewhere along the route car-pooling is recommended. The outing finishes at lunchtime.

*Lake Guntersville State Park will be the location for the 2023 AOS winter meeting. (Wikimedia Commons)*



**FIELD TRIP 2****GOLDSMITH-SCHIFFMAN WILDLIFE SANCTUARY AND THE J. D. AND ANNIE S. HAYES NATURE PRESERVE****7:00am Meeting Place:** Guntersville State Park Lodge

Part of the North Alabama Birding Trail, both locations are located on US 431 North about 35 minutes from Guntersville. The Goldsmith-Schiffman Wildlife Sanctuary, a newly established area, is located along the Flint River and is home to a variety of habitats with over three miles of trails winding through bottomlands, swamps, and sloughs that harbor an abundance of bird species. Hayes Preserve, located directly across US 431 North from Goldsmith-Schiffman, consists of 10 miles of trails and greenways that follow along the Flint River through low riparian habitat, old fields, and a golf course. We'll start at Goldsmith-Schiffman then head across to Hayes as time and bird activity dictates. We'll depart at 7:00am from Guntersville State Park Lodge with a pickup at 7:20am at the carpark at the south base of the US 431 bridge. There is a meat and three, Grandmother's House, close by for lunch.

**12:00pm–4:00 pm** Lunch and bird on your own.**5:15pm** Registration in the Goldenrod Room**5:30pm BANQUET AND KEYNOTE SPEAKER**  
Goldenrod Room**5:30pm** Social Hour**6:30pm** Banquet Buffet**7:15pm** Announcements/Discussion of Weekend Field Trips**7:30pm KEYNOTE SPEAKER: TIFFANY KERSTEN****9:00pm** Adjourn**SUNDAY, JANUARY 29****FIELD TRIP****HIGH FALLS AND MORGAN'S COVE****7:00am Meeting Place:** Guntersville State Park Lodge

This is a new destination for our Guntersville meetings, one that Linda Reynolds says is a "must see." After viewing the falls and searching for winter visitors, a drive through Morgan's Cove offers opportunities to observe open-land

birds, hawks and eagles. Meet at 7am in the parking lot at Guntersville State Park Lodge. Return can be in time to check out of the lodge at 11am and compilation at noon.

**12:00pm** Compilation in Lodge Lobby. Return can be in time to check out of the lodge at 11am and compilation at noon.**ROOMS AT GUNTERSVILLE STATE PARK LODGE****AOS GROUP CODE 9332**

Rooms, arriving Friday, January 27, 2023, for 2 nights:

Quantity	Type of Room	Rate Per Night
10	Double Queen Bed Upper Floor, Bluff Side	\$129.00
10	Double Queen Bed Lower Floor, Bluff Side	\$129.00
10	Single Queen Bed Park Side	\$119.00

Please note that room rates are subject to lodging tax, city and state surcharges, as well as a 4% resort fee. Rates reflect occupancy by up to two people. There is a \$10.00 per person charge for each additional person. Check-in begins at 4:00 pm and check out time is before 11:00 am.

Individuals lodging at the Lake Guntersville State Park Lodge should call 256-505-6621 to make reservations. To ensure that you receive the special rate extended to our group, please mention you are with the Alabama Ornithological Society—Group Code 9332. You can also make reservations online at <https://www.alapark.com/lake-guntersville-state-park-reservations>. Please note that a deposit is required for each reservation made. Deposits are the sum of one night's lodging plus taxes and are due at the time the reservation is made.

*Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions*

Spring 2023 February 10, 2023

Summer 2023 May 10, 2023

AOS WINTER MEETING, LAKE GUNTERSVILLE STATE PARK, JANUARY 26-28, 2023

## Meet the Speaker: Tiffany Kersten

**O**UR AOS WINTER MEETING SPEAKER WILL BE Tiffany Kersten. Tiffany is a Wisconsin native, turned Texan by way of New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Hawaii. She holds a B.S. in Wildlife Ecology from Northland College, and has spent over a decade as an environmental educator, teaching about raptor identification and migration with the Cape May Bird Observatory, monitoring shorebirds on Cape Cod, banding Honeycreepers in Hawaii, and finally landing in South Texas where she worked at Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, then Quinta Mazatlan World Birding Center, and managed the McAllen Nature Center, before founding her own company, Nature Ninja Birding Tours.

Tiffany didn't set out to do a big year, but after a series of unanticipated and serendipitous events, she suddenly found herself amidst one. As a sexual assault survivor, she spent 2021 traveling to all corners of the lower 48 states, tallying birds and gifting personal safety alarms to women she met along the way. Her goal was to see 700 species,

and to raise awareness of women's safety in the outdoors. She ended up surpassing her goal and setting a new lower 48 Big Year record of 726. In her presentation, Tiffany will speak about the fear, empowerment, struggles, and healing that all played vital roles in the personal growth she experienced on this wild adventure.

*Tiffany Kersten (left) will be the speaker for the AOS winter meeting at Lake Gunterville State Park. Tiffany is the founder of Nature Ninja Birding Tours and completed a Big Year of 726 species in 2021. (Tiffany Kersten)*



AOS WINTER MEETING, LAKE GUNTERSVILLE STATE PARK, JANUARY 26–28, 2023

# Winter Birding Sites at Guntersville

By GREG JACKSON

**F**OR THOSE NEW TO THE GUNTERSVILLE AREA, attending the organized field trips of the upcoming AOS winter meeting (January 27–29, 2023) is a great way to learn the best birding spots. However, many may also wish to investigate on their own before, during, or after the meeting, and a few of the top sites are outlined for independent discovery. These focus on the town of Guntersville itself, though include Guntersville Dam to the west. The full itinerary can be birded in 3–4 hours depending on numbers of birds at the sites, though you could linger and spend the whole day working this area.

**Guntersville Harbor:** At the north end of town just before US 431 crosses the Tennessee River, you'll see Guntersville Harbor on the east side. This area has recently been renovated with restaurants and shops, decreasing the birding potential, but still is an important and easy site to check. Over the years many rarities have been discovered here, and it is worth making multiple checks as the birds change frequently.

A parking lot is located on the west side of the harbor near the base of the bridge, providing good views of the harbor, adjacent waters, and the floating piers which often attract gulls and terns (when the cormorants don't overwhelm them). Lighting is best from the parking lot in afternoon but even in the morning is acceptable.

**Sunset Drive Trail and Ogletree Park/Civitans Pier:** At the southern base of the large US 431 bridge near the harbor, you can drive west and then south on Sunset Drive Trail. At the US 431 intersection, the building on the south side of Sunset Drive Trail is the Lake Guntersville Chamber of Commerce. You can park in the small lot and scan the water just west of the bridge, either from the lot or by crossing the street to the little park on the shore. The eastern portion of Sunset Drive Trail, which parallels a paved walking path, has limited access but can be birded with care; note that if conditions are wet the grassy roadsides can be slippery. Best spot for brief parking is at the intersection with Albert Smith Drive near the small pond. Continuing

southwest, soon you will see the large parking areas on the left near the Lurleen B. Wallace Pavilion; these allow excellent vantage of a huge expanse of water often good for diving birds. From here, make a right turn at the intersection with Ringold Street to continue on Sunset Drive Trail. In the next stretch there are many pull-offs to allow scanning, and this section is the location of a well-known Bald Eagle nest (look for the crowd of photographers usually present).

**Sunset Drive:** The continuation of Sunset Drive Trail once you cross AL 69 is called Sunset Drive, which gives excellent access to the north portion of Brown's Creek. Just past AL 69 on the right is the Parks & Recreation Center, where you can walk a short distance to the shoreline. Often a flock of ducks and coots is present, with an occasional rarity. Just to the south of the recreation center is the parking area for the public restrooms close to the shoreline. Continuing south on Sunset Drive, the next stop should be the large parking area for the public beach. Walking to the beach gives a broad view of the surrounding waters, often very good for ducks, grebes, and loons. Because of limited parking access, it is best to continue about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from the beach to the small lot near the end loop of the walking trail (just north of the small water treatment plant). This can be an excellent location for flocks of ducks and other waterbirds, and has yielded rarities on several occasions. Just beyond this site Sunset Drive ends at Willow Beach Road. Turn right and drive about a half mile to a right turn on Lakeshore Road. At the end of this short road is a small boat launch allowing additional scanning opportunities.

**AL 69 Causeway:** The AL 69 Causeway stretching across the north end of Brown's Creek is well known as a great place for loons, grebes, gulls, and others, and is a frequent site for rare species. It is probably best early in the morning, but can be good all day. The area near the bridge, a favored spot for fishermen, is often excellent for loons, which can be quite close and are found on both sides of the road. The best method for coverage is to park at a few spots along the causeway

and thoroughly scan the water to the north and south, particularly looking for flocks. At the west end of the causeway there are two sites of interest. On the north side a marina has covered slips close to the road which may have roosting gulls, and ducks are often common along the shore looking north. On the south side is a large boat launch which can give good views of the water in afternoon light; the shoreline south of the boat launch, which can be seen from the causeway, often has roosting Black-crowned Night-Herons.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** This is a four-lane road often with heavy traffic including trucks moving at highway speeds, and birding from this causeway requires marked caution. You are allowed to park on the shoulder to fish or bird, but the shoulder is narrow and a guardrail is closely adjacent; use care in pulling off and, particularly, in returning to the roadway. Look before opening doors and exiting/entering your vehicle, and if you cross the road on foot to examine the opposite side be extremely cautious. A suggestion is to scan from the shoulder in front of your vehicle instead of behind for added safety; if you have a window mount for a scope it can be handy to use it from the passenger side of your vehicle. Expect gusts of wind from passing trucks, and this seems the coldest spot in Guntersville, so dress accordingly.

**Guntersville Dam South:** The south side of Guntersville Dam can be reached in about 15 minutes from the AL 69 Causeway. Continue west on AL 69 and turn right in 3.4 miles on Union Grove Road, then turn right again in 2.3 miles on Snow Point Road (a small but pretty waterfall can be seen behind the building near this intersection). Drive through farmlands to the steep wooded descent into the river canyon. At the bottom, swampy areas can be interesting for Wood Duck and woodland birds. Continue to the south side of the dam, checking wetlands along the way, and park near the rest rooms. You can walk to the shore from here and scan the water below the dam, usually with good light in winter. It can be variably good for gulls here. It is an excellent area for Bald Eagles, both near the dam and looking downstream along the river banks. Drive west along the river to the boat launch for additional beautiful views. This area can be good for woodland birds, and a trail leads farther west along the shore.

**Spring Creek:** The northern end of Spring Creek can be viewed from AL 227 (Lusk Street), though parking is very limited. You can pull briefly into a small space on the right at the western end of the causeway just beyond the pump

house; this is at the gated north end of the Spring Creek walking trail, which runs about 1.5 miles along the western shore. View the water near the bridge and take a quick look at the marshy pond to the southwest, all from the gate itself (best not to park here to walk on the trail). Directly across the street on the north side you will see a large gravel parking area along the west shore, often used by trucks. This is private property, but you can park briefly just across the railroad track and view the water to the north and east. (Please do NOT go farther into the property.) In some years this area is excellent for ducks, and usually a few birds are present along the rocky western shore and out in the open water; also look across the water to the bank near the feed plant.

The area to the south where US 431 crosses Spring Creek is usually good. Just west of the highway on the north side, you can walk to a small pier from the Publix parking lot to view the water, and farther west via Thomas Avenue is a boat launch also offering birding without the need for highway precautions.

On the south side of Spring Creek, take the first left after crossing the bridge on Wyeth Drive and immediately turn left again into the small Guntersville Municipal Park. The pier often has a small flock of gulls and is an easy spot to check. View the water to the north, and also look back to the west close to the road, where gulls may congregate if water is low. The inlet to the east of the park (Lindsey Hollow) may have a few birds, and scoping across the water to the lodge and restaurant piers often reveals flocks of resting gulls. Especially if you note something of interest on these piers, it is possible to drive to the lodge/restaurant area and discreetly get closer views; this is done by continuing east on Wyeth Drive and turning north on Val Monte Drive at the signs for Top O' The River restaurant. Sometimes gulls roost on the roof of the adjacent marina, too. On the west side of the highway south of the creek, Spring Creek Marina occasionally has flocking gulls, which can be viewed either from the causeway or by driving to the parking lot of Wintzell's Oyster House.

There are many other sites to explore in the region of Guntersville, but these are some of the top areas close to the town. Additional options include visiting the north side of the dam, driving to the end of Buck Island Road, the shoreline of Town Creek, early morning viewing at the eagle roost (ask at the state park), the boat launch at the end of Meltonsville Road, multiple shoreline points and boat landings along north bank of the river from AL 79, etc. Possibilities are endless!

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**Pat Reed, 88838 Tallassee Highway, Tallassee, AL 36078**

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*Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by January 17, 2023*

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ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
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TALLASSEE, ALABAMA 36078

AOS is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Federal EIN: 63-1229959

## THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 42, NO. 4 • WINTER 2022

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*The Yellowhammer*, the newsletter of the Alabama Ornithological Society, is published four times a year. Editorial Office: 88838 Tallassee Highway, Tallassee, AL 36078. Send articles to be considered for publication to: BobReed1987@gmail.com. Subscriptions to *The Yellowhammer* and *Alabama Birdlife* are included in the AOS annual membership dues. Single copies \$2.00. Complimentary copies available for review and promotional purposes.

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