

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 44, NO. 2 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SUMMER 2024

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

FOUNDED 1952



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Greg Harber
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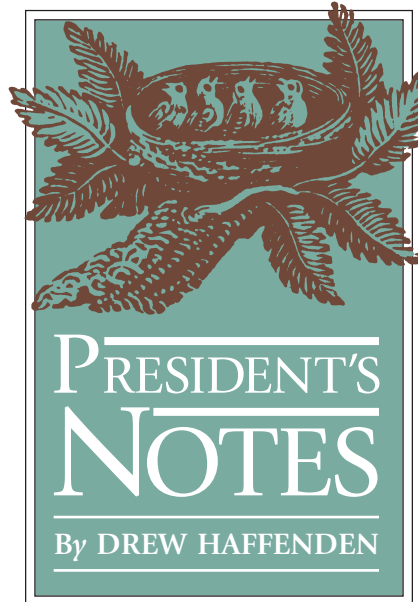
MEETINGS

Patsy Russo

THE 2024 SPRING MEETING WAS a huge success, with a good attendance, a great speaker—many people were taking notes!—and enough birds to both keep people happy and provide the best species tally for many years, with 204 species seen between Friday morning and Sunday lunchtime. As both warblers and shorebirds were in lower numbers this year this total was a surprise. We got a boost from a Mobile County Big Day by Ava and Mason and some nice rarities hanging on at Fort Morgan. As the clock struck noon at the compilation area, Michelle Reynolds shouted “Swallow-tailed Kite,” and this beautiful bird cruised serenely over our gathering. What a way to finish the meeting!

Speaker Nathan Pieplow, author of the two Peterson guides to bird sounds gave a well-attended workshop on Friday about how to use just your phone for recording bird calls, and a very interesting talk on the language of birds for the keynote. There were a lot of new faces at the meeting, and younger ones, so I think the idea of a workshop and keynote about observing, identifying or understanding birds is working. Our fall meeting continues this direction, with Cin-ty Lee, the author of last year's *Field Guide to North American Flycatchers*—*Empidonax* and *Pewees*, and the just-released second in the series *Kingbirds and Myiarchus*, being our speaker. I highly recommend both books to help untangle these often confusing species.

I want to thank all those who assisted with the meeting, which was at the new Dauphin Island Community Center that the Town of Dauphin Island let us have for a very good rate, even swapping us into the large room at the last minute as our attendance swelled. Thank you, Town of Dauphin Island, and especially Jill Pope, the energetic and caring Community Center Director who made it all happened for us. I also want to thank our own members for their contribution to making the meeting run smoothly, including Patsy Russo, Betsy Eager, Hal Smith, Deanne and Paul Porter and Shirley Farrell, especially for once again organizing our silent auction to support the Education



Fund. I would also like to thank our members for donations totaling nearly \$2500 to support the work DIBS is doing to acquire wooded lots on the island. Of course, no AOS Spring meeting would be the same without the amazing Saturday lunch provided by Jennie to all comers, which numbered over a hundred this year. Thank you, Jennie for this and all the other work you do for the birds and birders of Dauphin Island.

AOS is distributing two grants from the Dan C. Holliman Research Fund this year, one to Carlie Dollar to assist with her work on how stress may affect gut microbial diversity in birds and the other to Ruby Hammond to assist with her

work on breeding Wood Thrushes in the Sharp-Bingham Mountain Preserve in the Paint Rock River Valley and to participate in an international study of how the reserve facilitates migration for other Wood Thrush populations. Supporting both the Holliman Fund grants and DIBS is part of AOS conservation efforts for Alabama birds. Also directly related to bird conservation are the Breeding Bird Survey routes across the US; Alabama BBS lead and AOS Board Member Eric Soehren is seeking additional surveyors for the coming summer. If you know your Alabama birds by sight and especially sound, please consider picking up one of these routes. Eric can be contacted at eric.soehren@dcnr.alabama.gov.

Happy summer birding and see you in October.

Upcoming Meetings

FALL MEETING—October 11–13, 2024
Dauphin Island, Alabama

WINTER MEETING—January 24–26, 2025
Possibly West Florida

SPRING MEETING—April 18–20, 2025
Dauphin Island, Alabama

AOS SPRING MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, APRIL 19-21, 2024

AOS Spring Meeting Report

By LARRY GARDELLA, DREW HAFFENDEN, AND BOB REED

THE WEEKEND SEEMED RATHER BEREFT OF BIRDS at first. Friday and most of Saturday morning were very quiet. Of course there were birds, but to this observer, it seemed like the fewest birds observed in April in memory. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* kept creeping into my mind. But even without birds, catching up with old—and some new—friends is always good for the soul.

Without a doubt the lingering Bell's Vireo and the gorgeous male Black-throated Blue Warbler (inset right, by Bob Reed) were the stars of the show at the Shell Mounds. Almost everyone got to see the vireo, and reports of the Black-throated Blue kept us scurrying from one side of the mound to the other. A couple of Common Ground Doves hanging around the south end of the SeaLab campus were nice. Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were common.

One of the marvelous aspects of birding is the willingness to share sightings. I've never seen anyone "horde" a sighting; quite the opposite; everyone wants others to see the bird too. It could be argued that the sharing is motivated by "look at what I found," and I'm sure that's part of it, but it's much more than that, I believe. It's the joy of sharing the delight, the beauty of birds. I witnessed this several times during the weekend, when (especially) young birders, with their superior eyesight and mobility, went out of their way to get everyone on a bird. I also saw experienced birders doing much the same. Sharing a bird brings people together, even for a moment, in a way that's difficult to explain to the non-birder.

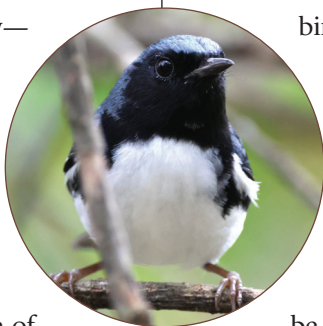
Drew has addressed Nathan Pieplow's engrossing discussions in his president's notes, as well as the wonderful lunch at Jennie's. Thank you, Jennie.

Spoiler Alert: the next three paragraphs are about Sunday afternoon and evening, after the official end of the weekend. Skip to Splinter Hill Outing if you don't want to read it. All weekend the weather forecast looked like it might produce

fallout conditions Sunday afternoon, so several birders opted to remain an extra day just in case. Bob Duncan, our own ornithological meteorologist, confirmed that rain 100 to 150 miles out in the Gulf might produce a fallout.

Sunday afternoon was very slow, with no new birds evident on Dauphin Island—until after 6 p.m. Waves of birds, primarily Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, began dropping out of the sky.

I am always awed by the sight of a wave of birds coming in and alighting, obviously for the first time in twenty plus hours and hundreds of miles on the wing. We witnessed a half dozen Scarlet Tanagers land within twenty seconds in the full sun, and close enough to be in one binocular view. What awed me almost as much as the sheer beauty of the scene was the fact that, at least to my unpracticed eye, they did not exhibit fatigue in any way. They simply started foraging for food, while one preened his feathers.—Bob Reed



Splinter Hill Outing—Drew Haffenden

Our usual Friday outing took place this year in beautiful spring weather. Our group of about 15 people saw Splinter Hill Bog at its finest, with a carpet of pitcher plants of four species—White-topped, Wherry's Sweet, Purple, and Parrot, plus two Sundews, the diminutive Pink and the tall Thread-leaf. Though it took a bit of time despite several birds singing when we arrived and during the morning, we finally got looks in the scope, and for some, photographs, of a singing Bachman's Sparrow. However, overall birds were pretty quiet. But very nice views of singing Brown-headed Nuthatch and Indigo Bunting were a treat, especially as they allowed the photographers to get shots, often hard with the ever-moving nuthatch. We were fortunate to have Gabrielle along, as she not only identified many plants for us but also had found and led us to several stunning Tuberous Grass Pink Orchids. So, all in all, a very nice morning's birding and botanizing.

Fort Morgan Outing—Drew Haffenden

As the Delta Boat Tour planned for Saturday morning was cancelled, a hastily arranged outing to Fort Morgan took its place. Alabama Audubon was banding in the Stables area, and we started there. Birds were being netted and banded, and we had the opportunity to see some of our warblers, vireos and other species close up. It's often surprising how different they can look compared to field views. But there were also several rarities reported from the fort, and several hunted for them after spending time at the banding station. Unfortunately, the small group I was with did not have much luck, with just the female Shiny Cowbird seen—a difficult call due to its close similarity to female Brown-headed and not finally decided until I got home and studied up a little more. But Geoff Hill and some others got the Yellow-headed Blackbird, though we missed the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. The several Black-whiskered Vireos seen during the week were also nowhere to be found. But still a nice morning's birding at Fort Morgan.

Blakeley Islands-Mud Lakes—Larry Gardella

On Sunday, seven members of AOS met at Blakeley Islands-Mud Lakes for a field trip to look for birds. Strong winds were blowing in from the north, and rain threatened. But we headed out to the two-mile loop near gate 4.

We succeeded. Early on, we located the two Wilson's Phalaropes that had been found out in the water on the red-mud impoundment, including one striking female in alternate plumage. A bit to the east, we noted a group of Eastern Kingbirds on stalks in the field to the south; when they took to the skies a bit later, we counted 28! Turning onto the north-south path, we added good numbers of Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, Lesser Yellowlegs, and Long-billed Dowitchers. They were scattered in the ponds on both sides of the path. Several ducks were still at Mud Lakes, including a female Bufflehead swimming amidst dowitchers and avocets. A lone Northern Harrier flew by.

It looked like the rain was going to hold off, so we proceeded to the southern end of the loop, about a mile from our cars. At that point the rain started, and before long it was coming down steadily, getting blown onto our faces by the wind. We picked up the pace and got to our cars, damp but happy with all that we had seen. The eBird list for our trip is at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S169626224>.

*Poems by Deidra Suwanee Dees***Fusvhayv (Mockingbird)**

cannot go canoeing today
one fusvhayv egg laid in my canoe
cannot go canoeing today
two fusvhayv eggs laid in my canoe
cannot go canoeing today
three fusvhayv eggs laid in my canoe

cannot go canoeing today
first fusvhayv born in my canoe
cannot go canoeing today
second fusvhayv born in my canoe
cannot go canoeing today
third fusvhayv born in my canoe

cannot go canoeing today
first fusvhayv flew from my canoe
cannot go canoeing today
second fusvhayv flew from my canoe
went canoeing today
third fusvhayv flew from my canoe

Blue Herons

smell
of wings flapping,
flock of blue herons

flying over

without orderly succession—
feather
in the grass

Deidra Suwanee Dees, Ed.D., is Director/Tribal Archivist in the Office of Archives and Records Management of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Atmore, Alabama.

AOS SPRING MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, APRIL 19-21, 2024

Minutes of the Spring AOS Board Meeting

By DORIS GERTLER, *Secretary*



THE AOS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING WAS held on April 12, 2024, via TEAMS. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by President Drew Haffenden. Stan Hamilton moved that the minutes from the January 19, 2024, meeting be approved. VP Shirley Farrell seconded, and the minutes were unanimously accepted.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Hal Smith will be switching to QuickBooks for accounting and backdated to January 1, 2024. Current total AOS assets are \$66,367.08 and current liabilities are \$1,259.64. Money donated to DIBS is input as a liability as it passes through the account. Hal Smith asked if we need to pay \$165 annually for computer security as he is not using that computer. After some discussion, he was directed to cancel that coverage. There was discussion about PayPal fees which vary by transaction amount and if we "break even." Hal Smith will review. Hal Smith and Shirley Farrell will discuss how to show what funds are earmarked for Education.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Spring meeting numbers are down slightly so we need to try to increase membership. The meeting will be held at the new community center. An email will be sent out by Bob Reed to detail the meeting site particulars. Flyers given out at restaurants when birding an area, as has been done in the past, was discussed. Also discussed was the idea of posting a flyer (with QR code explaining how to become an AOS member) at the Shell Mounds kiosk. Our speaker for the fall meeting has been arranged so we can advertise for several months—Cin-Ty Lee, author of two books on flycatchers.

Discussion about who has the membership roster and how it is updated. Final take is that the Treasurer is responsible for maintaining the membership roster. He sends an

updated list each month to Drew (President), Larry Gardella (Membership), Eric Soehren (*Alabama Birdlife*) and Bob Reed (*The Yellowhammer*). Shirley mentioned that the Gmail account could be used to share a spreadsheet.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

CONSERVATION—The Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Enhancements Act passed the US House and moved on to the Senate. Greg Harber has been writing to our House Representatives and Senators to encourage passage.

DAN C. HOLLIMAN RESEARCH FUND—Eric and Greg Harber reviewed all requests for funds. Ruby Hammond with Paint Rock River Forest Research Center (studying Wood Thrushes) and Carlie Dollar, Dr. Hill's student (studying hormone stress levels) are recipients. Total requests for both projects were \$2,117.60. Bob Reed moved to accept the Dan C. Holliman report and fund the projects in the amount of \$2,117.60. VP Farrell seconded and the motion passed unanimously. A request was made by a member of the Board to include a requirement for a report on the findings of the study and the use of the funds. Greg Harber will make the addition. Last year we did not fund any studies.

MEMBERSHIP—Larry Gardella would like to have information available that could be printed out as needed. It would be more convenient and cheaper than printing materials. It could be available on the website.

SOCIAL MEDIA—Molly Caldwell reported that Facebook engagement has increased and that we now have an Instagram account. She would very much appreciate any content we can provide.

BIRD RECORDS—Steve McConnell submitted his report. The Bird Records Committee held an election in February 2024 and the three outgoing members were replaced.

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE—Eric Soehren is working on Winter 2023 sightings and has some great articles to add.

THE YELLOWHAMMER—Yellowhammer Editor Bob Reed mentioned that deadline for submissions to the next issue is May 10, 2024.

CENSUSING—Greg Jackson stated that a DeKalb County summer bird count is planned.

EDUCATION—Shirley Farrell is doing a workshop for Legacy. The AOS logo will be on all materials.

OLD BUSINESS

A discussion on having a paid Zoom account resulted in a decision to “have the ability to use it if and when we need it but not pay for it now”

Forever Wild funding issue, which was mentioned by Greg Harber at last meeting, has been resolved.

Hal Smith and Greg Jackson will look into options concerning obtaining better yields on checking/CD monies, and email the Board to proceed.

Our Thanks To These AOS Donors

Gulf Breeze Motel

On Beautiful Dauphin Island, Alabama!

FOR MANY YEARS, MIKE TAFRA, OWNER OF THE GULF BREEZE Motel on Dauphin Island, has provided a room for the AOS speaker, spring and fall, free of charge. Thank you, Mr. Tafra and Gulf Breeze, for your continued support of AOS.



IT HAS BECOME THE HABIT OF HAL SMITH, OWNER OF WILD Birds Unlimited in Auburn, Alabama, to provide, at each meeting, a generous check to AOS for the purpose of attracting quality speakers for our meetings. Thank you, Hal Smith, and Wild Birds Unlimited of Auburn, for your continued support of AOS.

NEW BUSINESS

President Haffenden welcomed Patsy Russo back as Meetings chair.

We have received a request for \$500-\$1000 to fund a new Alabama birding trails map in Spanish. Bob Reed moved that we authorize \$500 to the Alabama Birding Trails (as outlined by Ken Hare) to help fund a Spanish version. Larry Gardella seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion about reimbursing out of pocket costs for AOS volunteers during field trips. Bob Reed moved that we reimburse volunteers for their extraordinary expenses, that it should be requested in advance, if possible, and that the Executive Committee should approve. Shirley Farrell seconded and it was approved unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next board meeting will be Friday, October 4.

New Members

Dennis Bennett
Melinda & Claude Crider
Dr. Deidra Dees
Rosalie DeGregory
Kevin Flowers
Abigail Gilbreath
Cathy Havard
Martha Hicks
Lara and Brad Knight
L. Winn LeVert
Andrew Lydeard
Patrick Madden
Jennifer Mayfield
Douglas & Marilyn Miller
Carla Ostrand
Nina Prater
Dr. Frank Randall
Satchell Watts-Kerr

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Bill Carswell
Hal Smith

2024 AOS Spring Meeting Compilation List, Dauphin Island, Alabama, April 19-21

NOTEWORTHY BIRDS OF THE WEEKEND WERE INCA DOVE, Glossy Ibis, Bell's Vireo, Cave Swallow. Count total was 204 species.

Black-bellied Whistling-
Duck

Canada Goose

Blue-winged Teal

Northern Shoveler

Gadwall

Mallard

Mottled Duck

Green-winged Teal

Lesser Scaup

Surf Scoter

White-winged Scoter

Black Scoter

Bufflehead

Red-breasted Merganser

Northern Bobwhite

Rock Pigeon

Eurasian Collared-Dove

Common Ground Dove

Inca Dove

White-winged Dove

Mourning Dove

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Black-billed Cuckoo

Common Nighthawk

Chuck-will's-widow

Chimney Swift

Ruby-throated

Hummingbird

King Rail

Clapper Rail

Sora

Virginia Rail

Common Gallinule

Purple Gallinule

American Coot

Black-necked Stilt

American Avocet

American Oystercatcher

Black-bellied Plover

American Golden Plover

Killdeer

Semipalmated Plover

Piping Plover

Upland Sandpiper

Whimbrel

Ruddy Turnstone

Stilt Sandpiper

Sanderling

Dunlin

Baird's Sandpiper

Least Sandpiper

Buff-breasted Sandpiper

Semipalmated Sandpiper

Western Sandpiper

Short-billed Dowitcher

Long-billed Dowitcher

Wilson's Phalarope

Spotted Sandpiper

Solitary Sandpiper

Lesser Yellowlegs

Willet

Greater Yellowlegs

Bonaparte's Gull

Laughing Gull

Ring-billed Gull

Herring Gull

Least Tern

Gull-billed Tern

Caspian Tern

Forster's Tern

Royal Tern

Sandwich Tern

Black Skimmer

Common Loon

Magnificent Frigatebird

Northern Gannet

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

Yellow-crowned Night-
Heron

White Ibis

Glossy Ibis

Turkey Vulture

Osprey

Swallow-tailed Kite

Northern Harrier

Cooper's Hawk

Bald Eagle

Broad-winged Hawk

Red-tailed Hawk

Great-horned Owl

Belted Kingfisher

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Downy Woodpecker

Pileated Woodpecker

American Kestrel

Merlin

Peregrine Falcon

Great Crested Flycatcher

Eastern Kingbird

Gray Kingbird

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

Eastern Wood-Pewee

Eastern Phoebe

White-eyed Vireo

Bell's Vireo

Yellow-throated Vireo

Blue-headed Vireo

Warbling Vireo

Red-eyed Vireo

Loggerhead Shrike

Blue Jay

American Crow

Fish Crow

Carolina Chickadee

Tufted Titmouse

Bank Swallow

Tree Swallow

Northern Rough-winged
Swallow

Purple Martin

Barn Swallow

Cliff Swallow

Cave 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

Swainson's Thrush

Wood Thrush

American Robin

Scaly-breasted Munia

House Sparrow

House Finch

American Goldfinch

Bachman's Sparrow

Chipping Sparrow

White-crowned Sparrow

White-throated Sparrow

Seaside Sparrow

Savannah Sparrow
 Swamp Sparrow
 Song Sparrow
 Eastern Towhee
 Yellow-breasted Chat
 Yellow-headed Blackbird
 Bobolink
 Eastern Meadowlark
 Orchard Oriole
 Baltimore Oriole
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Shiny Cowbird
 Brown-headed Cowbird
 Brewer's Blackbird
 Common Grackle
 Boat-tailed Grackle
 Ovenbird
 Worm-eating Warbler
 Northern Waterthrush
 Blue-winged Warbler
 Black-and-white Warbler
 Prothonotary Warbler
 Swainson's Warbler
 Tennessee Warbler
 Kentucky Warbler
 Common Yellowthroat
 Hooded Warbler
 American Redstart
 Cape May Warbler
 Northern Parula
 Bay-breasted Warbler
 Yellow Warbler
 Blackpoll Warbler
 Black-throated Blue
 Warbler
 Palm Warbler
 Pine Warbler

Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Prairie Warbler
 Black-throated Green
 Warbler
 Summer Tanager
 Scarlet Tanager
 Northern Cardinal
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak
 Blue Grosbeak
 Indigo Bunting
 Painted Bunting
 Dickcissel

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 **boldfaced**, 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.

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Fall 2024	August 10, 2024
Winter 2024	November 10, 2024

Pat's Pine Warbler

IN MID-JANUARY A MALE PINE WARBLER STRUCK OUR PATIO window and fell to the patio gasping for breath. Pat flew into action, grabbing the small towel reserved for such accidents and nuking it in the microwave for 30 seconds. She scooped up the warbler and gently made a grotto for it in the warm towel and placed both on the patio table. After about an hour of warmth and rest, he flew off, apparently recovered from his near-death experience.

Using a tongue-depressor padel, Pat puts suet out every morning, placing it in holes drilled in a cedar post, a hanging cedar log, and straight on the bark of a large pine tree. She noticed that a male Pine Warbler ("her warbler"?) began coming very close to her every morning, often eating the suet from right in front of her while she filled other holes.

Eventually, the warbler would come to the patio table and sing for food. Pat would carry out a tongue-depressor of food and the bird would hop over to her and eat two or three bites and fly away.

This behavior continued into May, when his fancy turned to another lady more his size. He still comes to the patio and sings occasionally, but only eats suet sparingly, once or twice weekly.

—Bob Reed

Membership Note

AOS WANTS TO DESIGN A NEW ONE-PAGE SHEET THAT members can hand out to birding friends and other people that they meet while birding who they think might be interested in AOS. We would distribute some hard copies, but the sheet would also be available for anyone to print.

Right now, we are open to suggestions on just what would be the best concise message to have on that sheet. We would like to include some benefits a birder can get from AOS, such as what they can learn, from whom they can learn and so on. We would also like to include something about how birders can use AOS membership to contribute to the birding community through writing and volunteering.

Please email me at lfgardella@gmail.com with your suggestions. I look forward to hearing from you all and coming up with a great new AOS sheet.

—Larry Gardella

The 'Bama Kingbirds' Big Day

By AVA LYERLY



HIS SPRING WAS SUCH A MEMORABLE BIRDING journey for my teen years, and I believe the rest of the Bama Kingbirds would say the same. Here is the story of how a group of Alabama teens came together to hit their biggest day of birding!

Birmingham Zoo Education Programs Curriculum Specialist Jess Searcy developed a birding competition for young Alabama birders called the Alabama Bird Search–Youth Challenge. Partners for the event included Alabama Audubon, Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, and Jefferson County Parks and Preserves comprising Ruffner Mountain, Red Mountain Park and Turkey Creek Nature Preserve. The competition was modeled after the Georgia Youth Birding Competition founded by Tim Keyes and was free to all interested Alabama youth from prekindergarten through 12th grade. The Big Day was a 24-hour competition that took place any day during April 12-19, 2024, anywhere in Alabama, with an awards ceremony held April 20 at the Birmingham Zoo.

My good friend and fellow teen birder, Mason Currier, who has spent most his life birding around the Gulf Coast and Mobile County, told me about the Birmingham Zoo Youth Bird Search (YBS), and suggested we start a team. I was absolutely down to do a Big Day in Mobile County with another young birder! The YBS rules required a 2–5-person team of teens, a chaperone (enter my Dad, Tony Lyerly) and a mentor (crowd roars): Alabama Audubon's Andrew Lydeard.

In March, Mason was contacted by Ellis Halgren and his sister Clara from Tuscaloosa. They wanted to join our team! We were so happy to add two awesome birders to our team. We worked out the details and probably thought a little too hard about a team name. Eventually, we settled on one we agreed was perfect: The Bama Kingbirds!

Mason, our team captain, spent several weeks doing research, scoping out where certain birds were, like “this is the best chance for Anhinga” or “this is where Brewer's Blackbirds have been seen.” Because of our great team captain, tips from Andrew on spotting the most species, and most important, enjoying each bird and not hurrying, we had a plan to hit our target: 175 birds. After the planning stage, we



The Bama Kingbirds on the road (left to right): Mason Currier, Ellis Halgren, Eve Lyerly, and Clara Halgren. (Tony Lyerly)

were ready to set out on our journey. It didn't take us long to become great friends and enjoy a Big Day full of adventures, lifers, rarities, and fun! We began at 4:15 a.m. in north Mobile, moved toward the Mississippi state line and then back down to end the day at Dauphin Island. We concluded with our last fly-by bird at 7:45 p.m. Collectively, our group effort and birding skills in the field put us in the lead!

Here are some highlights of our day: The first bird of the day was a Chuck-wills-widow at Mason's residence. While we started on an eerie, dark trail at 4 a.m. to find nocturnal species, all we encountered were some early morning singing birds. Later in the morning, a Great Horned Owl made up for it by flying over our heads at Blakely Mud Flats! No matter how many times I see them, I am still “wowed” by their magnificent figure. Our Blakely checklist was 80 birds, with some rarities and surprises like a Wilson's Phalarope seen from a distance, a late female Bufflehead, and many White-crowned Sparrows. We also saw multiple stunning male Painted Buntings. At Battleship Park, we got an awesome look at a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron which let us walk right up to the boardwalk where it was perched. Traveling down a road that seemed to lead nowhere, near the Mississippi state line, we

found some late Brewer's Blackbirds in a large field, perched together in a tree, like Mason had predicted. In the distance, Swallow-tailed Kites swooped through the air, showing us their incredible tails. One favorite sight of the day we found as Dad was driving down a dirt road. Ellis yelled "Uppies, Uppies!" We all jumped out of the car, cameras and bins in hand. Right next to the road were some Upland Sandpipers, giving their "pip-pip-pip" call. It was a special sighting for the day. A Tennessee Warbler's chattering song and an Eastern Meadowlark later, we were on our way to Dauphin Island, picking up raptors flying over Dauphin Island Parkway. Once on the island, we headed to the beach and got some lovely looks at a Reddish Egret on Pelican Island as he danced about in the shallow water and spread his wings. This was a lifer for some of us! After hanging around some bottlebrush trees, we finally had a gorgeous male Cape May Warbler pop out of the tree for a magnificent view. Our day ended with some Seaside Sparrows at the Dauphin Island Airport and a final, Black-crowned Night Heron fly-by.

The whole group met on the island to wrap up the night, celebrate our sightings, and enjoy a meal at the Lyerly camp-

er/diner. Our total was a whopping 171 bird species, and it won us the first-place title for the inaugural year of YBS! It was a celebration of so many fun and exciting bird species and a wonderful adventure with new friends. There were approximately 20 competing teams of all ages, which means more young birders for us to connect with down the road. However, Bama Kingbirds holds a special place in my heart. It was so much fun that the team is planning to reunite in the fall for another Big Day, perhaps to make a new record, but of course...to have some more fun! Happy Birding to you all!

Spring Meeting Silent Auction

THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HELD A SILENT AUCTION AT the spring meeting to raise money to create bird curriculum specific to Alabama. The money will be used to pay teachers to write curriculum during the summer. The auction included a wide variety of items from art work, books, clothing, and jewelry. Thanks to everyone who bid often and high, we were able to raise over \$1900.—Shirley Ferrell

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

Federal EIN: 63-1229959

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 44, NO. 2 • SUMMER 2024

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DESIGN.....Robin McDonald

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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. Complimentary copies available for review and promotional purposes.

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Annual Membership:

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