

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 42, NO. 1 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SPRING 2022

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

FOUNDED 1952



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MEETINGS

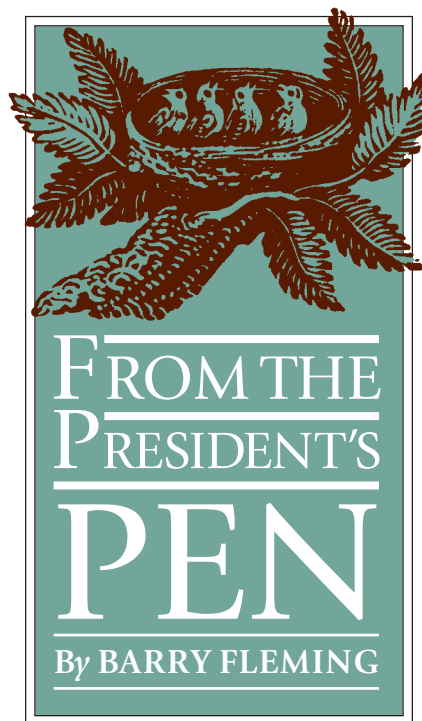
Patsy Russo
 Kathryn Palmore, Grace Sims

IN THE PREVIOUS NEWSLETTER, I spoke optimistically about our winter meeting being held in person and the return to normal meeting structure. It sure was a tough call to have to cancel it. One thing to be taken away from the past two years of the pandemic is the practice of remaining flexible and patient. Having said that, I am very hopeful about returning to a spring of bird song and fresh plumage, sunshine, fine food, and new and old friends, on our favorite Alabama barrier island.

Dr. Scot Duncan was to be our keynote speaker at the winter meeting. His book, *Southern Wonder, Alabama's Surprising Biodiversity*, is a landmark publication focusing on ecology of the southeastern United States. He proved to be so popular as the invited guest speaker, I asked, and he has agreed, to return to speak at a meeting in 2023. Although cancelling the meeting was not what we wished for, I believe the board of directors made the right decision. Alabama was at its highest levels of Covid just before our scheduled winter meeting. With our successful in-person meeting last fall and other recent meetings in Zoom, the society has avoided spreading of the illness. Thanks to all for your understanding and patience.

The Zoom meeting held instead offered a round-table discussion in which new ideas and concerns of members could be stated. There was a consensus that a concerted effort to recruit younger members and those outside our normal sphere of influence should be made. At the Zoom board meeting following the Zoom member meeting, it was agreed to establish an ad-hoc committee to study and act on this concern. Geoff Hill, professor of biology at Auburn University, then presented his lab's ground-breaking research into the color variations of Painted Buntings, and John Trent, biologist, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and eBird hotspot editor in our region, presented tutorials on new features of eBird.

The board meeting following also authorized monies to begin an AOS Vimeo channel. The identification workshops by AOS members Drew Haffenden on Terns and



Greg Jackson on Vireos are world-class and will be the first items uploaded, followed by Geoff Hill's and John Trent's presentations. The goal is a repository of workshops, seminars and lectures that would be available to members and non-members alike.

Our keynote speaker for the spring meeting has come to know the state of Alabama from a unique viewpoint, from the cockpit of an ultra-lite plane with Whooping Cranes flanking him on either side. Joseph Duff, co-founder and first pilot for Operation Migration, has flown with cranes that have now come to call Alabama their winter home. Joe is currently executive director for WildAid Canada where he steers funding for new and innovative conservation projects.

Jenny Stowers, in long tradition, has graciously offered her home for the Saturday lunch this spring. This is a great place to meet and greet and see birds on the bay from her back porch. All are welcome. Jenny will furnish all of the food.

Shirley Ferrell, Education Committee chair, will be directing a silent auction again this spring to be held in the Shelby Center on Saturday. This year will feature a great number of bird and nature-centered books. So, come prepared to bid big and often.

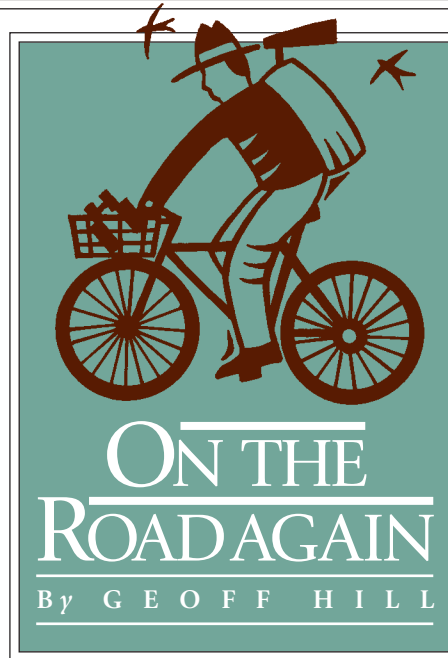
Greg Jackson, compiler, Alabama Bird Records Committee, has updated the state checklist, which is now available on the website. As always, the place to register for meetings, pay dues, see the latest AOS news and newly digitized color photographs and the upcoming Vimeo channel, is the AOS website. It just keeps getting better. Greg related that the bird records committee is up to date as they prepare to accept Lesser Goldfinch as Alabama bird number 453.

And just a reminder that annual dues were due in January, but if you forgot, they can be quickly paid on the website. You may want to think about a life membership; then you'll never have to remember again. Maybe consider sponsoring a young person at the inexpensive student rate. The ten dollars could be a very worthwhile investment.

Good birding; and I really hope to see you in April.

A North American (Pretty) Big Year

BIRDING BIG YEARS HAVE become a thing. A very expensive, all-consuming thing for those who want to shoot for all-time records. A birding big year is an effort to see as many species as possible in a specific area—usually within a county or state or some other political boundary. For most birders in the U.S. and Canada, seeing as many species as possible in the US and Canada (traditionally excluding Hawaii) is the category of big year that gets the most attention. This is called an ABA (American Birding Association) big year. Until 2011, birding big years were a thing known only to



birders, but then 20th Century Fox released the movie *The Big Year* starring Jack Black and Steve Martin. After that movie, birders no longer had to explain big years to non-birders.

I did not go into 2021 with any thoughts of a continent-wide big year. I can prove this is true because in January and February 2021, I didn't go to places where unusual winter birds show up. I did have several bird-oriented trips lined up for 2021. I was scheduled to go to California in April and September to help with a research project focused on understanding migration in White-crowned Sparrows. I also was booked on a May pelagic



trip off the coast of North Carolina that had been rescheduled after being cancelled in the pandemic year. In March, I did a spur-of-the-moment road trip to Key West to look for Cuban Pewee and Black-faced Grassquit (got them both), but I made no effort to find numerous south-Florida specialties that would have boosted a continent-wide big year. When my friends Jim Cronin and Dave Carr invited me to go on a four-day trip to Arizona in August, I was already looking at a year list of over 400 species of birds. That Arizona trip along with my September research trip to California, pushed me over 470 species of birds and suddenly a 500-bird year looked very possible. The most species I had ever seen in a year in the U.S. and Canada prior to 2021 was 417 in 2017, so I was anxious to see how high I could push what would likely be the biggest ABA birding year of my lifetime.

Five hundred species in a year in the U.S. and Canada was hardly an impressive big year by the standards of hotshots chartering planes and pursuing listing full time. For example, Sandy Komito saw 745 species in the ABA area (excluding Hawaii) during the big year chase that was the basis for the movie (a record broken many times since then). Nevertheless, five hundred bird species in the lower 48 states in a year was bigger than any year list I had ever amassed, and it seemed like a fun personal goal. After my August Arizona trip, a 500 bird year seemed to be within reach, even with my busy fall schedule.

Even though I was within relatively easy striking distance of 500 species when I got to 470 species in October, there was no way I was going to get to 500 species by birding around my home in Auburn, Alabama. As I approached 500 species in the US and Canada, I was also approaching 300 species for the year in Alabama, so I had exhausted most the birds to be seen around Auburn. I needed one more really good birding trip to put me over 500, and the obvious place where I could most easily pick up 25-or-so year birds on a weekend excursion involving a short plane flight was the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) in Texas. I checked my calendar and saw that I had nothing scheduled on Friday November 5, so I booked a weekend trip to Texas, November 5 to 7.



This male Black-faced Grassquit (opposite page) was seen on a trip to Key West. (Geoff Hill) A White-tailed Hawk (above) was one of the first birds spotted in Texas. (Bob Reed)

At mid-morning on November 5, I landed at San Antonio a few minutes earlier than scheduled, got my rental SUV quickly, and headed south down I-37 around 10 a.m. The weather was fantastic—clear, cool, calm. My first stop was an area with large agricultural fields just off of I-37 near Edroy. I picked up two nice year birds almost immediately—Sprague's Pipits (474) flushed from the side of the road and White-tailed Hawk (475) soaring over the fields. As I drove around scanning the vast plowed fields, I spotted a flock of shorebirds flying in a tight ball. These plovers had clean white breasts and lacked orange rumps. It was a flock of Mountain Plovers (476). I had been in Texas less than two hours and I already had added three birds to my year list.

The pipit/plover stop only took about 30 minutes, and then I was back on the road headed for the edge of Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge where Aplomado Falcons now breed and are pretty easy to observe. I pulled into the falcon viewing area and was disappointed that the birds were not visible on any of the perches (cell tower, nesting platform, telephone poles) where they are regularly observed. I was getting close to giving up when I noticed some birds

soaring right over me. Along with Turkey Vultures riding the early afternoon updrafts was a much smaller and very graceful raptor—an Aplomado Falcon, easy to identify by its dark ventral plumage, distinctive falcon shape, and long tail (477). It was exciting to see an Aplomado Falcon soaring; previously I had only seen them perched.

From the falcon site, all of my birding areas lay to the west of me, so I drove toward the afternoon sun. My next stop was Harlingen City Lake, an urban pond that hosts a big flock of whistling-ducks. I pulled in, set up my scope, and started sorting through the throngs of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks sitting on the concrete wall that lined the lake. I put 300 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks on my ebird list but that was just a conservative guesstimate. There could have easily been 500. It took a few minutes of careful scanning but eventually I found three Fulvous Whistling-Ducks (478) mixed in with the Black-bellied. Spotting the Fulvous Whistling-Ducks among the hundreds of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks gave me a strong sense of *déjà vu*. Thirty years earlier, I had spotted my lifer Fulvous Whistling-Duck scoping through piles of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at a pond a few miles away in Brownsville. I almost didn't take notice of four Neotropic Cormorants (479) that flew in and splashed into the lake as I scanned the whistling-ducks. I expected that species to be easy during my birding weekend, but amazingly, those ended up being my only Neotropic Cormorants of the whole trip. I'm really glad I noticed them.

By the time I found my Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, it was late afternoon. My plan was to look for Red-crowned Parrots at dusk in McAllen, but that still left an hour of birding time, and I decided to spend the hour at Estero Llanos Grande State Park, one of the best parks for all-around birding in the LRGV. The park was officially closed when I arrived a few minutes after 5 p.m., but all of the trails were still accessible. I spent the next hour skimming the easiest of the easy LRGV birds. The LRGV is the most popular birding destination on the continent because it has a long list of birds that you can see nowhere else in the US, and most of these species are tame, easy to find, and beautiful or interesting. I wasn't even out of my car when I heard the ringing "kisk-a-dee" call of the Great Kiskadee (480)



and the very Red-bellied Woodpecker-like call of the Golden-fronted Woodpecker (481). A few steps down the trail to the visitor center and I was looking at a flock of Plain Chachalacas (482) on a feeding station with Green Jays (483) hovering around the feeder waiting for their turn. A Buff-bellied Hum-



A visit to Estero Llanos Grande State Park in the Lower Rio Grande Valley produced sightings of the Great Kiskadee (opposite page, above) and Plain Chachalacas (opposite page, below). On a second visit to Estero Llanos Grande, a sleeping Common Paraquet (above) was hard to spot. (All Bob Reed)

mingbird fed at a nearby bird feeder. The hummingbird by all rights should have been a new year bird since it is a LRGV specialty, but I had chased and seen a Buff-bellied Hummingbird in Alabama in January. Near the visitor's center, I added Altamira's Oriole (484) and Black-crested Titmouse (485) to my rapidly growing year list. After the bonanza of new birds in the late afternoon I drove the neighborhood where Red-crowned Parrots were reported to regularly come in during the late afternoon and evening to roost. These parrots are big and loud, and if there is a roost around, you can generally locate it by driving around with windows rolled down. I spent 45 minutes searching in vain for flocks of parrots. I ended my first day in the LRGV with 485 species but with many easy birds to get during my full birding day on Saturday.

For my full day of birding around the McAllen area, I had some expert help. When I was checking eBird for the best places to find my target birds, I kept running into the lists of a young birder named Ryan Rodriguez. He gave his email address in his eBird profile, so I sent Ryan a note to see if he wanted to go birding with me on Saturday. He wrote back that he was excited to do a full day of birding, so at 6:50 a.m. on Saturday, November 6, his dad dropped him off and we set out to find as many species as possible in the McAllen refuges. Since I had missed parrots the eve-

ning before, we started out driving around near Frontera Audubon to see if we could hear Red-crowned Parrots coming off their roost. As we rolled slowly toward the refuge with our car windows open, both Ryan and I heard the distant shrieks of parrots. We drove toward the sound and within two minutes we were looking at about 30 Red-crowned Parrots (486) flying around in a tight flock. A block away from the parrots as we started our drive to our first birding site, Ryan yelled, "Gray Hawk" and I pulled over and stopped. There, in the top of a tall tree in a residential yard, was a beautiful adult Gray Hawk (487).

I would have missed the bird if it hadn't been for the sharp eyes of Ryan. From the hawk spot, we headed over to Estero Llano Grande State Park, the same place where I had birded briefly the afternoon before. Our target was a bird for which Estero Llano Grande State Park is famous among birders—Common Pauraque. This relative of the Whip-poor-will does not call often in the fall and winter and can be very hard to find even though they are common in all the larger refuges. However, there is a bird at Estero Llano Grande State Park that sleeps in the same patch of ground each day. Local birders, including Ryan, know where this spot is, and Ryan took me right to the sleeping Common Pauraque (488). These birds are so well camouflaged that it took Ryan a full minute to spot the bird even when he knew which small patch of leaves it was likely to be sleeping on. On the way to and from the pauraque we also spotted White-tipped Dove (489), Long-billed Thrasher (490), and Olive Sparrow (491). We also had a flock of Greater White-fronted Geese fly past. These were not new big year birds for me, but the geese were a new species for my Texas list, and they were county listers for Ryan (he was in a battle for biggest year list in Hidalgo County).

We hoped to turn up our own rarity at Estero Llano Grande State Park, but by 9 a.m. we had checked some of the best places and decided to change locations. We drove over to Frontera Audubon Sanctuary, and hadn't gone 50 feet down the first path when we started seeing the bird that Ryan promised we would see at this refuge—Clay-colored Thrush (492). We ended up seeing about a dozen of these drab, American-robin-like birds. After the thrush, we spent some time looking for Couch's Kingbird, which Ryan said are almost always

present, but for once, we missed our target bird. As a matter of fact, I ended up missing Couch's Kingbird for the entire trip, by far my worst miss on my trip to Texas. But we got so many hard-to-find birds, I can hardly complain about one miss.

From Frontera, we drove over to Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge. Santa Ana NWR and Bentsen Rio Grande Valley State Park are the two largest preserves in the LRGV. They are each so large that we had to make a choice of going to one or the other, so we went to Santa Ana. Our first stop in Santa Ana was the observation tower which gave a view of the entire refuge and really the entire area including Mexico, just across the Rio Grande. It was now about noon and hawks and swallows were up in the updrafts. There were more than a hundred Cave Swallows over our heads. These would have been year listers but I had seen the Caribbean subspecies in South Florida in February. Most of the raptors were Turkey Vulture but in the spotting scope, Ryan picked out a mid-sized hawk with very broad wings soaring in wide arcs about a half mile away. It mostly soared like any other raptor but every 45 seconds or so, it would transition into a weird flutter flight, unlike anything I had ever seen a Cooper's Hawk or any other raptor species do. I mention Cooper's Hawk because that was the other species it could have been. The combination of broad rounded wings, long tail, and the flutter flight convinced us that it was a Hook-billed Kite (493). After the kite we spent the next hour or so birding around the numerous ponds that dot Santa Ana and we found both Green Kingfisher (494) and Least Grebe (495). That ended the haul of year birds for me at Santa Ana. Before I dropped Ryan at his house just at sunset, we watched 100 Green Parakeets (496) mass on the wires at the mall near his house. Even if the location wasn't very scenic, Green Parakeets are beautiful little birds. I said goodbye to Ryan four birds short of my goal of 500 year birds and with one morning left in Texas.

On Sunday, November 7, I had about two hours to bird in the morning before I had to drive to San Antonio to catch my flight home. I spent my last two hours of birding in Texas at the banks of the Rio Grande at Salineño. There is a fantastic feeding station and bird refuge at Salineño, but it didn't open until 8 a.m. and by then I had to be driving to San Antonio. But you don't need to go to the gated refuge to see great birds at Salineño. I got to the edge of the river just at first light and it was a birdy place. Ringed Kingfisher (497) were calling loudly and continued to call all morning. As it got a bit

lighter I started walking down a trail along the river north of the boat landing. Audubon's Orioles (498) started to sing, and I flushed a couple of Scaled Quail (499). I was hoping to find a Morelet's Seedeater (499), which used to be called the White-collared Seedeater. Amazingly, at the first patch of cane I stopped next to, a female seedeater perched out in the open and let me see and photograph it. The Morelet's Seedeater was my 500th bird of the year.

I arrived home from my Texas trip having achieved my goal of 500 species in a year in the continental U.S. Now I wanted to see how far past 500 I could go with local birding. So, the next weekend I drove over to Georgia to get a bird that cleaned up a bad miss from my Arizona, California, and Texas trips—Burrowing Owl. For the past 10 years or so, one Burrowing Owl has returned to the same pasture in east Georgia, about 2 hours drive from my house. I drove up to the little fenced area put up to protect this rare Georgia bird, and there was the Burrowing Owl (501) sitting at the entrance to his burrow.

I finished off my ABA big year as I also worked on my state big year. In Alabama, a year list over 300 is big. The record year list is 328. In 2019 I worked hard on an Alabama big year and totaled 320. I had no aspirations to beat that personal record in 2021 but when I got back from my Texas trip, my state year list was as at 294 and 300 was within easy reach. It was especially fun the rest of the year to get birds that added to both my Alabama and ABA big years. One such bird was LeConte's Sparrow, which I found with some effort in wet fields at Eufaula National Wildlife refuge where several winter every year.

By December, I was running out of both state birds and ABA birds to add to my year lists without getting on a plane or driving far out of state. In early December, I drove down for a nice day on the beach at Dauphin Island and got Black Scoter for both year lists. I went north to the waterfowl refuges along the Tennessee River in Alabama and got several Alabama year listers along with Whooping Crane and Ross' Goose for my ABA list.

I ended the year with 310 birds for Alabama and 505 birds for my ABA list. It was the best big year I've ever attempted because I felt no pressure to get every bird. If I missed a target bird, it was not a big deal. I wasn't setting any records, just having fun birding in a lot of great places. I doubt that I'll ever get an ABA list higher than 507, but who knows? I do like traveling and birding, and that combination puts you in front of a lot of species of birds.

AOS WINTER VIRTUAL MEETING, OCTOBER 3-20, 2020

Minutes of the AOS Board Meeting

By PAT REED, Secretary



RESIDENT BARRY FLEMING CALLED THE ALABAMA Ornithological Society Board of Directors meeting to order via Zoom, February 3, 2022. A quorum was present.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Fleming stated Lake Guntersville State Park has been booked for the winter 2023 meeting. He also reported the Dauphin Island Sea Lab has been booked for the spring meeting and has rooms available if one wants to stay there. Patsy Russo has arranged the catering with Wilton Caterers for the Saturday banquet. Friday evening will have heavy hors d'oeuvres, and a tip jar will be present.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Shelly Taliaferro, treasurer, stated she had a lengthy discussion with bank personnel after which she was assured she was officially accepted as treasurer, and Anne Miller had been released from the CD. She reported two outstanding invoices and stated these will be paid as soon as the new checks are received.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Alabama Birdlife—Eric Soehren stated he is not pleased with the current publishers of *Alabama Birdlife*, and he has talked with Robin McDonald who may be able to assist in finding another publisher. He stated the Adobe account would be due for renewal soon at a price of \$350 annually. Also AOS has a standing agreement with Wilson Ornithological Society and he would like to have this accessible to the entire membership.

Membership—Larry Gardella stated the membership list needs to be kept by one person, the treasurer, further stating he and Shelly Taliaferro can work on this. President Fleming stated he and Shelly had worked with Joan and gotten everything from her; however, Joan said she did not do the mailing list. Shelly stated she did not have a master

list to work from but would keep records from this point and would work with Larry to get the list updated and sent to the proper people.

Bird Records—President Fleming reported for Greg Jackson, stating the Alabama Bird Record is current, the checklist updated, and on the website indicating 452 birds. The Lesser Goldfinch will soon make it 453.

Dan C. Holliman Research Fund—The board approved the recommendation of the committee to award \$1,000 grants each to Bee Gray and Emma Rhodes.

Education—Shirley Farrell stated there would be a silent auction at the spring meeting. Most of the items on hand are books from John and Mary Porter's collection. Also, Jim Wilson donated approximately 800 copies of his self-published book *Birds of Birmingham*. She suggested everyone who registers for the spring meeting be given a copy and further requested she be authorized to give a set of 30 to the Environmental Education Association. The board voted to allow the Education Committee to determine how and when these books could best be distributed. Mrs. Farrell stated there is a need for donated bluebird houses to be given to the Green Ribbon School winners. She has a possibility for donations but requested assistance in securing these if her possibility did not work out.

Public Relations—Anne Miller stated Greg Jackson would like to have his recent workshop offered on the website. Joe Watts recommended Vimeo or YouTube at a cost of approximately \$7.00 a month payable annually. After discussion, the board approved the expenditure of up to \$150 per year to establish a Vimeo account to showcase AOS workshops.

OTHER BUSINESS

President Fleming reported Patsy Russo has taken over the responsibility of meetings with Grace Sims assisting. He also stated Pat Reed had requested to be relieved as secretary as soon as another could be found. Anne Miller stated she

too would like to step down. The matter of changing board meeting times was discussed. The following concerns were suggested: more zoom meetings; meet a week before the member meeting to enable reports to be given to the full meeting; committee reports be emailed to the board prior to the meeting to facilitate more efficient meetings. After discussion the Friday before the regular meeting was agreed upon. Other matters discussed were youth recruitment and a possible new logo. The board agreed to have the President and Bill Summerour consult on the logo.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

2022 Dan C. Holliman Research Fund Awards

By GREGORY J. HARBER



AS CHAIRMAN OF THE DAN C. HOLLIMAN RESEARCH Fund committee, it is my pleasure to announce the recipients of this year's grant awards. The purpose of the fund is to provide small grants, in the amount of \$1,000 each, in support of scientific research projects of an ornithological nature that are clearly applicable to Alabama birds. Priority is given to projects involving natural history or field biology involving ornithological research, or environmental issues that impact birds and those performed in Alabama or by individuals or institutions affiliated with Alabama.

From a total of six applications, two were selected to be this year's recipients.

Bee Gray from Jacksonville State University will study "Characterization of Anti-microbial Properties of Excrement and Functional Microbiome of New World Vultures in Alabama."

Emma Rhodes, originally from Auburn University, and cofounder of Banding Coalition of the Americas, is working on a "Southeastern U.S. Purple Martin Project."

My thanks to the members of the Dan Holliman Research Fund Committee, Dr. R. Scot Duncan and Eric Soehren, whose assistance was invaluable with the review process, and to the AOS board for approving these two well-deserved research grants.

From the Membership Committee

THE PANDEMIC HAS BEEN AROUND FOR MORE THAN TWO years. It has not interfered much with short trips to enjoy birds safely, but it has stood in the way of a lot of birding in groups. AOS has had a long stretch of meetings pared down to Zoom. Those meetings have included some excellent programs on bird identification, but we are eager for in-person meetings, starting with the spring meeting April 15-17. During the pandemic, we have had people join AOS who have never had an opportunity to meet many other members. This is the first chance to get together in quite some time.

We hope you can make it down to Dauphin Island for the meeting. Bring a friend and give that person a chance to see how AOS can add so much to the fun and learning of birding.

And please remember that annual dues are for the calendar year, so don't forget to include you 2022 dues if you haven't already paid them.

—Larry Gardella

New Members

Patricia Burns
Rebecca Davidson
Gabrielle Dunham
Amy Gaddy
(William) Todd Harvey
Darlena Hnizdil
Mary Mefferd
Thomas Powell
Serena Sage
Marilyn Steelman
Joe Wujcik

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Jeff Taylor

DONATIONS

Linda Reynolds

AOS SPRING MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, APRIL 15-17, 2022

AOS Spring Meeting Schedule



UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL ACTIVITIES BEGIN or occur at the Shelby Center, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, 101 Bienville Boulevard, Dauphin Island, Alabama 36528.

To register online for the Spring Meeting, go to: <http://www.aosbirds.org/aos-meeting-registration>

FRIDAY, APRIL 8

6:00 p.m. AOS Board Meeting: Via Zoom

FRIDAY, APRIL 15

6:15 a.m. Field Trip Baldwin County Birds and Blooms

5:15 p.m. Registration/Social hour at Shelby Center, Dauphin Island Sea Lab

6:00 p.m. Member Social—Shrimp boil and sides. Monetary contributions are welcome.

6:45 p.m. Announcements/Discussion of Weekend Field Trips

7:00 p.m. Members Photography Show

8:00 p.m. Adjourn

SATURDAY, APRIL 16

6:30 a.m. Field Trip 1
Exploring Dauphin Island with Joe Duff and Barry Fleming

Where: Cadillac Park

6:30 a.m. Field Trip 2
Birds of Pelican Bay Peninsula with Drew Haffenden

Where: Public Beach and Pier parking lot.

11:30 p.m. Potluck—Lunch at the home of Jennie Stowers. She will provide all food.

5:15 p.m. Registration at Shelby Center,
Dauphin Island Sea Lab

5:30 p.m. BANQUET AND KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Shelby Center, Dauphin Island Sea Lab

5:30 p.m. Social Hour

6:30 p.m. Banquet Buffet

7:15 p.m. Announcements and Discussion of Field Trips

7:30 p.m. Keynote Speaker: Joseph Duff

9:00 p.m. Adjourn

SUNDAY, APRIL 17

6:30 a.m. Field Trips

Noon Compilation (Includes all bird sightings in Mobile and Baldwin Counties from Friday, April 15 to noon, April 17, 2022)

Where: Goat Trees

ACCOMMODATIONS AND INFORMATION

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

Websites:

www.gulfinfo.com

www.townofdauphinisland.org/where-to-stay

Motels:

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

Bed and Breakfast:

Dauphin Island Harbor House: 251-861-2119

Air BnB has lots of rentals! www.airbnb.com

Rentals:

Boardwalk Realty, Inc.: 877-861-3992

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)

A O S SPRING MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, APRIL 15-17, 2022

Spring Meeting Field Trips



ALL PARTICIPANTS MUST EMAIL ANDREW HAFFENDEN at andrew@natasp.com to advise of your participation and your cell phone number if you plan to attend any field trip so we know how many to expect on each trip, and so any last minute changes can be sent to you. Due to the nature of some sites we may restrict the number of participants on a field trip. Please check the AOS website for updates.

Friday, April 15, 2022

BALDWIN COUNTY BIRDS AND BLOOMS

Leader: TBA

Meeting Time: 6:15 a.m. for a departure at 6:30 a.m. sharp.

Meeting Place: Green Park (next to Ship & Shore)

We'll start by heading north to Splinter Hill Bog, about 1 1/4 hours from DI up I-65. This bog is one of the largest White-topped Pitcher Plant bogs in America, with four other pitcher plant species also present as well as species of sundews and bladderworts. Our main birding goal, Bachman's Sparrow, should be singing from exposed perches. Other birds include woodpeckers, Brown-headed Nuthatch, possibly Grasshopper Sparrow, and other species typical of Longleaf Pine habitat. If there has been recent rain parts of the track may be muddy. We return to the coast and Meaher State Park to observe birds from the boardwalk in the shallows of Mobile Bay. The park can hold a variety of birds including shorebirds, herons and egrets, gallinules, Boat-tailed Grackle, Gull-billed Terns and occasionally Anhinga and Roseate Spoonbill. Alligators are also regular here. Continuing along the Mobile Causeway, our next stop, around 11:45-noon, is a seafood restaurant on the Causeway, where we have views overlooking the Mobile-Tensaw Delta while eating some of the best seafood

in Alabama. After lunch we return to Dauphin Island, arriving by 3 p.m. in time for the incoming migrants.

Saturday, April 16, 2022

EXPLORING DAUPHIN ISLAND

Trip Leader: TBA and Joseph Duff

Meeting Time: 6:30 a.m.

Meeting Place: Green Park (next to Ship & Shore)

We'll bird the varied habitats of Dauphin Island with our Keynote Speaker starting at the airport for rails and sparrows, then to the Shell Mounds for warblers, vireos, tanagers and any other Neotropical migrants we can find. In addition to the Shell Mounds we'll check out the Audubon Sanctuary and other island hotspots, aided by the cellphone network of sightings by other birders on the island. Other than Audubon Sanctuary, which is a circuit of one mile, there is not a lot of distance walked on this outing, though almost all of our time is spent on foot.

NOTE: It is important for all participants to meet at Green Park, and not arrive at the airport independently. Early airport arrivers can cause rails and sparrows to retreat into the marsh before the rest of the group arrives.

BIRDS OF PELICAN ISLAND

Trip Leader: Drew Haffenden

Meeting Time: 6:30 a.m.

Meeting Place: Start of pier in the parking lot at Public Beach (next to school)

Join DI resident Drew Haffenden to get to know the birds of Alabama's richest beach habitat, Pelican Island, formerly an island, but now a peninsula. With an eBird count currently

standing at 186 species, Pelican Island is exceptional for a strip of beach and dune 100-150 yards wide and just over 1.5 miles long at low tide. We'll take the opportunity to turn the walk into an easy mini-workshop, quickly learning to separate the small plovers from the small sandpipers and from each other, separating often confusing species such as Caspian and Royal Tern, and learning many ID points rarely seen in the guide books. It's an easy walk on flat sand, and our distance traveled depends on how close the birds are to the pier. The island is growing longer once again, and given the tide, the far end, which often has most of the birds, will be about 1 to 1.3 miles from the pier. Participants can return to their cars at any time. There'll be several spotting scopes for general use, which can quickly ramp up your shorebird ID skills.

Sunday, April 17, 2022

FIELD TRIP TO BLAKELEY ISLAND MUDLAKES

Trip Leader: Larry Gardella

Meeting Time: 6:30 a.m. for a departure at 6.45 a.m. sharp.

Meeting Place: Green Park (next to Ship & Shore). Parking is very limited at the Mudlakes so some car-pooling is necessary. Participants staying overnight off the island can meet at the Mudlakes. Please advise when signing up, and you will receive directions and start time.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This trip is planned, but for the last couple of years bird activity has been very quiet at this usually very productive site. The site will be visited just a little before the trip, and if similarly quiet a different outing may replace this one.

The Blakeley Island Mud Lakes are a complex of disposal ponds that attract large numbers of shorebirds and waterfowl. We'll carpool to the site and walk the dirt road up and along the dikes to view rows of ponds of varying depths. Expected birds are American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Stilt Sandpiper, and a variety of other shorebirds, as well as Gull-billed Tern, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, and raptors, often including Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Mississippi

Kite and Northern Harrier, are often seen. We'll return to Dauphin Island in time for compilation at noon. Walking distance is about two miles in the open with no shade. Terrain is good, level dirt road. Mosquitoes and biting flies may be present. If there has been recent rain places may be muddy. Once on the site participants must stay on the roads, not even going into the immediate vegetated verges. AOS and individuals could lose the hard-won permission to bird here if this occurs.

NOTE: A permit form must be lodged with the State Docks Authority prior to your arrival and the permit displayed inside the windscreen. Go to <http://www.aosbirds.org/alabama-birding/blakeley-island/> to register in advance. Registration is valid for the rest of the calendar year.

Have You Read a Good Bird Book Lately?

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

Upcoming Meetings

SPRING MEETING—April 15–17, 2022
Dauphin Island, Alabama

FALL MEETING—October 14–16, 2022
Dauphin Island, Alabama

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

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Summer 2022 May 10, 2022

Fall 2022 August 10, 2022

Winter 2022 November 10, 2022

AOS SPRING MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, APRIL 15–17, 2022

Meet the Speaker: Joseph Duff

How I Spent Twenty Years Pretending To Be A Whooping Crane

AFTER A TWENTY-FIVE-YEAR CAREER AS A COMMERCIAL photographer in Toronto, Canada, Joseph Duff partnered with metal sculptor Bill Lishman in 1993. The two artists-turned-naturalists used ultralight aircraft to lead 18 Canada Geese from Ontario to Virginia, completing the first human-led bird migration.

That initial study was broadcast on the ABC news program 20/20 with host Barbara Walters. That drew the attention of the scientific community and the idea of using their technique to reintroduced endangered avian species was germinated.

Geese, cranes and other precocial birds learn migratory behavior and the route to their traditional wintering grounds by following their parents. That is not possible when trying to reintroduce an extirpated species. By using imprinting and costume rearing, Duff and Lishman were able to act as surrogate parents and teach migratory behavior along a safe route.

After working with Sony Columbia to produce the major motion picture *Fly Away Home* and establishing Operation Migration as a registered charity, they conducted a series of migration experiments with Sandhill Cranes and Trumpeter Swans. Thereafter, Duff convinced the Whooping Crane Recovery Team that the technique had merit, and Operation

Migration became a founding member of the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership. From 2001 to 2015 Duff headed the team that led a new generation of Whooping Cranes from Wisconsin to Florida each fall. Their participation ended in 2017 when there were over one hundred cranes migrating in the eastern flyway, the first in over a century.

In his partial retirement, Joe serves as executive director of WildAid Canada Society (<https://wildaidcanada.org/>), which is a self-funded charity founded by the exploration geologist who discovered diamonds in Canada. He is currently working on a proposal to reintroduce muskoxen into the area near Churchill, Manitoba, and a project to safeguard the habitat of the deep snow mountain caribou in the temperate rainforest of central British Columbia.

Joe's personal aircraft is hanging in the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.



Young whooping cranes completing their first migration, from Wisconsin to Florida, in January 2009, following an Operation Migration ultralight aircraft. Joseph Duff, who developed the program with Bill Lishman and was the pilot for the first flights, will be the guest speaker at the AOS Spring Meeting on Dauphin Island, April 15–17, 2022. (Tim Ross)

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:

Shelly Taliaferro, 2300 Fernway Drive, Montgomery, AL 36111

Name(s) _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Email address _____ Phone _____

**YOU CAN ALSO JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP ONLINE AT WWW.AOSBIRDS.ORG
PLEASE ADD 3% TO PAYPAL TRANSACTIONS**

AOS SPRING MEETING 2022 REGISTRATION FORM

Complete and return to:

Shelly Taliaferro, 2300 Fernway Drive, Montgomery, AL 36111

Telephone: (205) 688-7236 • Email: shellytaliaferro@gmail.com

Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by April 5, 2022

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

Registration @ \$25 per person	\$
Friday Night Hors d'oeuvre Buffet (no. of people)	
Banquet Buffet @ \$25 per person	\$
2022 DUES	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution	\$
TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$

ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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TALLASSEE, ALABAMA 36078

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