

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 44, NO. 4 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY WINTER 2024

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

FOUNDED 1952



4

IN MEMORIAM

OLIVE ANN PARSONS
SANDRA FITZPATRICK KENDALL

6

AOS FALL MEETING
FALL MEETING REPORT
by Drew Haffenden & Bob Reed

IN THIS ISSUE

7

AOS FALL MEETING
FALL MEETING COMPILATION

Cover: Piping Plover (left) and Semipalmated Plover
on Dauphin Island. (Photo by Drew Haffenden)

8

AOS WINTER MEETING
AOS WINTER MEETING
SCHEDULE AND ACTIVITIES

10

AOS WINTER MEETING
MEET THE SPEAKER:
DR. SAHAS BARVE

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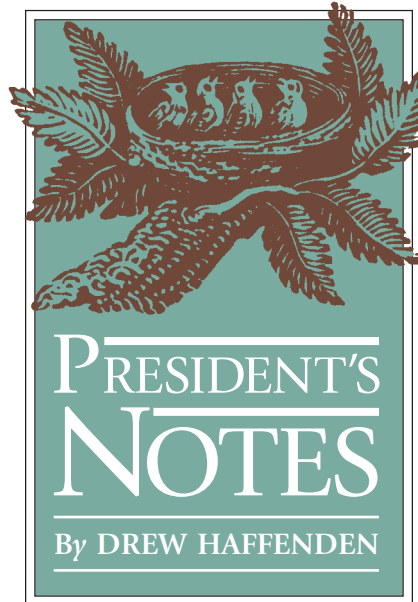
IT'S THE TIME OF THE YEAR that many birders call rare bird season. Later October and November is a prime time for rare birds to show up, mainly western ones. These may be returning individuals or newly lost or misguided birds. The weather is milder, so wonderful for getting out. And although habitat can be a guide of where to look, many birds are not so fussy about habitat, in part because many occupy different habitats where they winter farther south. So, get out and have some birding fun. I'd also remind you that our January meeting is at St Marks. We have blocked off rooms, but they will be released on December 31, so if

you intend to join us sign up and get your room before then, as availability is not certain after that, and the price will rise.

In just under a month Christmas bird counts will start. This very useful program for bird conservation is also a lot of fun, one of the times birding with others won't have you shushed if you enjoy a bit of social chitchat. Bring a friend new to birding to join the fun and help develop a new friend for the birds. They need all the friends they can get.

And speaking of birds needing friends, I was at the annual Cocktails with the Critters fundraising event here on the coast of the Alabama Coastal Foundation, which does great conservation work along the Alabama coast including operating the Share The Beach turtle nesting monitoring program. I was talking with Dennis Liu, of the E. O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation. We were talking about private land trusts such as DIBS. He pointed out, and made me more aware, of how important these trusts were for land protection and conservation. Although there are large players such as The Nature Conservancy, they can't be everywhere, and when all the smaller land trusts are added up, their reach is broad and their total protected area is huge.

They are also local, recognizing local conservation issues often overlooked by the larger organizations. Sitting at home that evening I thought about AOS, not as a land trust (though its ongoing and generous support of DIBS makes it a quasi one) but as a conservation organization helping birds not with a physical landscape but a mental one. Though the



casual, then serious, interest in looking at and enjoying birds may start as that alone, it may, shortly into the process, transform birders into conservationists, if they were not so before. They see and experience birds disappearing from areas they previously birded due to development and land degradation. They see first-hand diminishing numbers of birds due to large picture environmental damage and change.

But like small land trusts, individual birders can make a difference. By reaching out to newer birders, AOS members can keep these starting birders' interest up until it continues under its own power. Introducing non-birders to birds, such as via Vice President Shirley Farrell's school

teacher and student outreach programs, giving bird talks to local community groups and schools, striking up a conversation with non-birders using a local park or hiking trail, being active on social media, talking about backyard bird gardens and feeders to the local gardening club, suggesting bird friendly plantings in municipal parks and other open areas, and other opportunities can bring new birders into the fold.

For those of you who visit Dauphin Island in spring, for some years now you have seen the For The Birds signs on Town right of ways in front of many houses and Town properties. These stop the Town from mowing these areas during bird migration in April and early May to protect Lyreleaf Sage, a preferred food of Painted Buntings and other seed-eating birds. This idea came from one person, Don Mckee, who with his wife Dena got the town onboard. Of the hundred or more signs up, plus the several entire streets designated by the town, very few are in front of the houses of birders. The vast majority have been requested by non-birders once they found out why the program was in place. With increasing numbers of people more aware of the needs of birds, as happened fortuitously during the Covid shutdown, the mental landscape for birds and habitat conservation and other measures increases. Once awakened to the need for bird conservation, and conservation generally, that recognition rarely disappears. It's a bit like putting a mental conservation easement on someone's mind, just as we do with land. While there are national, state and private protection

agencies, they can't be everywhere, or have local knowledge. But this is something all birders can do, just by talking to others in their community. People before us, by their foresight in protecting bird habitat, and the birds themselves, allow us to enjoy them now. Especially now, it's our turn to pay it forward by bringing more of those we meet along the way to become part of the mental landscape of bird conservation.

IN MEMORIAM

Olive Ann Parsons

LONG-TIME AOS MEMBER ANN PARSONS, OF WETUMPKA, Alabama, passed away at the age of 86, on January 27, 2024. She was born April 26, 1937.

She was predeceased by her parents, Charles Steven Allen and Marion Elizabeth Allen (Cornwell). She is survived by her husband, AOS member Bruce L. Parsons, Jr., her children, Bruce A. Parsons (Rhonda), Beth Osgood (Mark), Eric Parsons and Kathryn Sumrall (Steve); ten grandchildren, and eight great grandchildren.

Sandra Fitzpatrick Kendall

SANDRA FITZPATRICK KENDALL (83) PASSED AWAY ON September 13, 2024.

Sandra was born on August 14, 1941, in Montgomery, Alabama. She attended the University of Alabama and, while there, met and married Robert G. Kendall, III. After brief stays in Hawai'i and Montgomery, she lived most of her adult life in Mobile, Alabama, where she raised her daughters, Lee, Mary Margaret, and Kathryn.

Sandra was a life-long learner who never stopped inquiring, growing, and challenging her preconceptions. She was endlessly curious, constantly reading and recommending new books, and her social calendar was always full.

She is survived by her three daughters, Lee Metcalf, Mary Margaret Bailey (John Bailey), and Kathryn Travis, and her nine grandchildren, Kate (Daniel), Laura, Curtis, Kendall Ann, Elizabeth, Emma, Julia, Helen (Dustin), and Michael (Katie), all of whom she adored.

From the Membership Committee

YOU ARE GETTING THIS NEWSLETTER IN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT season, but you surely remember this fall's unusual numbers of late migrants. Eastern Wood-Pewees, Barn Swallows and a wonderful mix of warblers. We could feel it happening, but a team of eBird reviewers (almost all of them AOS members) and a few other AOS members are doing their best to make sure that this phenomenon is well-documented and to analyze it thoroughly.

You will be able to read all about it in an *Alabama Birdlife* issue that will summarize this fall's migration, just as you have been able to read seasonal reports in earlier issues. People you know, including people who bird with you, can also benefit from this analysis if they join AOS in the next few months. Help your friends by giving them a gift membership or encouraging them to join.

Membership is based on the calendar year, so if you have not renewed for 2025, now is the perfect time.

—Larry Gardella, Membership Chair



*A Peregrine Falcon on the wing
at Dauphin Island. (Drew Haffenden)*

New Members

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Bruce Parsons

Lucia Plant

Michelle Reynolds

Bob & Pat Reed

(in memory of Charles Kennedy)

Jessica Searcy

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Spring 2025 February 10, 2025

Summer 2025 May 10, 2025

Fall 2025 August 10, 2025

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.

Upcoming Meetings

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING—Friday,
January 17, 2025, 5:30 p.m. via Zoom

WINTER MEETING—January 24–26, 2025
Wildwood Inn, Crawfordville, Florida

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

FALL MEETING—October 10–12, 2025
Dauphin Island, Alabama

AOS FALL MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, OCTOBER 11-13, 2024

AOS Fall Meeting Report

By DREW HAFFENDEN & BOB REED

THE WEATHER WAS PERFECT FOR THE FALL meeting, at least for humans, though not so much for birding as winds gave the birds an opportunity to continue south quickly. Which of course is good for them. About 70 birders attended the meeting, a good turnout. It was good to see so many friends converge on Dauphin Island. Given how dry it had been, the mosquitos were still surprisingly abundant and hungry.

The weekend was pretty birdy, with the Shell Mounds a little busier than in recent Octobers, both with avian and butterfly activity. Little pockets of birds would pop up, entertain folks for a while, and move on, with 18 species of warblers, all the thrushes and relatives except Hermit, nine species of sparrows including good looks at a Nelson's at the airport (after a bit of work) and three others elsewhere, Seaside, Lincoln's. White-crowned, Clay-colored and a Henslow's Sparrow seen by a group of birders, including our speaker Cin-Ty Lee, at Grand Bay Savannah National Wildlife Refuge where a Black Rail was reported as heard. At the East End many saw a long-persisting Ash-throated Flycatcher. A possible Bullock's Oriole was found late Friday by Andrew Lydeard and was

refound on Saturday for the group. Photos showed overlap features with Baltimore, and the jury is still out on which it was. The Wood Stork appeared early October near the ferry landing and was quite unconcerned about people or cars, although it was only seen flying short distances. It had become so accustomed to humans that people approached to within a few feet near the campground, which is cool, but doesn't bode well for its overall survival chances, though it is feeding well and seemed perfectly healthy. Ten heron species and allies were tallied, including a white morph Reddish Egret that now appears to be a permanent island resident.

Dr. Cin-Ty Lee presented a workshop on flycatchers, complete with dozens of photographs, tables, and comparisons, very useful for this often-difficult group. His Saturday presentation was a very interesting talk on nocturnal flight calls, which meshed well with Nathan Pieplow's spring meeting talks on recording bird calls and what bird sounds can mean.

The food, Friday and Saturday night, was delicious, as usual. Wilton's never disappoints. Thank you, Patsy, for arranging all of this. Overall a very good meeting by one of the most active birding state organizations in the country.



A white morph Reddish Egret was observed during the winter meeting. (Drew Haffenden)

2024 AOS Fall Meeting Compilation List
Dauphin Island, Alabama, October 11–13

NOTEWORTHY BIRDS OF THE WEEKEND WERE BLACK RAIL, Least Bittern, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Bullock's Oriole. Black-bellied Whistling-Duck. Count total was 154 species.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Wood Stork	Philadelphia Vireo	Boat-tailed Grackle
Blue-winged Teal	Anhinga	Warbling Vireo	Ovenbird
Mallard	Double-crested Cormorant	Red-eyed Vireo	Northern Waterthrush
Mottled Duck	American White Pelican	Loggerhead Shrike	Black-and-white Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Brown Pelican	Blue Jay	Tennessee Warbler
Rock Pigeon	Least Bittern	American Crow	Orange-crowned Warbler
Eurasian Collared-Dove	Great Blue Heron	Carolina Chickadee	Common Yellowthroat
Inca Dove	Great Egret	Tufted Titmouse	Hooded Warbler
White-winged Dove	Snowy Egret	Tree Swallow	American Redstart
Mourning Dove	Little Blue Heron	Bank Swallow	Northern Parula
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Tricolored Heron	Barn Swallow	Magnolia Warbler
Black-billed Cuckoo	Reddish Egret	Cliff Swallow	Bay-breasted Warbler
Black Rail	Cattle Egret	Cave Swallow	Yellow Warbler
Clapper Rail	Green Heron	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Virginia Rail	Black-crowned Night-Heron	Brown-headed Nuthatch	Palm Warbler
Sora	White Ibis	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Yellow-rumped Warbler
American Oystercatcher	Turkey Vulture	House Wren	Yellow-throated Warbler
Black-bellied Plover	Osprey	Sedge Wren	Pine Warbler
Killdeer	Northern Harrier	Marsh Wren	Prairie Warbler
Semipalmated Plover	Cooper's Hawk	Carolina Wren	Black-throated Green Warbler
Piping Plover	Bald Eagle	Gray Catbird	Summer Tanager
Snowy Plover	Red-shouldered Hawk	Brown Thrasher	Scarlet Tanager
Ruddy Turnstone	Broad-winged Hawk	Northern Mockingbird	Northern Cardinal
Sanderling	Red-tailed Hawk	European Starling	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Least Sandpiper	Great Horned Owl	Scaly-breasted Munia	Blue Grosbeak
Short-billed Dowitcher	Belted Kingfisher	Eastern Bluebird	Indigo Bunting
Spotted Sandpiper	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Veery	Painted Bunting
Willet	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Gray-cheeked Thrush	Dickcissel
Greater Yellowlegs	Downy Woodpecker	Swainson's Thrush	
Laughing Gull	Northern Flicker	Wood Thrush	
Franklin's Gull	American Kestrel	American Robin	
Ring-billed Gull	Merlin	House Sparrow	
Herring Gull	Peregrine Falcon	House Finch	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Ash-throated Flycatcher</i>	<i>Clay-colored Sparrow</i>	
Gull-billed Tern	Eastern Wood-Pewee	White-crowned Sparrow	
Caspian Tern	Least Flycatcher	Seaside Sparrow	
Royal Tern	Eastern Phoebe	Nelson's Sparrow	
Sandwich Tern	White-eyed Vireo	Henslow Sparrow	
Black Skimmer	Yellow-throated Vireo	Savannah Sparrow	
		Lincoln's Sparrow	
		Swamp Sparrow	
		Eastern Towhee	
		Eastern Meadowlark	
		Bullock's Oriole	
		Red-winged Blackbird	
		Bronzed Cowbird	
		Brown-headed Cowbird	
		Common Grackle	

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.

AOS WINTER MEETING, CRAWFORDVILLE, FLORIDA, JANUARY 24-26, 2025

AOS Winter Meeting Schedule



OUR WINTER MEETING WILL BE A RETURN TO FLORIDA and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Unless otherwise noted, all activities begin or occur at Magnuson Hotel Wildwood Inn, 3896 Coastal Highway, Crawfordville, FL 32327, phone: 850-926-4455. Casual dress is appropriate throughout the meeting. *Remember that Crawfordville, Florida, is in the Eastern time zone.* To register online for the Winter Meeting, go to: <http://www.aosbirds.org/aos-meeting-registration>.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17, 2025

5:30 p.m. Board Meeting via Zoom

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2025

Birding on your own if you arrive early. The Wakulla Springs Boat Trip is an option for those who can't stay for the Sunday field trip. The boat trips start hourly from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Reservations can be made at <https://thelodgeatwakullasprings.com/boat-tour/>. *See page 9 for details.*

5:00 p.m. Dinner on your own—two of our kind members will provide desserts at the Social Hour at the hotel's Blue Heron Room

5:30 p.m. Registration—Blue Heron Room

6:00 p.m. Social Hour—Blue Heron Room

7:00 p.m. Workshop with Drew Haffenden: "A Wholistic Look at Peeps"
Blue Heron Room—*See page 9 for details.*

7:45 p.m. Member Photos—You must preregister with Drew Haffenden to show photos.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 2025

7:00 a.m. Field Trip: St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge—Meet in the Hotel Lobby
See page 9 for details.

5:30 p.m. Dinner at the Seineyard@Wildwood
Adjacent to Magnuson Hotel Wildwood Inn. Attendees will pay for their own dinners.

6:30 p.m. Registration
Where: Magnuson Hotel Wildwood Inn—Blue Heron Room

6:30 p.m. Social Hour—Blue Heron Room

7:15 p.m. AOS Winter Meeting Announcements

7:30 p.m. Keynote Speaker: Dr. Sahas Barve
"Oak Scrub, Fires, and Family:
The Natural History of an Enigmatic
Florida Endemic Bird"

9:00 p.m. Adjourn

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 2025

9:15 a.m. Compilation
Where: Hotel lobby

10:15 a.m. Field Trip: Wakulla Springs Boat Trip
Where: Meet in the Hotel Lobby following the Compilation. Boat trip is at 11.00 a.m.
See page 9 for details.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND INFORMATION

Magnuson Hotel Wildwood Inn
3896 Coastal Highway, Crawfordville, FL 32327
Telephone: 850-926-4455

Rooms are reserved at the hotel for a convention rate of \$114 for King, \$124 for Double Queen, plus taxes and surcharges per night. The reservation telephone number is 850-926-4455. Please indicate that you are with Alabama Ornithological Society. You must book by December 31, 2024, for guaranteed availability and price. Rooms after that are subject to availability and additional cost.

AOS Winter Meeting Group Activities

— *Friday Evening Workshop* —
*A Wholistic Look at Peeps
with Drew Haffenden*


AS WE ARE AT THE COAST IN WINTER—AN UNUSUAL occurrence—and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge is well known for shorebirds in addition to many other birds, our workshop will take a look at the small plovers and a couple of similarly sized sandpipers. Rather than trying to identify them just by appearance, as is done in most field guides, we'll look at a whole suite of characteristics that enables you to quickly decide if the bird is a plover, or a sandpiper, then use a few simple steps to funnel down to which species you are seeing. Some characteristics can eliminate possibilities before you even see a bird! For those who visit the Gulf Coast in spring, this workshop will also be useful to get you ahead of the game for your birding there. The workshop will be presented by our president Drew Haffenden, known for his interest in, and surveying of, shorebirds during 13 years of living on Dauphin Island. Drew has run several multi-session shorebird ID courses for Alabama Audubon and has led shorebird ID outings for AOS.

— *Saturday Field Trip* —
St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

ALL DAY TRIP TO ST. MARKS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE with our guest speaker Dr. Sahas Barve and AOS leaders. St. Marks is one of the richest wildlife refuges in the South, known especially for its water birds, ranging from beach shorebirds to herons and egrets, eagles and other raptors, sparrows and birds of grasslands and shrubs, with miles of open walking trails along levees allowing for excellent viewing opportunities. Regional birders, and those from further afield, return to St. Marks again and again for the natural history opportunities it provides.

— *Sunday Field Trip* —
Wakulla Springs Boat Trip

WAKULLA SPRINGS, IN THE EDWARD BALL WAKULLA Springs State Park, is well-known for its clear warm-water spring and river, surrounding hardwood forests dripping with Spanish moss, and wildlife including birds, alligators, fish, and mammals. The 45-minute boat ride allows us to glide along the river seeing wildlife on the banks. The surrounding forest is home to both wintering songbirds and local resident birds. Those participating will proceed to Wakulla Springs following the Compilation.



*A young American Alligator relaxes
at Wakulla Springs (Robin McDonald)*

AOS WINTER MEETING, CRAWFORDVILLE, FLORIDA, JANUARY 24-26, 2025

Meet the Speaker: Dr. Sahas Barve

Oak Scrub, Fires, and Family

The Natural History of an Enigmatic Florida Endemic Bird

THE FLORIDA SCRUB-JAY IS A FLAGSHIP OF THE unique upland oak scrub habitats of Florida. Dr. Sahas Barve will leverage 56 years of long-term data to reveal the interesting social lives of scrub-jays, their dependence on their unique habitat, and the threats that are facing this charismatic habitat specialist.

Sahas is the Program Director of Avian Ecology at Archbold Biological Station. There, he oversees a 56-year-long study of threatened Florida Scrub-Jays. Previously, Sahas has worked on a wide range of taxa and systems including tracking king cobras in south India, bird research in the Himalayas for his PhD from Cornell University, Acorn Woodpecker

biology at Old Dominion University, and museum research at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History on Himalayan and Andean birds. Sahas is broadly interested in life-history evolution of birds and enjoys communicating research with the public in new and innovative ways. Outside work, he is an avid birder, and has also won awards in multiple grilled-cheese-making competitions.

BELOW LEFT: *Dr. Sahas Barve is the John W. Fitzpatrick Director of Avian Ecology at Archbold Biological Station. (Jen Brown)*
BELOW RIGHT: *The Florida Scrub-Jay is the only species of bird endemic to the state of Florida. (Jim Rodgers)*



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Your Membership Dues Support the Work of the Alabama Ornithological Society

Please check membership category: ____ New Member ____ Renewing Member

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

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Hal Smith, AOS Treasurer, 3590 Eagle Nest, Opelika, AL 36801

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**YOU CAN ALSO JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP ONLINE AT WWW.AOSBIRDS.ORG
 PLEASE ADD 4% TO PAYPAL TRANSACTIONS**

AOS WINTER MEETING 2025 REGISTRATION FORM

Complete and return to:

Hal Smith, AOS Treasurer, 3590 Eagle Nest, Opelika, AL 36801

Telephone: (334) 329-8272 • Email: aosbirdstreasurer@gmail.com

Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by January 15, 2025

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

WAKULLA SPRINGS BOAT TRIP

I will attend the Wakulla Springs Boat Trip on Sunday morning, January 26.

YOU CAN ALSO REGISTER ONLINE AT WWW.AOSBIRDS.ORG	
Registration @ \$25 per person	\$
2025 DUES	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution	\$
TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$

ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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 TALLASSEE, ALABAMA 36078

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