

# THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 41, NO. 1 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SPRING 2021

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

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6

DAN C. HOLLIMAN GRANT  
PROGRAM REPORTS

by Emma Rhodes & Nicholas M. Justyn

8

AOS 2020 VIRTUAL WINTER MEETING

WINTER MEETING REPORT

by Larry Gardella, Bob Reed, Greg Harber

## IN THIS ISSUE

10

AOS 2020 VIRTUAL WINTER MEETING  
BIRDING NEAR HOME COMPILATION

Migratory Shorebirds Land Along the Yellow  
Sea in China. (Photo © Scott Weidensaul )

12

AOS 2021 VIRTUAL SPRING MEETING

AOS SPRING MEETING  
SCHEDULE

12

AOS 2021 VIRTUAL SPRING MEETING

MEET THE SPEAKER:  
SCOTT WEIDENSAUL

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# 67 in 67



N THE PAST FEW YEARS, I'VE found county listing—spending time in different counties in Alabama to record as

many species of birds as possible—to be among the birding activities that I enjoy most. About 10 years ago, I was finding it hard to get excited about birding. Basically, I was stuck in the rut of visiting the same birding spots—the places where rare birds were likely to turn up—and most of the time I'd end up looking at the same birds sitting literally in the same spots they occupied the week before. The unusual bird that turned up one or twice per year wasn't enough to hold my interest. I started doing more fishing than birding. Then eBird updated its features making it much easier to keep track of county birds, and I found the lure to fill in my county lists irresistible.

Alabama is a great state for county listing. It isn't so large as California or Texas or even Florida, where moving from one corner of the state to the other requires a two-hour airline flight. I live toward the southeast corner of Alabama in Auburn, and I can get to even the most far-flung Alabama counties with four hours of driving. Two thirds of Alabama's counties lie within a two-hour drive for me. A state much smaller would be too easy to cover and would lack the challenge presented by Alabama. Within the borders of Alabama are 67 more-or-less equally sized counties. Obviously, there are some larger and smaller counties, but the biggest county is not twice as big as the smallest county.

As I started to spend time in counties around the state and to fill in my eBird county maps, my first county listing goal was pretty straightforward: I wanted to record an eBird list in every county in the state. I accomplished that goal in October 2017 when I submitted an eBird list for Franklin County. (You can read an account of my journey to this first state listing goal here: <https://www.ornithologistsblog.com/>



single-post/2017/11/15/county-listing).

A common second goal for county listers in other states is 50 birds in every county. Fifty birds in each county in a state is a legitimate milestone because recording 50 bird species establishes that you actually got out and birded a county instead of just briefly passing through. I thought about making 50 birds in each Alabama county my next goal, but to tailor my goal more specifically to Alabama, I decided that my goal would be to record at least 67 species of birds in all 67 counties: I call this quest "67 in 67." Simply due to geography (they are farthest from my home), I found the counties in west Alabama to be most challenging. I spent 2019 and 2020 picking away at these inconvenient western counties: Franklin, Marion, Lamar,

Pickens, Sumter, and Choctaw. Finally, by December 2020 the only county for which I did not have 67 species recorded was not a west Alabama county but Jackson County in extreme northeast Alabama. Jackson County is on the outskirts of both Huntsville and Chattanooga, so it is hardly the most remote county in the state. Nevertheless, it is a full 4-hour drive from my driveway, and it was the last holdout in my quest to record 67 species in all 67 Alabama counties.

One of the reasons that I had held back Jackson County to be the 67th county in which I recorded 67 birds was that I knew I could go over 67 in one morning of birding. Jackson is a birdy county. Not only does it have some of the best southern Appalachian habitat in the state for breeding songbirds, but it also has an extensive backwater area of Guntersville Reservoir that is loaded with ducks and other waterbirds in the winter.

I drove into Jackson County on a frigid December morning headed for Stevenson Municipal Park which encompasses a peninsula surrounded by a shallow bay off the Tennessee River. Stevenson Park is one of the best city parks in the state for birding. I put it on par with Ruffner Mountain in Bir-



mingham and the Sunset Drive walking trail in Guntersville. On this cold morning, Stevenson Park was filled with ducks. About 2,000 Gadwall covered the bay that surrounded Stevenson Park with over 200 Canvasback and 300 Ring-necked Ducks mixed in. I picked out 14 species of ducks and geese in total. My 67th bird species for Jackson County—and the bird that ended my 67 in 67 quest—was Sandhill Crane flying over the duck flocks. I saw more than a dozen cranes flying by on the morning. There were also interesting land birds including a flock of Rusty Blackbirds.

Now that I've recorded my 67 in 67, my next goal is 100 species tallied in all 67 counties. That will take me a couple of years and then I'm faced with a monumental challenge: 10,000 total ticks. "Total ticks" is the sum of all of the county species totals for a state. 10,000 total ticks will mean that I will average nearly 150 species for all Alabama counties. A milestone that I let slip by a few years ago without paying attention is 6,700 total ticks—that is an average of 100 species observed in each Alabama county. I'm currently at 8,580 total ticks for the state. That means I need a daunting 1,420 additional ticks. Did I mention that ticks get harder and harder the more thoroughly each county is birded? Gone are the days when Tufted Titmouse or Mourning Dove might be a new tick in a county. I need 1,420 quality birds going forward.

What is the point of county listing beyond filling some hunter's instinct to go bag new game? Of all the birding activities in which I engage, county listing is undoubtedly the

most useful to professional ornithologists and conservation biologists. County listing draws a birder into seldom-birded corners of the state in all seasons of the year. If you check the distribution of eBird lists in Alabama, you will find that a huge proportion of all lists are clustered in just a few spots in a few counties—the places where nearly all of the state's birders live and the hottest of the state hotspots. To provide detailed information on distributions and seasonal movements of birds, the eBird database needs observations from the vast, largely unbirded regions of the state, and county listing gets birders into those gaps on the maps. When I'm county listing, I make a point of breaking my birding day into as many unique checklists as possible rather than doing multi-hour checklists covering tens of miles across the county. The latter sort of checklist is close to useless to scientists because it provides so little data on exactly where individual birds were seen. On the other hand, a series of ten-minute stationary checklists made when one stops to check out different spots is extremely useful data for eBird, especially when such checklists are recorded in a little-birded part of the state.

If anyone is interested in how I plan and undertake a day of county listing, I have created some YouTube clips in which I explain how I plan my trips: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQsFgmvr\\_PQ&t=57s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQsFgmvr_PQ&t=57s) and how I spend a day county listing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8R7MyZDteQ&t=1309s>.

## *In Memoriam*

### *Peggy Baker*

**P**EGGY BAKER DIED FEBRUARY 3, 2021. SHE WAS A MASTER teacher, a birder, and a woman of action. She rallied the Francis M. Weston Audubon Society to save the Roy Hyatt Environmental Center in Escambia County, Florida, when the school board was about to sell the property. Because of Peggy, Audubon kept the center "alive" for around ten years (our Audubon chapter hired and paid teachers) until the school board realized what a gem they really had and began to support it with upgrades to the facilities and hir-

ing of more staff. Next, Peggy recognized that Blackwater River State Forest had no inventory of their birds, and she designed a four-year project, marshalled local birders, and compiled a comprehensive report on the status of the birds of the forest. She volunteered for many F. M. Weston Audubon Society projects, especially to teach bird lessons in schools, lead bird walks, talk to garden club and civic groups. She loved the birds and promoted their welfare. Who dared say "no" to Peggy? She was a joy to bird with and to work with, and I am proud to have enjoyed her friendship; we will all miss her light.

—Lucy Duncan

**M**Y MOTHER, PEGGY BAKER, TAUGHT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL at many schools across the Panhandle. She loved teaching, and I'm so happy that she spent her working life doing something she loved. There is only one class per grade at Pensacola Beach Elementary School so, if I'm not mistaken, she taught literally every kid on the island for that time. On every visit to see her on Pensacola Beach, everywhere we went we heard "Hey, Ms. Baker!!! Hey, Ms. Baker!!!" from children and adults. I used to kid her that she couldn't pay for a drink anywhere on the island. It would probably embarrass her to say this, but she really enjoyed those free Bushwhackers. I hope that some of her students see this post.

She loved you all and was so proud of you. She loved her Audubon and Alabama Ornithological Society friends and all the adventures she went on with y'all. Peru and Australia and Trinidad and all over. Thank you for that.

—Jay Baker

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### *Robert "Bob" Tate*

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**I**T IS WITH GREAT SADNESS THAT WE NOTE THE PASSING OF Robert G. "Bob" Tate on January 9, 2021. Bob was a well-loved and long-time member of the Alabama Ornithological Society and Alabama Audubon, having served in multiple capacities in that organization over the years. In addition to serving a term as president of the chapter, he also served several terms as treasurer and was active on the conservation committee.

Bob also served terms as the president of the Blanche Dean chapter of the Alabama Wildflower Society and the Cahaba River Society. Bob was also instrumental in the founding of the Freshwater Land Trust and, as an early and ardent supporter, played a role in the creation of Alabama's Forever Wild land trust program. He was diligent about ensuring that the conservation community maintained a presence on their board of directors. Bob's legal expertise and guidance were invaluable to Dr. John Porter when Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries commenced its habitat conservation endeavors, and for that we are deeply grateful.

As I write this, it is hard for me to imagine any aspect of the conservation community in Alabama that was not influenced in some way by the work that Bob, along with his wife,

Ann, so diligently and tirelessly pursued through the years I have known them. Bob and Ann so beautifully exemplify a deeply held conservation ethic: sharing with others the joy to be found in birds and nature, a passion to protect it and a beautiful example to follow. I cannot possibly thank them enough for their tireless and dedicated efforts on behalf of conservation in Alabama. My condolences to Ann and their family. Rest in peace, Bob.

—Greg Harber

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### *Remembering Dick Bruer*

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**D**ICK BRUER DIED DECEMBER 15, 2020, AT THE AGE OF 77. I had the pleasure of knowing Dick Bruer for over 25 years. We first met when I was on a North Alabama Birdwatcher's Society (NABS) field trip to the Swan Creek Wildlife Management Area. He and his wife Sally were at the parking area as we walked out. After talking for a while, we invited Dick to join us on future field trips. At the time, Dick lived one street over from me so we decided to ride together for the next field trip, and that was the beginning of a long friendship. Over the next many years we participated in numerous NABS trips and bird counts. Dick was on the NABS field trip scheduling committee and was a certified NABS trip leader. What "NABS certified" meant was that you could find the place without getting lost too many times, and that, after the trip, most people made it back to the parking lot. Dick and I had a standing trip on New Year's Day to get the new year list started. Dick claimed to never keep a list so I suppose it was all about me. When there wasn't a trip of some kind scheduled, we often went prospecting, as he called it, wandering all over North Alabama looking for birds. Now if you ever rode with Dick on a trip, you knew that he didn't like to stop and check out those little brown birds—a trait that he inaccurately labeled me with also. Probably why to this day I have never seen a Lincoln's Sparrow.

After Dick and Linda Reynolds introduced me to the thing known as AOS, I convinced Dick to join as well. He attended many meetings and made a lot of new friends. I remain convinced that he enjoyed the socializing during the weekend as much as he did the birdwatching. Even as his health continued to deteriorate, he always seemed to find the strength to

make the trip to Dauphin Island. Of course his birdwatching experience had to change but he made the most of it.

My experience has been that when birders get together the focus is on the birds and not so much on who you are and what you do when you are not birding. However, over time and when the birding is slow people do get to know each other. Perhaps there are a few things about Dick that some of you didn't know. For instance, he served 20 years in the Air Force retiring as a major. He started his career as a critical member of a B-52 crew and served in the Vietnam War. Dick was the electronic warfare officer, responsible for identifying and countering hostile air defense systems, surface to air missiles, anti-aircraft artillery, and enemy fighter planes. This position was also known as the "Crow"—how fitting is that? He also served several years as a headquarters squadron commander in Japan. After retiring from the Air Force, he worked many years for Boeing. Dick's early interest in birds was as a duck hunter. However, he saw the light and decided that he would rather watch and photograph them than shoot

at them. His experience as a duck hunter was valuable in his wood carving hobby. He was an accomplished carver of ducks and participated in many juried shows around the Southeast. He was also a serious genealogist who spent many hours researching and documenting family trees. When the DNA testing tool became available, Dick embraced it and was able to greatly expand his family tree.

Dick was a good friend and birding buddy. He will be missed. Bird on, Dick Bruer.

—Harold Dean

*Sometimes I think that the point of birdwatching is not the actual seeing of the birds, but the cultivation of patience. Of course, each time we set out, there's a certain amount of expectation we'll see something, maybe even a species we've never seen before, and that it will fill us with light. But even if we don't see anything remarkable—and sometimes that happens—we come home filled with light anyway.*

—Lynn Thomson, Birding with Yeats: A Memoir

## Dan C. Holliman Grant Program Reports



THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, THROUGH the Dan C. Holliman Grant program, offers scholarships to graduate students to study various avian topics related to Alabama and nearby birds. Below are two reports from recent recipients, Emma Rhodes and Nicholas M. Justyn.

### *Window Strike Mortality Report*

Emma Rhodes, Auburn University

Authors: Emma Rhodes, Joel Borden, John McCreddie

**B**UILDING COLLISIONS, especially window collisions, pose a major anthropogenic threat to birds. Mortality caused by building collisions is estimated to be between 100 million and 1 billion annually, and it is the second largest source in the U.S. for human-caused bird mortality. While several studies have focused on the frequency of building and window collisions and the role played

by temporal differences in abundance during migration, minimal studies have explored the possible relationship between age and mortality in window strike collisions. One study suggested that there is no correlation with window strike and age. However, a recent study suggested otherwise. If juvenile birds exhibit a pattern of higher mortality from window strikes, it might possibly be attributed to less experienced individuals. However, various other factors need to be considered including morphological, physiological, and behavioral characteristics as well as species-specific ratios of adult to juvenile birds and how these ratios might change temporally and seasonally. The primary goal of this study was to investigate if there is a direct age-mortality correlation with window strike mortality and to investigate the accuracy of current aging methodology used on avian specimens.

In this study, we critically examined three standard methods for aging passerine (and near-passerine) specimens: skull pneumatization, the bursa of Fabricius, and gonad development.

Data were obtained from four southeastern museums. We were able to consolidate a total of 1,434 window strike mortality records collected from various entities in the southeastern U.S. The dataset includes a total of 166 species, most of which are passerines and near-passerines.

We currently are in the final stages of manuscript preparation and hope to have our findings published soon. We would like to thank the Alabama Ornithological Society for their support for this research and look forward to sharing our published results with the society.

### *Preliminary Report: Investigating the Successful Invasion of Scaly-breasted Munia Populations in Southern Alabama*

Nicholas M. Justyn, Auburn University

THE SCALY-BREADED MUNIA (*Lonchura punctulata*) is a common cage bird that is native to Asia. Populations of the Scaly-breasted Munia are rapidly spreading through areas of the United States including Alabama. The *Lonchura* finches spreading in Alabama appear to be phenotypically pure Scaly-breasted Munias, but in captivity different species of *Lonchura* finches are frequently crossed, so many cage birds carry traits of multiple finch species. Moreover, other species of *Lonchura* finches have been observed in Alabama and Florida, which creates an opportunity for hybridization, as Scaly-breasted Munias have been documented to hybridize with several different species (R. Restall, *Munias and Mannikins*, 2010, Bloomsbury Publishing). The goal of my study is to carefully examine the phenotypes of wild Scaly-breasted Munias to determine if there is evidence of introgression of traits from other *Lonchura* finches.

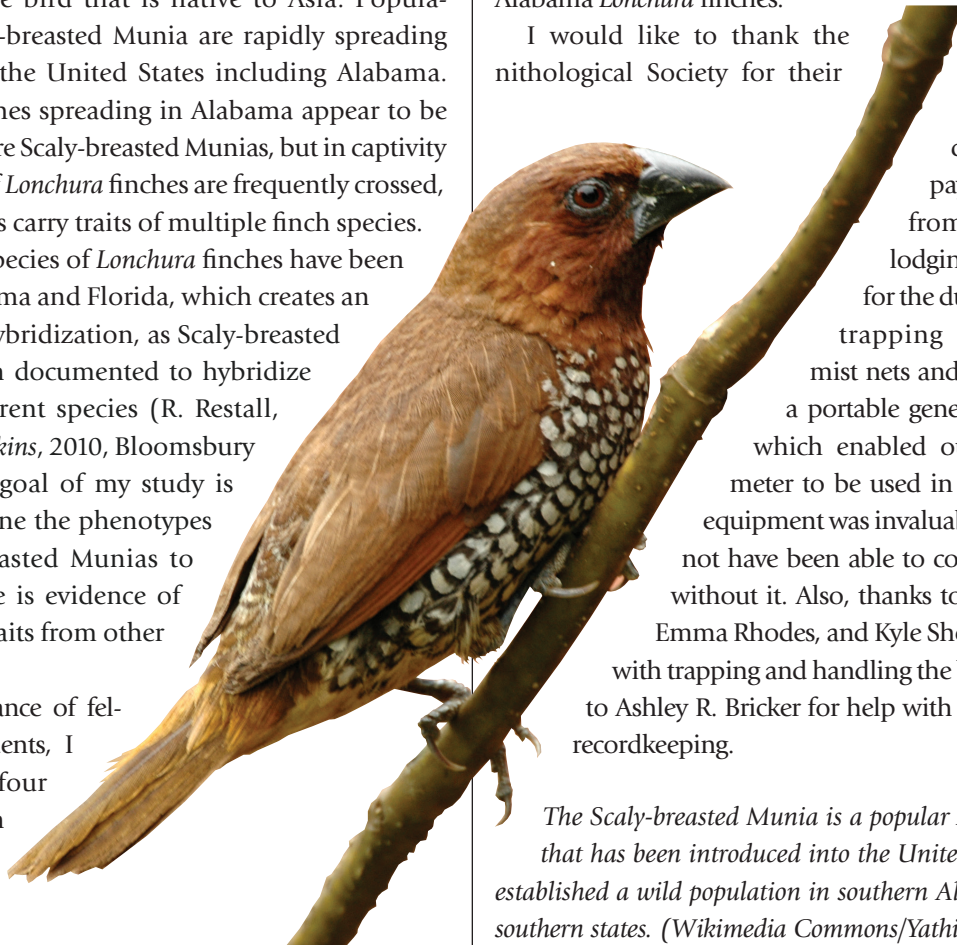
With the assistance of fellow graduate students, I captured twenty-four Munias from March 6 to 8, 2020, in Baldwin County, Alabama, using

traps and mist nets. Each bird was banded to make sure that we did not accidentally resample the same bird. After measurements were taken, we took pictures of the ventral and dorsal side of the bird to capture variations in chest and rump plumage. Lastly, we used reflectance spectroscopy to quantify the head and rump color of each Scaly-breasted Munia before they were released. Reflectance spectroscopy shines a light at the bird's feathers, and then a receptor captures and records the amount of reflected light at each wavelength in the visible and UV spectrum.

The size, color pattern, and reflectance spectrum of all birds that we examined fell within the expected range for Scaly-breasted Munias. We detected no traits that are characteristic of other *Lonchura* finch species. In future analyses, I will borrow museum specimens of *Lonchura* finches collected from the wild in Asia and compare their size, plumage pattern, and reflectance spectra with those of birds from Baldwin County to reach a final conclusion regarding the Alabama *Lonchura* finches.

I would like to thank the Ornithological Society for their

Alabama Or-  
generous fund-  
ing. Funding re-  
ceived helped to  
pay for gas to and  
from the gulf coast,  
lodging at a local hotel  
for the duration of the trip,  
trapping equipment like  
mist nets and feeder traps, and  
a portable generator and laptop,  
which enabled our spectropho-  
tometer to be used in the field. All this  
equipment was invaluable, and we would  
not have been able to complete this study  
without it. Also, thanks to Geoffrey E. Hill,  
Emma Rhodes, and Kyle Shepard for assisting  
with trapping and handling the birds. Thanks also  
to Ashley R. Bricker for help with photography and  
recordkeeping.



*The Scaly-breasted Munia is a popular Asian cagebird that has been introduced into the United States and has established a wild population in southern Alabama and other southern states. (Wikimedia Commons/Yathin S. Krishnappa)*



AOS WINTER VIRTUAL MEETING, JANUARY 22-24, 2021

# AOS Winter 2021 Meeting Report

By LARRY GARDELLA, BOB REED, & GREG HARBER



FOR THE WINTER MEETING, GEOFF HILL URGED AOS members to bird in their home areas and email their eBird lists to him for a statewide compilation. So, I (Larry Gardella) did a little more birding than usual and saw some good birds.

First stop January 16 was Blakeley Mud Lakes. There hadn't been many ducks or shorebirds this winter, and that remained the case. A variety of heard rails and a single American Avocet were nice, but the prize turned up on the lowest north-south path. Shortly after I got down there, a Short-eared Owl flushed from the side of the path and turned to give me a great look at its striking face before it disappeared into the high grass. Although one showed up in Navarre Beach for an AOS winter meeting, this was the first I have seen in Lower Alabama. Back at home the best birds were two hummers (a Ruby-throated and a Black-chinned that Fred Bassett had banded) and two warblers (Orange-crowned and Yellow-throated) that are regular. The next day after seeing some shorebirds at Bayfront Park/Village Point Preserve, I went to check out Trione Park in Daphne, where I had earlier photographed a meadowlark that had many Western Meadowlark attributes but also some of an Eastern. This time I heard and photographed a Western Meadowlark, which eBird eventually confirmed. Taking the long way home, I checked out the Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks on Rigsby and a bunch of American Pipits on the wires.

I started the 18th at d'Olive Bay listening for and to rails with some birders from Tennessee, one of whom heard her lifer King. 45 species at Meaher, but nothing unusual. The day's best bird was a Summer Tanager at a friend's home. On January 19, low water left sandbars exposed with shorebirds and gulls, including a Lesser Black-backed found a few days earlier by another group of Tennessee birders. Before dawn on the 20th I played Eastern Screech-Owl near Blakeley Historic Park and was able to record one responding. I headed over to the Belforest part of Daphne and was shocked to hear two American Woodcocks peent. From there I drove down

to Higbee Road. At the edge of the hot spot pond, a Solitary Sandpiper bobbed. After photographing it, I turned the corner and walked out into a field Mr. Higbee has authorized me to walk. There wasn't much doing, but as I began the loop back to my car, I spotted a Lincoln's Sparrow in an area with weeds and piles of wood from Sally. Not much response to playing its call, so no photo. A group of us tried to relocate the Short-eared Owl at Blakeley Mud Lakes in the late afternoon and evening. We found the Barn Owl in the shed but no other owl.

The last morning, I took a long walk at Blakeley Historic Park highlighted by a Brown Creeper and a Red-breasted Nuthatch on the same stretch of trail.

WE (PAT AND BOB REED) HEADED TO LANETT, ALABAMA, TO check out the avian population on West Point Lake. Naturally we opted for one of the coldest days of the year so far, but it warmed nicely as the day grew older.

Activity below the dam was sparse. Double-crested Cormorants and Ring-billed Gulls predominated. A few passerines, including Pine Siskins, Pine Warblers, American Goldfinches, White-breasted Nuthatches, Butter-butts and several Bald Eagles kept us twisting around to refocus our binos. Above the dam was not too busy, either. The woodland wrens, thrashers, thrushes, and kinglets had provided entertainment on the way, but other than a few Horned Grebe, and gulls, there wasn't much, but when we ventured north along the shore, we were rewarded with an Eared Grebe and a handful of Buffleheads.

A couple of days later we forayed down to Eufaula to visit the refuge and the state park. But first we had to detour just north to try for the Say's Phoebe that John Cole had found on Corcoran Road during the Eufaula Christmas Bird Count. Eric Soehren was just leaving, but not before he got us on the bird. Eric sent us a little way up Corcoran to the resident Brewer's Blackbirds in the company of cowbirds.

The refuge itself yielded the usual passerine and woodland suspects. The number of ducks was down terribly. The



speculation was that the lack of ice in the northern parts of North America had allowed the ducks the luxury of staying put. As we neared the estimated time of departure for home, we spotted two Common Ground-Doves, which turned out to be the last birds of the day.

I (GREG HARBER) KNEW MY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STATEWIDE AOS winter meeting bird list would likely be minimal, since I reside in Birmingham and don't have ready access to good spots for winter waterfowl. Thus, on Saturday morning I consoled myself with a visit to Hero Doughnuts followed by a stroll through Railroad Park, located across the street. I was rewarded with a view of an Eastern Phoebe catching and consuming three fathead minnows, of all things. I followed this with a short drive to downtown to check on the Peregrine Falcons that have become a regular sight there. Thankfully, I was able to record them for the meeting count tally.

Later that evening, I, along with the others, joined in the Zoom gathering to hear President Hill tally our results for this statewide effort. As I listened, I couldn't help but appreciate the diversity of bird life Alabama has to offer in winter. As much as this pandemic has altered our way of conducting our affairs, out of necessity it has opened up a whole range of outreach possibilities.

We closed the night with a presentation from Dr. Chris Elphick, who joined us live via Zoom from Connecticut. (See what I mean by new possibilities?) His presentation focused on the potential impacts of sea level rise on birds that nest in coastal marshes, especially the saltmarsh sparrows that are the focus of his studies. His photographs of the sparrows and the marshes they inhabit illustrate a tight relationship between the two—a relationship to which the sparrows have adapted (the sight of the nestlings sitting in a nest that has been temporarily flooded on a rising tide remains with me to this day). The question remains, though, how will the birds fare when the temporary flood caused by a high tide becomes a regular occurrence due to rising seas?

Dr. Elphick's research and his commentary on it is applicable to us here in Alabama, where our coastal saltmarshes are also in decline as sea levels rise. Saving them isn't out of the realm of possibility, because the capacity to take corrective action exists. The challenge is to find the resolve to see that the work gets done.

As noted elsewhere in *The Yellowhammer*, many of us enjoy the visits as much as the birds, and we look forward to the day when we can again gather together.

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## 2021 Membership Dues

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A FRIENDLY REMINDER ABOUT DUES. PLEASE CHECK YOUR membership date on your *Yellowhammer* to make sure that you are still current, or, particularly if you receive an electronic *Yellowhammer*, you can get in touch with me at [lfgardella@gmail.com](mailto:lfgardella@gmail.com). AOS dues are by calendar year, and renewals were due in January. If you haven't paid your AOS dues for 2021, please do so now. We don't want to lose you. You can pay online at [www.aosbirds.org](http://www.aosbirds.org), or you can send a check to AOS treasurer, Joan Dixon, 1059 Palmetto Street, Mobile, AL 36604.

—Larry Gardella, Membership Chairman

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## New Members

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Jacbo Taylor and Ellen Coors  
 Susan Wood  
 Cliff and Cindy Martin  
 Drake Stallworth  
 Marilyn Steelman  
 Walter Ernest  
 Lauren Taylor  
 Jim and Nancy Gaines  
 Reese Partridge

NEW LIFE MEMBER  
 Cynthia Palmer

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## Honoraria and Acknowledgements

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David and Berta Pylant donated to AOS in memory of  
 Dick Reynolds

David and Berta Pylant donated to AOS in memory of  
 Dick Bruer

A O S W I N T E R V I R T U A L M E E T I N G , J A N U A R Y 2 2 - 2 4 , 2 0 2 1

# Birding Near Home Compilation



FOR OUR VIRTUAL FALL MEETING, PARTICIPANTS submitted checklists for the period of January 16 to 22 from a nearby birding spot. The checklists were compiled and the highlights reviewed at Saturday's evening session. Seventeen lists were submitted with a total of 115 species. Notable birds are in **Bold**.

Canada Goose  
Wood Duck  
Mallard  
Blue-winged Teal  
Northern Shoveler  
Gadwall  
Green-winged Teal  
Ring-necked Duck  
Redhead  
Greater Scaup  
Lesser Scaup  
Bufflehead  
Red-breasted Merganser  
Hooded Merganser  
**Eared Grebe**  
Horned Grebe  
Pied-billed Grebe  
Rock Pigeon  
Eurasian Collared-Dove  
Mourning Dove  
Common Ground-Dove  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
Sandhill Crane  
King Rail  
Clapper Rail  
Virginia Rail  
Sora  
Common Gallinule  
American Coot  
American Avocet  
Piping Plover  
Snowy Plover  
Black-bellied Plover  
Semipalmated Plover  
Killdeer  
Dunlin  
Least Sandpiper  
American Woodcock  
Wilson's Snipe

**Marbled Godwit**  
Red Knot  
Sanderling  
Short-billed Dowitcher  
Solitary Sandpiper  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Willet  
Lesser Yellowlegs  
Laughing Gull  
Ring-billed Gull  
Herring Gull  
Great Black-backed Gull  
Lesser Black-backed Gull  
Forster's Tern  
Caspian Tern  
Royal Tern  
Black Skimmer  
Common Loon  
Anhinga  
Double-crested Cormorant  
American White Pelican  
Brown Pelican  
Great Blue Heron  
Cattle Egret  
Great Egret  
Snowy Egret  
Tricolored Heron  
Reddish Egret  
White Ibis  
Turkey Vulture  
Black Vulture  
Osprey  
Northern Harrier  
Bald Eagle  
Red-shouldered Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Cooper's Hawk  
Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Barn Owl

Eastern Screech-Owl  
Barred Owl  
Great Horned Owl  
**Short-eared Owl**  
Belted Kingfisher  
Red-cockaded Woodpecker  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Red-headed Woodpecker  
Downy Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
Pileated Woodpecker  
American Kestrel  
**Say's Phoebe**  
Eastern Phoebe  
White-eyed Vireo  
Blue-headed Vireo  
Loggerhead Shrike  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Fish Crow  
Carolina Chickadee  
Tufted Titmouse  
Tree Swallow  
Golden-crowned Kinglet  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Brown-headed Nuthatch  
Red-breasted Nuthatch  
Brown Creeper  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
House Wren  
Winter Wren  
Sedge Wren  
Marsh Wren  
Carolina Wren  
European Starling  
Gray Catbird  
Brown Thrasher  
Northern Mockingbird  
Eastern Bluebird  
Hermit Thrush  
American Robin  
Cedar Waxwing  
House Sparrow  
American Pipit  
House Finch

Purple Finch  
Pine Siskin  
**Lesser Goldfinch**  
American Goldfinch  
Field Sparrow  
Chipping Sparrow  
White-throated Sparrow  
Savannah Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
**Lincoln's Sparrow**  
Swamp Sparrow  
**Henslow's Sparrow**  
Eastern Towhee  
**Western Meadowlark**  
Eastern Meadowlark  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Common Grackle  
Brewer's Blackbird  
Rusty Blackbird  
Boat-tailed Grackle  
Orange-crowned Warbler  
Common Yellowthroat  
Palm Warbler  
Pine Warbler  
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Yellow-throated Warbler  
Summer Tanager  
Northern Cardinal

**LISTERS**  
Larry Gardella  
Lew Scharpf  
Lydia Johnson  
Jean Golden  
Jennie Stowers  
Ken Ward  
Verner Guthrie  
Geoff Hill  
Barry Fleming  
John Cole  
Eric Soehren  
John Trent  
Bob Reed & Pat Reed  
Katherine Clemo  
Drew Haffenden  
Shirley Farrell  
Chris Elphick

AOS WINTER VIRTUAL MEETING, JANUARY 22-24, 2021

# Minutes of the AOS Board Meeting

By PAT REED, *Secretary*

RESIDENT GEOFF HILL OPENED THE MEETING AT 2:00 p.m., Saturday, January 23, 2021, via Zoom. The fall meeting minutes had been furnished prior to the meeting.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Joan Dixon reported income of \$10,703.13 and expenses of \$11,915.81 leaving a net income loss of \$1,212.68. AOS equity follows: PNC checking \$20,936.36, a CD \$29,123.93, and \$100.00 petty cash for a total of \$50,160.29. Also, \$14,723.29 in restricted funds. Joan moved the report be accepted. Upon second, the Treasurer's Report was approved.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Hill stated he felt Covid-19 is still rampant enough that a face-to-face meeting for spring would not be responsible. After discussion the consensus was to hold a Zoom social on Friday evening, a virtual workshop Saturday afternoon followed by the compilation, a virtual banquet and a speaker. Meeting details will be worked out and published in *The Yellowhammer* and posted on the AOS website.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Conservation Committee**—Greg Harber reported concerns that giving industry a free pass to allow so called "incidental take" permits, a rule that was finalized in the last weeks of the previous administration, weakens the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. He also reported National Audubon and other organizations are requesting comments seeking to reverse this rule and stated he would provide comments for AOS.

**Dan C. Holliman Research Fund**—Greg Harber reported he had just received Nicolas Justyn's report on work he did. Emma Rhodes also submitted a report on the work she accomplished. Mr. Harber also reported no requests for proposals were issued as per vote of the Board at the fall meeting. Geoff Hill reported that he will contact Nicholas and Emma

and ask them to submit a brief article to *The Yellowhammer* summarizing their work.

**Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuary**—Greg Harber reported DIBS was very appreciative of the donations from AOS and its members to assist with cleanup, etc. after the hurricanes of 2020. Andrew Haffenden added an update on proposed property purchases on Dauphin Island.

**Membership Committee**—Larry Gardella reported no major changes in membership numbers.

**Education Committee**—Shirley Farrell reported she is holding books donated from the estate of John and Mary Porter. These and many other items will be auctioned off at the first face-to-face meeting of AOS. Also, AOS continues to support the Green Ribbon Schools program, and she will participate in the Legacy "Mountains to Gulf" program again this year.

**Public Relations Committee**—Anne Miller reported she was given a box of Tom Imhof's *Alabama Birds*, second edition, and stated it had been suggested these be sold for \$100. Another suggestion was made to offer these books for a donation of \$100 to AOS. This will be discussed at a later meeting.

Anne Miller reported some members had issues registering for the meeting and stated she and Joe Watts are working on this matter. The featured photo item is going well and work continues to improve the website including furnishing information on committees and Alabama Birdlife.

**Publications Committee**—Bob Reed reported the deadline for the spring *Yellowhammer* is February 14. He thanked members for their excellent input for the last *Yellowhammer* and requested more articles. He brought up an issue for future consideration concerning the cost of publishing *The Yellowhammer*. He stated one suggestion would be to charge a higher membership fees if the person requests a hard copy of *The Yellowhammer* and *Alabama Birdlife*, and stated he is still putting figures together for a future report.

Eric Soehren reported the last 2019 issue of *Alabama Birdlife* was finished and work will begin soon on the 2020 issues. He would also like to see *Alabama Birdlife* on SORA.

AOS SPRING VIRTUAL MEETING, APRIL 10-17, 2021

# AOS Spring Meeting

## Registration is Required for Participation

**T**HE AOS BOARD VOTED TO REQUIRE A MODEST REGISTRATION fee of \$10 per person for the spring meeting. The Zoom links will only be shared with registered members.

### A CURRENT EMAIL ADDRESS IS IMPERATIVE FOR THE VIRTUAL MEETING

The virtual meeting makes it imperative that we have a current email address for you. Notices will be sent out via email with links to meetings, etc. The **only** way to receive those notices is via email. Please send your current email address along with your registration to Joan Dixon. All of her contact information is on the registration page.

## AOS Spring Meeting Schedule

### April 10 to 16, 2021

#### BIRD NEAR HOME

Share one checklist from a nearby birding spot with Geoff Hill (ghill@auburn.edu). We'll compile checklists and review highlights Saturday evening.

### Friday, April 16, 2021

#### ON-LINE SOCIAL AND WORKSHOP

**5:30–6:30 p.m.** Open forum social

**6:30–7:30 p.m.** Vireo Identification Workshop with Greg Jackson

**7:30–8:00 p.m.** Questions/Discussion

### Saturday, April 17, 2021

#### AOS BOARD MEETING

**2:00–4:00 p.m.** Via Zoom

#### COMPILATION, AND SPEAKER

**6:30–7:00 p.m.** Bird near home compilation/highlights

**7:00–8:00 p.m.** Speaker: Scott Weidensaul

## Meet the Speaker: Scott Weidensaul

**N**OTED BIRDING AND NATURALIST AUTHOR SCOTT WEIDENSAUL will be the featured speaker for the Alabama Ornithological Society's virtual spring meeting in April.

Weidensaul (pronounced "Why-densaul") has lived almost all of his life among the long ridges and valleys of the Appalachian Mountains, a landscape that has defined much of his work.

His writing career began in 1978 with a weekly natural history column in the local newspaper in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, where he grew up. The column soon led to a fulltime reporting job, which he held until 1988, when he left to become a freelance writer specializing in nature and wildlife. (He continued to write about nature for newspapers, however, including long-running columns for the Philadelphia Inquirer and Harrisburg Patriot-News.)

Weidensaul has written nearly 30 books, including his acclaimed *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*, which was a finalist for the 2000 Pulitzer Prize. His newest book, *A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds*, will be published in March.

His writing has appeared in dozens of publications, including *Audubon*, *Living Bird*, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and *National Wildlife*, among many others. He lectures widely on conservation and nature, and directs ornithological programs for National Audubon's famed Hog Island Center on the coast of Maine.

In addition to writing about wildlife, Weidensaul is an active field researcher whose work focuses on bird migration. He is a co-director of Project OwlNet, a collaborative effort among nearly 125 banding and research stations across North America studying owl migration; and for more than 20 years he has directed a major effort to study the movements of Northern Saw-whet Owls.

He is also part of a continental effort to understand the rapid evolution, by several species of western hummingbirds, of a new migratory route and wintering range in the East.

He and his wife Amy now live in the northern Appalachians of New Hampshire.





*Tens of thousands of Amur Falcons rise from their roost in Nagaland in northeastern India—perhaps the greatest concentration of raptors on Earth, but unknown to the outside world until a few years ago. (© Scott Weidensaul)*

**I**N THE PAST TWO DECADES, OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE navigational and physiological feats that enable birds to cross immense oceans, fly above the highest mountains, or remain in unbroken flight for months at a stretch has exploded. What we've learned of these key migrations—how billions of birds circumnavigate the globe, flying tens of thousands of miles between hemispheres on an annual basis—is nothing short of extraordinary.

Bird migration entails almost unfathomable endurance. A six-inch Semipalmated Sandpiper about to begin a long migration shows all the physiological characteristics of a morbidly obese human with heart disease and diabetes—yet it will experience no long-term health consequences from its

condition, while performing the equivalent of running 126 consecutive marathons without food, water, or rest as it flies nonstop 3,275 miles from northern Canada to Venezuela.

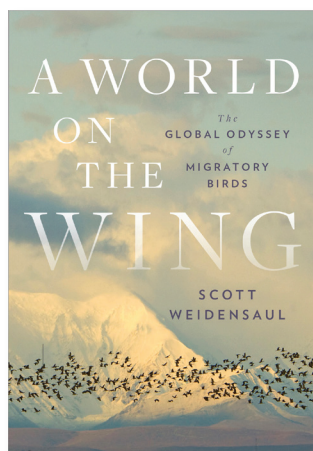
Along the way it will use a natural form of performance-enhancing drugs, selectively feeding on tiny marine crustaceans rich in omega fatty acids that dramatically improve the bird's metabolism, while avoiding dehydration by "drinking" moisture from its own muscles and organs, and orienting itself using the earth's magnetic field through a form of quantum entanglement that made Einstein queasy. Crossing the Pacific Ocean in nine days of non-stop flight, as some birds do, leaves little time for sleep, but migrants can put half their brains to sleep for a few seconds at a time, alternating sides—and their reaction time actually improves.

These are some of the revelations that naturalist and migration researcher Scott Weidensaul—the speaker at this spring's AOS meeting—explores in his newest book, *A World*

on the Wing: *The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds* (W.W. Norton, 2021). Weidensaul, the Pulitzer Prize-nominated author of nearly 30 books on nature, conveys both the wonder of bird migration and its breathtaking sweep, from the mudflats of the Yellow Sea in China, where millions of shorebirds pause en route from Australia and New Zealand heading for Siberia and Alaska; to the remote mountains of northeastern India, where millions of Amur Falcons—the greatest gathering of raptors on the planet—feed before crossing the ocean to Africa and the dusty hills of Cyprus, where Weidensaul chases songbird poachers in the company of activists and law enforcement.

Weidensaul introduces readers to those scientists, researchers, and birders trying to preserve global migratory patterns in the face of climate change and other environmental challenges, while exploring our rapidly expanding understanding of the physiology and science of migration, including advances in miniaturized tracking technology that have allowed humans to track dove-sized Arctic Terns from Maine to their wintering grounds in the Indian Ocean, a round trip of 51,000 miles, or to realize that when Common Swifts finish their breeding season in Europe they spend the next ten months entirely on the wing, never touching ground or landing.

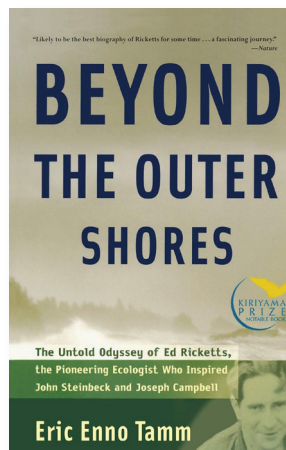
Drawing on Weidensaul's own extensive fieldwork, including the research he conducts on Snowy Owls in mid-winter in New England, or songbird migration in the wilderness of central Alaska, *A World on the Wing* unveils the miracle of nature taking place over our heads, and shines a light on how much we're still discovering about the greatest natural phenomenon of all.



*The Alabama Ornithological Society will soon have discounted copies for sale of Scott Weidensaul's latest book, A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds. We will make announcements on the AOS website ([www.aosbirds.org](http://www.aosbirds.org)) and on ALBirds when the book becomes available.*

## Two Interesting Books

I READ TWO BOOKS LAST YEAR THAT I GIVE HIGH PRAISE. Neither is a birding topic, but both are entertaining and outstanding reads in the natural history, ecology, and conservation categories. If you are a fan of John Steinbeck's



works, especially *Cannery Row* and the real story of the main character that Steinbeck used, the friendship they had around science (and drinking together), and the ecology of seashores, *Beyond the Outer Shores* by Eric Enno Tamm (Da Capo Press, 2005) should hit the sweet spot.

*The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness, and Greed* by John Vaillant (W.W.

Norton, 2006), is a great journey of the natural history of timber, culture, and conservation in the Pacific Northwest wrapped in a crime mystery. Very entertaining and insightful.

Neither is a recent work, but if you chose to read them, I hope you enjoy them as much as I did. —Skip Smith

## Upcoming Meetings

**SPRING MEETING**—April 15–17, 2021

Virtual Meeting

**FALL MEETING**—October 14–16, 2021

Dauphin Island, Alabama (tentative)

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

TBA

## Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Summer 2021

May 10, 2021

Fall 2021

November 10, 2021

## AOS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

*Your Membership Dues Support the Work of the Alabama Ornithological Society*

Please check membership category: \_\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_\_ Renewing Member

Please check membership category: \_\_\_\_ Student \$10 \_\_\_\_ Individual \$25 \_\_\_\_ Family \$40\* \_\_\_\_ Sustaining \$50  
\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_

**YOU CAN ALSO JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP ONLINE AT [WWW.AOSBIRDS.ORG](http://WWW.AOSBIRDS.ORG)  
PLEASE ADD 3% TO PAYPAL TRANSACTIONS**

## AOS SPRING MEETING 2021 REGISTRATION FORM

*Complete and return to:*

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

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

*Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by April 10, 2021*

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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

**YOU CAN ALSO REGISTER ONLINE AT [WWW.AOSBIRDS.ORG](http://WWW.AOSBIRDS.ORG)**

Registration @ \$10 per person	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution	\$
DIBS Hurricane Damage Remediation	\$
<b>2021 DUES</b>	\$
<b>TOTAL ENCLOSED</b>	\$



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DESIGN.....Robin McDonald  
ILLUSTRATIONS.....Annabel Markle

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Greg Harber  
Geoff Hill  
Ken Hare  
Lew Scharpf

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Life (family): \$550



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<http://www.vetmed.auburn.edu/raptor>

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<http://www.tvas.org>