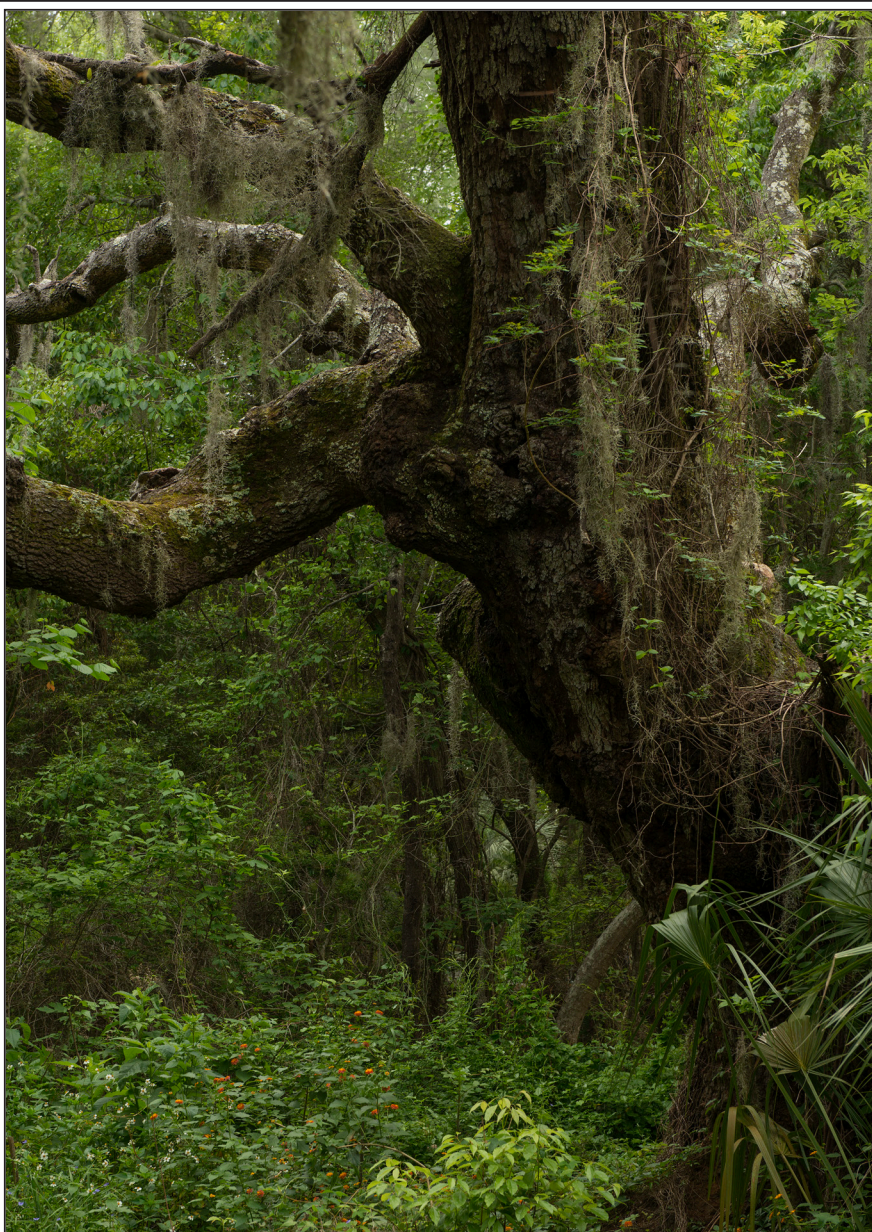


THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 46, NO. 1 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SPRING 2026

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

FOUNDED 1952



IN THIS ISSUE

5

MINUTES OF THE AOS
BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
by Dana Hamilton

7

LAUNCH OF THE AOS
VIDEO CHANNEL
by Greg Jackson

8

BOOK REVIEW
SCOT DUNCAN'S
SOUTHERN RIVERS
by Mike Russell

9

AOS LOCAL FIELD TRIPS
HEADING YOUR WAY
by Greg Jackson

11

AOS 2026 SPRING MEETING
SPRING MEETING SCHEDULE
AND FIELD TRIPS

14

AOS 2026 SPRING MEETING
MEET THE SPEAKER:
JASON HOEKSEMA

Cover: The Bee Tree, on the Shell Mounds,
Dauphin Island, in 2016 (Robin McDonald)

ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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 VICE PRESIDENT.....VACANT
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 IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT.....Drew Haffenden

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 MOUNTAIN REGION.....Stan Hamilton
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 GULF COAST.....Mike Wilson
 NORTHWEST FLORIDA.....Lucy Duncan

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ALABAMA BIRDLIFE.....Eric Soehren
 THE YELLOWHAMMER.....Robert Reed
 ALABAMA BIRD RECORDS.....Greg Jackson
 NORTHWEST FLORIDA BIRD RECORDS....Bob Duncan
 AOS ARCHIVES CURATOR.....VACANT

COMMITTEES

CONSERVATION

Greg Harber
 Scot Duncan

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT

Larry Gardella
 Stan Hamilton, Mike Wilson

SOCIAL MEDIA

Molly Folkerts Caldwell

BIRD RECORDS

Steve McConnell, *Secretary*
 Ben Garmon, Drew Haffenden,
 Greg Jackson, Craig Litteken,
 Eric Soehren, Collin Stempien

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Joe Watts
 Annabel Markle

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

Eric Soehren
 Robin McDonald

THE YELLOWHAMMER

Robert Reed
 Robin McDonald

CENSUSING

Greg Jackson
 Bob Duncan, Geoff Hill, Steve McConnell,
 Eric Soehren, Bill Summerour

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Greg Jackson
 Molly Caldwell, Shirley Farrell, Larry Gardella, Dana
 Hamilton, Ken Hare, Anabel Markle, Jared Sapp, Joe Watts

EDUCATION

Paul Franklin
 Shirley Farrell, Stan and Dana Hamilton, Don Self

FIELD TRIPS

Patsy Russo

DAN C. HOLLIMAN RESEARCH FUND

Greg Harber
 Scot Duncan, Eric Soehren

MEETINGS

Dianna and Paul Porter

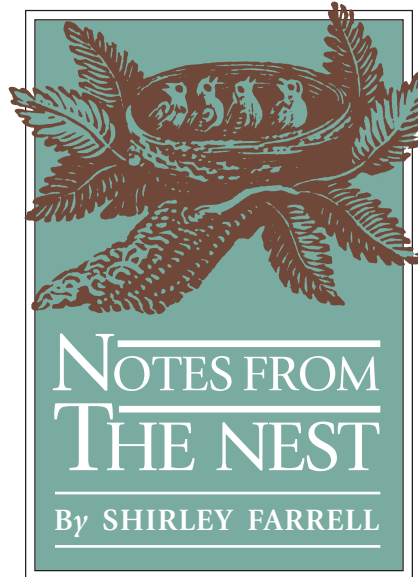
AFTER MONTHS OF THOUGHTFUL planning and excited anticipation for our Winter Meeting, it was truly disappointing to have to cancel due to severe weather. Safety must always come first, and I am grateful that our members heeded warnings and stayed safe during that winter storm. Still, I hope—fingers crossed—that this does not become a pattern for future meetings! We had planned a festive Mardi Gras-themed gathering, complete with surprises sprinkled throughout the weekend, and while it was difficult to let that go, all is not lost.

Instead of canceling outright, we've simply shifted those plans forward. Think of it as a "rain check" with extra anticipation built in. We are excited to announce that the 2026 Winter Meeting activities have officially been postponed to 2027. Please go ahead and SAVE THE DATE for the 2027 Winter Meeting at Lake Guntersville State Park, January 22–24, 2027. While we will welcome a different keynote speaker for that meeting, the location, timing, and spirit will be well worth the wait.

In the meantime, I am delighted to share that Bonner Black has agreed to join us as the keynote speaker for our 2026 Fall Meeting, which will take place October 9–11, 2026. We are thrilled to welcome her and look forward to the insights, enthusiasm, and music she will bring to our fall gathering.

Looking ahead more immediately, our 2026 Spring Meeting is scheduled for April 17–19, 2026, and it promises to be an outstanding weekend of learning, birding, and community. Our featured speaker will be Dr. Jason Hoeksema, a professor at the University of Mississippi and a nationally recognized expert on shorebirds. Dr. Hoeksema is a key leader of the Delta Wind Birds workshops and field trips and is deeply passionate about shorebird conservation—particularly in the face of shrinking habitats during critical migration periods.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Dr. Hoeksema's work is his collaboration with catfish farmers in Mississippi to create alternative habitats for migrating shorebirds. These innovative partnerships highlight how conservation, agriculture, and science can work together in powerful ways. If you would like to learn more about this work in advance, I



encourage you to read "A Safe Harbor" in *Delta Magazine*, (<https://deltamagazine.com/a-safe-harbor/>) which beautifully captures the heart of these efforts.

During the Spring Meeting, Dr. Hoeksema will also join us in the field to visit newly created habitats along the causeway to Dauphin Island, as well as the traditional and productive birding areas on Pelican Island (peninsula). This field experience will offer a firsthand look at how intentional habitat creation supports shorebirds and other species, and it will undoubtedly deepen our understanding of conservation in action along the Gulf Coast.

The Spring Meeting is also an important time for AOS in another way—it is when we host our annual silent auction to support the Education Committee. Funds raised through the auction directly benefit both educators and AOS members by supporting professional learning opportunities, classroom resources, and birding education initiatives. Over the years, this committee has played a vital role in extending AOS's educational mission, and we are excited to continue expanding those efforts.

Beginning this year, we are also enhancing our Saturday afternoon programming during meetings. In addition to our traditional schedule, members can look forward to additional talks, workshops, and hands-on classes. These offerings are being thoughtfully developed under the leadership of our new Education Committee Chair, Paul H. Franklin, who brings many years of experience designing and teaching birding classes and webinars.

Paul is currently developing a suite of educational classes and webinars for AOS, and we are pleased to share that some—if not all—of these sessions will be recorded and made available through the AOS YouTube Birding Channel. This will allow members to revisit content or catch up on sessions they were unable to attend in person. You can access these videos through the AOS website, and I encourage you to check back periodically as new content is added.

A special thank-you goes to Dr. Greg Jackson, who has been working diligently behind the scenes to bring this video channel to life. Thanks to his persistence and vision, this long-held goal has become a reality. We are also deeply

grateful to our former president, Dr. Geoff Hill, for sharing his video series *Birding Better with Geoff Hill* on the AOS channel. His generosity has helped set a strong foundation for this growing resource.

Dr. Jackson has also been busy with another exciting initiative through the Outreach Committee—the Bird Benches Project. AOS has installed two beautifully placed benches, complete with AOS plaques, at Fort Morgan, offering birders a welcoming place to sit, observe, and enjoy the surrounding habitat. Additional locations are already in the works, with the long-term goal of placing Bird Benches at key birding sites throughout Alabama. This project reflects AOS's commitment to accessibility, outreach, and creating welcoming spaces for birders of all ages and abilities.

Another long-awaited development is the return of printed AOS checklists. While many of us rely on eBird to record sightings (and rightly so), there is still something deeply satisfying about holding a physical checklist in your hands. Our new checklist serves a dual purpose: it functions as a compact AOS brochure and an Alabama bird checklist, complete with a QR code linking directly to our website.

Think of this checklist as an infographic you can carry with you. It includes the 455 bird species recorded in Alabama, along with valuable information about their status in the state. These checklists will be available at AOS meetings and events, and a digital version is also available on our website for download and printing.

We are also excited to share that AOS now has new logo apparel, including T-shirts and sweatshirts, just in time for spring birding season. We've made purchasing easy through Bonfire—you simply place your order, pay for shipping, and your items will be delivered directly to your home. No pickup, no hassle. We hope you'll wear your new AOS T-shirt or sweatshirt at the Spring Meeting—and well beyond as you represent AOS in the field, at events, and on your everyday birding adventures. Be sure to check the information in this issue for details on how to order your AOS apparel.

All of these exciting initiatives bring us back—full circle—to AOS meetings themselves. Like many organizations, AOS has experienced rising costs related to meeting spaces, speaker travel, honoraria, and logistical needs. As many of you know, we now meet twice a year at the Dauphin Island Community Center. While this venue costs more than the Shelby Center at the Sea Lab, it provides a larger space and

eliminates the need to rent tables or recruit volunteers for extensive setup and cleanup—a task that has become increasingly difficult as our membership grows and changes.

After careful consideration, the Board has approved a modest increase in meeting registration fees. Beginning with the Spring 2026 Meeting, registration will increase by \$5, from \$25 to \$30. This is the first increase in many years, and we believe it is a necessary and reasonable step to ensure the continued quality of our meetings. While future costs may vary depending on speakers and programming, we remain committed to keeping meetings as accessible as possible.

One further note: after many years of extraordinary Stowers hospitality, the venue for the Saturday lunch is changing to the DI Community Center, where Jenny and the Porters will be hosting.

Looking ahead, 2027 marks the 75th anniversary of the Alabama Ornithological Society, and we are already working behind the scenes to make it a truly memorable year. You can expect special programming, celebrations, and a few surprises along the way.

To stay connected with AOS and everything on the horizon (hint: there's always something!), please follow us on Facebook and regularly visit the AOS website, where we continue to add new content and updates. I hope to see many of you at the Spring Meeting, where we will learn more about shorebirds, explore remarkable habitats, and enjoy a few surprises. And don't forget—join us for compilation at noon on Sunday, where we'll share our bird sightings and enjoy a well-earned treat. Happy birding, and thank you for being part of AOS.

Upcoming Meetings

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING—Friday,
April 10, 2026, 6:00 p.m. via TEAMS

SPRING MEETING—April 17–19, 2026
Dauphin Island, Alabama

FALL MEETING—October 9–11, 2026
Dauphin Island, Alabama

WINTER MEETING—January 22–24, 2027
Lake Guntersville State Park Lodge

A O S S P E C I A L B O A R D M E E T I N G , J A N U A R Y 1 6 , 2 0 2 6

Special Board Meeting Minutes

By DANA HAMILTON, SECRETARY



THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY BOARD of Directors held a special meeting on January 16, 2026 via TEAMS. President Shirley Farrell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The November 21, 2025, minutes were approved as written.

TREASURER REPORT

President Shirley Farrell advised that the Treasurer's Report will be forwarded via email to the AOS Board for approval when received.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Shirley Farrell provided an update on the AOS Winter Meeting registration numbers and shared that registered AOS winter meeting participants are invited to attend the Eagle Awareness field trip on Sunday morning, January 25, 2026 for no additional charge.

She shared a preview of the new AOS merchandise (tee shirts, sweatshirts, caps, mugs etc.) that will soon be available to order via the AOS website.

She also announced that AOS has been invited to participate at several upcoming bird-related events across the state. AOS is invited to have a booth (or table) at events which include Eagle Awareness Weekend at Guntersville State Park, the Banding Coalition of the Americas bird banding events, the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries (DIBS) spring and fall migration events at the Shell Mounds, the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge's 2027 Festival of the Cranes, and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resource's Feather Fest.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CONSERVATION: Greg Harber reported that there are proposals and ongoing analysis at the federal level to drill for natural gas and expand the natural gas drilling leases in Alabama's Conecuh National Forest. This is an item of environmental concern because drilling runs the risk of potentially polluting the water table, as well as jeopardizing the

resident population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in the Conecuh National Forest. It does not appear that the proposed legislation includes any protection for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker clusters throughout the forest. If drilling occurs without protection for the RCWs, all the effort and resources previously invested to establish and protect this population may be jeopardized. This item merits comment by AOS. The comment period ends January 29, 2026.

Greg Harber also reported that he has sent letters to Senators Katie Britt and Tommy Tuberville on behalf of AOS to encourage them to keep the strength of the Endangered Species Act protections which are currently in place.

DAN C. HOLLIMAN RESEARCH FUND: Greg Harber reported that this year, the following research funding proposal applications were submitted for consideration to the AOS Dan C. Holliman Research Fund:

Assessing the Degree to Which Different Agroecosystems Benefit Avian Biodiversity and Landowner Wellbeing in Alabama—Alexander Ferentinos, Ferguson Lab, Incoming Graduate Student, University of Alabama

Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) Recognition of Nest Competitors: Testing Threat Perception Across Familiar and Novel Species—Jordan Rambo, Perez Lab, M.S. Student, University of South Alabama

Predicting Avian Assemblage Based on Habitat Structure in Riparian Ecosystems—Kathryn R. Schabron, Environmental Science M.S. Student, Troy University

Signals, Sounds and Sustenance: Attractant-Driven Woodpecker Activity in West Alabama—Caroline L. Smith, Ph.D. Student (2nd Year), University of Alabama

Following a careful review of the applications, the reviewers (Greg Harber and Eric Soehren) recommended funding the Alexander Ferentinos and Kathryn R. Schabron applications for \$1000 each. Additionally, the committee recommended partial funding for the application submit-

ted by Jordan Rambo. It was noted that Caroline L. Smith previously applied and received funding from the Alabama Audubon Walter Coxe Research Fund. After discussion by the AOS board, Greg Harber presented a motion to fund the Alexander Ferentinos and the Kathryn R. Schabron applications at \$1000 each, and the Jordan Rambo application at \$500. The motion was passed unanimously.

MEMBERSHIP: Larry Gardella reported that many AOS members participate in the Christmas Bird Counts each year. He is formulating a spreadsheet of the Christmas Bird Count participants to name the participants who are not AOS members so that he can reach out to them, discuss the benefits of AOS membership, and invite them to join AOS.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Molly Caldwell reported that views on our Facebook page are down this month (59%) compared to last month, but over the last three months our views are up 416% (compared to the previous three months). Our Facebook page currently has 2948 followers, with 50 of those gained over the last three months. Our Instagram page following is still low—currently at 174 followers, up from 129 since our last board meeting. Recent social media posts have focused on promoting the winter meeting. As always, we can use help from all of you: Like and share our posts and invite people to like our page.

We are always looking for quality photos of birds native to or seen in Alabama (along with stories of interesting bird sightings, etc.) for new content. Or if you just have nice photos but no story, Molly will be happy to create informational content. If you have bird photos you are willing to update, please upload them here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13u0mqU9iTECg7femNhC7Kr7otjBoDwBk?usp=sharing>

BIRD RECORDS: The Records Committee is currently evaluating a large batch of rarity reports including potential first state records. There were no other changes from the November 2025 report.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE: Greg Jackson reported that the Outreach Committee has been busy with several initiatives. The AOS Video Channel provides YouTube videos related to bird identification and tips for better birding. The bird identification links include in-depth lessons related to Tern Identification in Alabama and Northwest Florida presented by Andrew Haffenden and Vireo Identification presented

by Greg D. Jackson. One may view the entire presentation or search by the individual species. Additionally, the Video Channel includes a 12-part series Birding Better with Geoff Hill. More content will be added soon.

The AOS Bench initiative is underway and growing. Two benches were recently installed at Ft. Morgan in the Stables area. These are sturdy attractive metal benches that have a prominently-placed plaque which states “Donated by the Alabama Ornithological Society;” the AOS website and QR code are also displayed. The QR code connects directly to the AOS website. Soon, more benches will be installed in other heavily birded areas.

The AOS Checklist has been updated to reflect the current taxonomy and decisions by the AOS Bird Records Committee. AOS President Shirley Farrell added a QR code to link to the AOS website. 500 of the checklists will be printed in an initial run. These can be handed out at field trips, AOS information booths at festivals, and other events related to birding.

President Shirley Farrell has created an AOS business card with the AOS logo, website address, Gmail address on the front and the AOS QR code on the back.

Greg Jackson stated that other important birding initiatives are in the works with announcements to follow.

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE: Eric Soehren reported that *Alabama Birdlife* Vol. 70, No. 2 (December 2024) was completed and electronically mailed to the membership on October 14, 2025, then sent to the new print vendor (Alabama Power Company Print Shop) to print the hardcopies. The hardcopies were subsequently delivered to Workshops, Inc. who used the provided mailing list to prepare the hardcopies for mailing. The hardcopies were mailed first class mail on November 7, 2025. In early December, Eric received two large bundles of the hardcopies labeled “Return to Sender.” A thorough investigation shows that the error occurred at the Post Office. The erroneously returned hardcopies were remailed and should have been received by late December 2025. Eric plans to send a mass email to the AOS members who have requested hardcopies to identify any members who have not yet received this issue so that he can send them one. Eric also reported that *Alabama Birdlife* Vol. 71, No. 1 (June 2025) is awaiting feature articles and will be published in the Spring.

THE YELLOWHAMMER: Bob Reed reported that *The Yellowhammer* deadline is February 10, 2026. Bob advised that

the short deadline is necessary to be able to publish the information about the AOS Spring Meeting on time.

CENSUSING: Nothing new to report since the November 2025 report.

EDUCATION: President Shirley Farrell welcomed our new AOS Education Chairman, Paul Franklin, to the AOS board. Paul is well regarded in the birding community, bringing with him many years of experience teaching birding and photography classes, both online and in person, as well as leading field trips. Paul discussed several different educational avenues that he would like to pursue in his new role as AOS Education Chairman.

OLD BUSINESS

President Shirley Farrell reminded the Board that the AOS 75th Anniversary will be celebrated at the Spring 2027 Meeting. She would like to bring in a nationally known Keynote Speaker as part of the milestone celebration. Several prominent speakers were mentioned in the discussion, but no decision was made.

For the Spring 2027 Friday night program, President Shirley Farrell suggested a panel discussion with long-time AOS birding experts to discuss how birding has changed over the years.

Shirley also advised that the 2026 AOS Spring Meeting Keynote Speaker will be Dr. Jason Hoeksema from the University of Mississippi. Dr. Hoeksema works with Mississippi catfish farmers on a project that lowers water levels in catfish ponds for shorebird stopover sites and conservation.

NEW BUSINESS

Bob Reed submitted the following motion: Move to increase meeting registration from \$25 to \$30. Move further that the president be authorized to increase, in consultation with the executive committee, the registration for a particular meeting as needed for speakers, venue, or other needs.

He offered the following reasons supporting his motion. In earlier AOS Board meetings, we have learned that the organization has been losing money on each meeting due to the increase in the cost of the meeting venue and other expenses associated with holding the meeting. AOS uses our money to sponsor grants to students doing bird-related research, DIBS habitat conservation, the AOS outreach initiatives, etc. We should not be losing money with every meeting. A modest

increase in the AOS meeting registration fee should be considered. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Launch of AOS Video Channel Program

By GREG D. JACKSON



WE ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THE AOS VIDEO Channel, with content produced by AOS members for the education and enjoyment of birders. The videos are available through YouTube and are free for members and non-members alike.

Currently there are two identification seminars: tern ID by Drew Haffenden and vireo ID by me. Both are fully indexed and can be viewed in their entirety or in individual segments by species. (Click on the "...more" tab on the YouTube page just under the video to expand the description and see the index tabs.) The vireo presentation is accompanied by a PDF of the content which may be useful as a reference; this is downloadable from the video channel webpage.

Additionally, Geoff Hill has generously shared his excellent "Birding Better" video series providing tips and guidance on several birding topics. Links to these 12 videos are provided on the video channel webpage.

We hope to add more identification pieces soon. If other AOS members have bird-related educational videos they would like to add to the collection, please contact me at g_d_jackson@bellsouth.net. You can access the video channel page on the AOS website by clicking: <https://www.aosbirds.org/videos/>. We hope you enjoy these presentations and look forward to hosting many more!

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Summer 2026 May 10, 2026

Fall 2026 August 10, 2026

Winter 2026 November 10, 2026

BOOK REVIEW

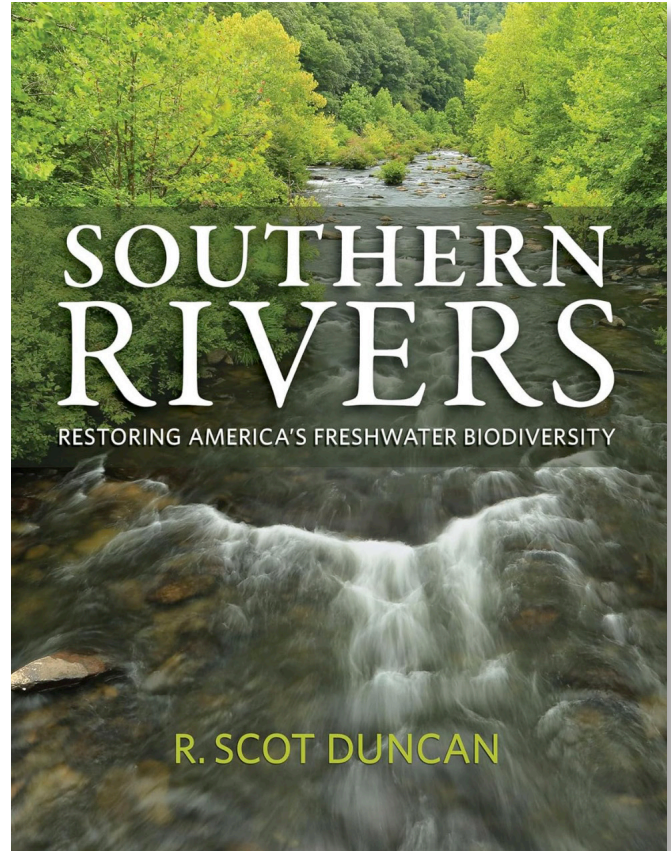
Southern Rivers: Restoring America's Freshwater Biodiversity

R. Scot Duncan

The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa (2024)
ISBN: 978-0-8173-2182-6 (cloth); 978-0-8173-6128-0
(paper); 414 pages, 50 Chapters, plus notes, bibliography,
and index

By MICHAEL RUSSELL

ALABAMA IS A WELL-WATERED STATE, HAVING MORE miles of streams and rivers for its geographical area than most other states, yet most of these are not in their natural condition or free-flowing throughout their length. Even the Cahaba River, the longest free-flowing and most biologically diverse in the state, was once dammed near its source, and rising as it does near Birmingham, has been subject to industrial pollution and unregulated drainage, especially from the expanding suburbs to the south of the city. However, this book is about more than the rivers and streams of Alabama, as it covers the larger extent of southeastern states, which share the same hydrological and environmental problems as Alabama. Scot Duncan, formerly Professor of Biology at Birmingham-Southern College and now Executive Director of Alabama Audubon, has made the ecology of southern rivers his specialty. In this book he has set out to describe the natural diversity of freshwater life, the problems it faces throughout the southeast, and how it can and should be restored to meet the needs not only of wildlife but also of the growing human population. While it follows his previous outstanding work, *Southern Wonder* (2013), which described the amazing biodiversity of Alabama's plant and animal wildlife in the context of its underlying physiography, *Southern Rivers* takes a very different tone. In the preface, Duncan notes that these rivers are in crisis, yet people depend on them for the services they provide, not only as sources of household water and crop irrigation,



means of transportation, and for electrical power, but also for various recreational activities.

Duncan warned me when I purchased this book that the first parts might make for disturbing reading, but that if I persevered it would become more optimistic; that is true. Its fifty chapters are arranged in six parts. Part I (chapters 1-5) begins with Duncan recounting his boyhood on Pensacola Bay, which has since seen considerable ecological decline due to industrialization along the rivers that feed into it and the resulting pollution. This leads into a discussion of the impact of the emerging Anthropocene era and concomitant climate change effects on the biodiversity of the rivers, and poses three questions: *How did we get here?* *Will we have enough water?* and *Can southeastern river biodiversity survive the Anthropocene?* The remainder of the book seeks to answer these questions. Part II (chapters 6-18) relates, often from a personal and family perspective, many examples of impact on aquatic species, ranging from sturgeons that were once common in Alabama and have economic value as well as constituting an evolutionary relic, to the large number and

many species of freshwater mussels that have major impact on water quality as well as stream flow. In turn, this affects the vitality of numerous fish species, many of which are unique, endemic to single river flowages, and threatened with extinction as a result. But as Chapter 18, *Pearls and Caviar*, points out, this is more than a matter of such appealing topics, as the human population in the southeastern states depends critically on both the quantity and quality of water available in their river systems.

Part III (chapters 19-26) lays much of the blame for the pollution of rivers on the coal industry, both directly as a result of mining the seams in the mountainous hinterland where most southeastern rivers rise, and indirectly from the burning of coal (as well as other fossil fuels) to drive other industries, heat homes, and fuel transportation. One consequence of this is the global rise in sea level brought about by the warming climate, which is affecting highly populated coastal communities as Duncan himself has witnessed at his family homestead. Part IV (chapters 27-28) summarizes the dire state we find ourselves in, concluding with the warning provided by the impact of hurricane Ivan in October 2004 along the gulf coast of Alabama and adjacent Florida.

Part V (chapters 29-48) describes practical solutions to the threats posed by Anthropocene-driven environmental change. As chapter 29 notes in its title, these require us to *Armor, Adapt, [and] Retreat*. Ensuing chapters show how all this must involve Working with Nature (chapter 30), by such efforts as restoring rivers to free-flow by dam removal, which has already begun in several locations both in the southeast and elsewhere with remarkable impact on the wildlife, as described in several chapters of this section. These positive outcomes, however, relate not only to wildlife, but also to the human population, with impacts on social equality, thereby helping to reverse some of the historical injustices from which the region has suffered. The final section, Part VI then raises a fourth question: *Where Do We Go from Here?* (chapter 49) and concludes with *Homecoming* (chapter 50) in which Duncan acknowledges his parents, Bob and Lucy Duncan, for an upbringing that has led him to his current professional status and the writing of this book. Thus, this work has a strong personal element and is the better for it, as this challenges all of us to rise to the task. Environmental conservation is not just a matter of looking out for the critters, it affects everyone; we are all part of nature.

AOS Local Field Trips Heading Your Way

By GREG D. JACKSON

AOS Local Field Trips Coordinator



THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY IS excited to present the AOS Local Field Trips program! Through a flexible system of free events, we plan to connect the birding community with the most experienced collection of birders in our area. The program will present a wide range of field trips, initially throughout Alabama but hopefully to soon include the AOS area of northwest Florida.

Experienced volunteer leaders will select the locations, dates, durations, and types of activities and offer them to area birders (AOS members and non-members alike). These field trips may range from a couple of hours at a local park to all-day journeys in far-flung localities. All regions of the state are well represented by a robust team of leaders, allowing the program to reach as many birders as possible. Events will be at no cost for participants (excepting a special activity such as a boat trip).

The platform for the program is a calendar accessed through the AOS website (www.aosbirds.org); a dedicated webpage is being built. Some outings will be listed well in advance; others could appear nearer the date. When possible, these trips will also be advertised on Facebook and other social media, though if there is short notice this may not always occur. Browsing the calendar regularly will be the best way to see what is currently being offered. Clicking on the event in the calendar will bring up details. In general, no sign-up will be necessary unless a leader requests it in the notes.

Anyone seven years old and above is encouraged to join these trips regardless of birding experience (please do not bring pets). Unless other items are specified in the trip description, what you need to join us are a pair of binoculars, clothes and shoes appropriate for outdoor activities at that season, drinks/snacks, and curiosity about birds and nature.

If circumstances require significant modification or cancellation, leaders will post these changes to the event listing by 6 p.m. the prior evening (usually with a change in the color of the tab from green to orange or red). It is strongly

recommended that anyone planning to join a trip checks the calendar listing the prior evening.

We're thrilled to be able to share decades of knowledge and skill throughout AOS area year-round. Though learning about birds and other natural topics will be a goal, just as important will be the simple fun of exploring the great outdoor places in our region. Come join us!

AOS Participation in Citizen Science

By LARRY GARDELLA



WHEN AOS BEGAN IN 1952, OUR GOALS INCLUDED stimulating interest in the study of birds, bringing together those interested in birds, and publicizing the findings of their observations. During the past 74 years, AOS has been advancing these goals both through activities within our organization and through work with other organizations. This article discusses two projects where AOS is playing a major role: Breeding Bird Surveys and Christmas Bird Counts.

For the Breeding Bird Surveys of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, AOS members who know the calls and songs of their breeding birds have done the lion's share of the work, running 47 of Alabama's 66 routes. AOS member Eric Soehren is the Alabama point person for the BBS. Significant findings from Alabama's BBS have appeared in articles in *Alabama Birdlife*.

AOS members have also done good work on Christmas Bird Counts for the National Audubon Society. Of the twelve active CBC circles in Alabama, AOS members have been the compilers for nine, and 40% of the participants on the most recent counts in those circles belong to AOS. I supervise the compilers in Alabama and, with help from Mississippi's Cullen Brown, help monitor the results in Mississippi. I write an annual article on the Alabama and Mississippi counts for Audubon, which discusses rarities, expected birds missing during one or more circle's counts, and any unusually high and low numbers of a species. Often, these records of interest also appear in *Alabama Birdlife*, primarily in articles on seasonal occurrences.

I urge AOS members with good knowledge of the sounds made by their area's breeding birds to volunteer to get up very

early one morning each spring to conduct a breeding bird survey. To see the routes that are available, go to <https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/RouteMap/Map.cfm> and select United States and Alabama. This site shows all the BBS routes in the state. As of the time of this writing, it shows twenty-two of those routes are available.

AOS members with the qualifications to run BBS routes can also be helpful contributors on Alabama's Christmas Bird Counts. So can any other AOS member. National Audubon is making a big push to encourage participation by anyone with an interest in birds. Most compilers can pair inexperienced birders with proficient team leaders. Alabama's current CBC circles are Auburn, Birmingham, Cullman, Dauphin Island, Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Fort Morgan, Gulf Shores, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, Waterloo, Wheeler Dam, and Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. To see just where the count is conducted, please go to <https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count/join-christmas-bird-count> and click on the map link in step 2. AOS members can help improve the quality of CBC data by assuring that circles are adequately covered.

New Members

Nicole Ackermans • Kris Bisgard • Valerie Castanza
Raymond Cavender • John Michael Chappell
Alan Clemons • Amber Coger • Anna Crow Dabbs
Paul Franklin • Augusta Herre • William Lilly
Joe McLaughlin • Matt Morrow • Tom Mullen
Linda Neighbors • Renee Raney • Tasha Simon
Will & Ruth Varnell

Honoraria and Acknowledgements

AOS DONATIONS

Alex Fisher • Greg Jackson • Matt Morrow
Paul & Dianna Porter

DAUPHIN ISLAND BIRD SANCTUARY DONATIONS

Alex Fisher • Richard Beil • Linda Gunnoe
Park & Catherine McGehee • Susan Barrow
James White • Will & Ruth Varnell • Barry Fleming
Matt Morrow • Marilyn Steelman • Cheryl Killingsworth

AOS SPRING MEETING, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, APRIL 17-19, 2026

AOS Spring Meeting Schedule



UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL AOS SPRING Meeting events, including field trips, will start at the Dauphin Island Community Center, 412 Lemoyne Drive. Dress for all activities is casual. Stay tuned for surprises and activities during the AOS Spring Meeting weekend.

FRIDAY, APRIL 17

- 6:30 a.m.** **Field trip: Daphne Bayfront Park and Meaher State Park**—Meet Green Park across from Community Center.
- 5:00 p.m.** Drop off silent auction items
Silent auction starts
- 5:30 p.m.** Registration opens at Community Center
- 6:00 p.m.** Member Social—Heavy hors d'oeuvres
Donations are welcome. This is not included in the registration fee.
- 6:30 p.m.** Announcements and Field Trips Discussion
- 6:45 p.m.** Member Slides—Only 10 slides per person.
Send email to Shirley Farrell (aosbirdsinfo@gmail.com) if you wish to participate.
- 7:10 p.m.** Learn shorebird ID before going out on Saturday morning to the mudflats and Pelican Island with Jason Hoeksema

SATURDAY, APRIL 18

- 6:30 a.m.** **Field Trip 1: Exploring Dauphin Island (Shell Mounds/Goat Trees/Audubon Sanctuary)**—Meet at Green Park across from Community Center
- 6:30 a.m.** Field Trip #2: Coden Mudflat Area and Pelican Island with Jason Hoeksema and Howard Horne. Pelican Island should be opened in March.
- 11:30 a.m.** Lunch at the Community Center and special presentation
- 5:30 p.m.** Registration, Social Hour, Banquet, Silent Auction, Keynote Speaker, Community Center
- 6:00 p.m.** Silent Auction ends

- 6:30 p.m.** Banquet Buffet
- 7:15 p.m.** Announcements and Field Trip sightings
- 7:30 p.m.** **Keynote Speaker: Jason Hoeksema**
“Delta Wind Birds and the Ecosystem Services of Agricultural Pop-up Wetlands”
- 8:30 p.m.** Pick up and pay for auction items

SUNDAY, APRIL 19

- 6:30 a.m.** **Field Trip 1: Blakely Island Mud Lakes with Craig Litteken**—Meet Green Park across from Community Center. **NOTE: See important instructions on page 13.**
- 6:30 a.m.** **Field Trip 2: Grand Bay/Point aux Pins with Shirley Farrell**—Meet Green Park across from Community Center.
- NOON** Compilation (All bird sightings in Mobile and Baldwin Counties from Friday, April 17 to noon, April 19, 2026)—Where: Goat Trees. Treats for all who attend.

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)

AOS Spring Meeting Field Trips

NOTE: ALL FIELD TRIPS MEET AT GREEN PARK ACROSS FROM THE COMMUNITY CENTER

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 6:30 a.m.

DAPHNE BAYFRONT PARK AND MEAHER STATE PARK

This field trip explores the east side of diverse Mobile Bay, birding that combines open-water views, shoreline habitat, and rich delta wetlands. These two easily accessible sites along the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail offer outstanding opportunities to observe waterfowl, waders, shorebirds, raptors, and seasonal migrants. As with many coastal and wetland sites, birders should remain mindful of potential hazards including snakes and alligators. Construction zones should be respected at all times.

Bayfront Park—Bayfront Park is a premier North Mobile Bay birding location featuring wetlands, pine forest edges, shoreline, and a fishing pier. Although portions of the main park area are under construction through April 2027, the pier and adjacent beach areas are often accessible and remain productive birding spots. This site is especially well known for wintering waterbirds including scaups and grebes, shorebirds along the beach and mud edges, and migrant songbirds during spring. The pier provides sweeping views of Mobile Bay, where scanning can reveal diving ducks, loons, pelicans, and passing gulls or terns.

Meaher State Park—The park (below) is located in the wetlands of north Mobile Bay and contains 1,327 acres of a rich mix of delta habitat. Two scenic boardwalks extend into the bay, offering panoramic views and close access to feeding and roosting birds. On the south side of the island looking west, White Ibis are frequently observed. Near the entrance, Yellow-crowned Night-Herons may be seen foraging on crabs.

After stopping at the gatehouse to pay the nominal entrance fee, drive to the shell road (approximately ¼ mile) and park near the chain. From there, walk toward the boardwalk extending into Mobile Bay.



SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 6:30 a.m.

EXPLORING DAUPHIN ISLAND (SHELL MOUNDS/GOAT TREES/AUDUBON SANCTUARY)

Birdwatching on Dauphin Island during spring migration is nothing short of extraordinary. Known as a classic migrant trap along the Gulf Coast, the island can erupt with birds during a spring “fallout,” when cold fronts, rain, and northerly winds force migrating songbirds, shorebirds, and raptors to seek immediate refuge—sometimes appearing to drop from the sky. This field trip explores three of Dauphin Island’s most iconic birding areas, each offering unique habitats that concentrate migrating and resident species.

Shell Mounds—The Shell Mounds are massive piles of oyster shells left by Native Americans centuries ago, now transformed into a shaded birding haven beneath towering live oaks draped in Spanish moss—one believed to be over 800 years old. These cool, sheltered woods are prime fallout habitat, where exhausted migrants gather in astonishing numbers. Warblers, tanagers, vireos, and thrushes often feed at eye level, creating unforgettable close-up birding experiences.

Goat Trees—Just east of the Shell Mounds, the Goat Trees area is named for enormous oak trees where legend says wild goats once hid from alligators. Today, these moss-covered giants create a peaceful, protected woodland ideal for birding during migration. The dense canopy and abundant insects make this a magnet for passerines, while the quiet setting allows birders to slowly work mixed flocks moving through the trees.

Audubon Bird Sanctuary—The Sanctuary spans 164 acres of diverse coastal habitat, including maritime pine forests, swamps, a freshwater lake, and dune systems that lead directly to the beach. A 1,000-foot handicap-accessible boardwalk offers excellent lake views where herons, egrets, and other wetland birds are regularly seen. The sanctuary is part of a Globally Important Bird Area and is open 24 hours a day, making it one of the premier birding destinations on the Gulf Coast.

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 6:30 a.m.

CODEN MUDFLAT AREA AND PELICAN ISLAND

Dauphin Island has been recognized as one of the “ten most globally important sites” for bird migration, making this stop especially exciting during spring movement. We will visit two hotspots on this trip.

Coden Mudflat Area—Coden Mudflat area is the Dauphin Island Causeway Shoreline Restoration Project, that stretches from Bayfront Park to Cedar Point and represents one of the largest investments in Alabama coastal resilience. The three-phase project protects the only access road between Dauphin Island and the mainland while rebuilding critical marsh habitat. Phase 1: Segmented rock breakwaters installed along 3+ miles of shoreline. Phase 2: Beneficial use of dredge material from the Mobile Ship Channel to create a marsh platform and sand berm. Phase 3: Native grass plantings and tidal creek construction to restore natural hydrology. Gaps in the breakwaters allow tidal flow, creating nursery habitat for shrimp, crabs, and fish species—fueling the rich food web that draws shorebirds and waders. The mudflats between Bayfront Park and the Dauphin Island Bridge are a prime, easily accessible birding location along the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail—best viewed at low tide. These nutrient-rich flats attract a diversity of shorebirds, herons, and egrets, with occasional surprises such as Roseate Spoonbills. Parking is limited along the Causeway—carpooling is strongly encouraged.

Pelican Island—Connected to Dauphin Island near the public beach and pier, Pelican “Island” is a narrow strip of sand that historically migrated from the Sand Island Lighthouse and is currently attached to Dauphin Island. Shorebirds and waders congregate along the tidal edges, often at eye level. Depending on water and sand conditions, participants may need to wade shallow water to access portions of the peninsula. For this trip wear sunscreen and shoes that can get wet.

SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 6:30 a.m.

BLAKELY ISLAND MUDFLAT LAKES

For adventurous spring birders, the Blakeley Island Mud Lakes offer one of coastal Alabama’s most productive shorebird and waterfowl locations. This complex of dredge

disposal ponds can host an impressive diversity of species, especially during spring migration when mudflats and shallow water create prime feeding conditions.

After parking, we will walk the dirt road up onto the dike and continue east. Birders must remain on the road or the tops of the dikes at all times. Depending on water levels, the first pond on the right (south side) often provides excellent viewing of waterfowl such as Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Mottled Duck, and Northern Shoveler, along with gulls, terns, and a wide array of shorebirds.

Late spring can be particularly rewarding, as this is one of Alabama’s best locations to find White-rumped and Baird’s Sandpipers among mixed peep flocks.

IMPORTANT ACCESS & SAFETY INFORMATION

The Mud Lakes are former industrial waste treatment sites, and the waters in these dredge material management ponds can be extremely caustic. The ponds are actively used for dredge material disposal by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Alabama State Port Authority.

- Do NOT leave the road or the tops of the dikes for any reason.
- Entry to certain upper ponds is by permit only.
- Water levels fluctuate daily, affecting bird concentrations and viewing conditions.
- There are no facilities on site.
- Expect potentially long, hot, and exposed walks—especially in late spring.
- Bring plenty of water, sun protection, sturdy footwear, and insect repellent.

Permit Requirement

Access to Blakeley Island is only allowed with a valid annual permit on file with the Alabama State Port Authority. Attempts to visit without filing the proper permit can result in loss of visitation privileges for all birders. Please complete the required permit registration here: <https://www.alports.com/birding/>

The AOS website (<https://www.aosbirds.org/alabama-birding/blakeley-island/>) provides an updated map indicating which ponds are currently open to visitors.

SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 6:30 a.m.
GRANDBAY/POINT AUX PINS

This area is Alabama's premier coastal ecosystems—an area The Nature Conservancy has recognized as one of the "last great places on Earth." Spanning more than 18,000 acres of marshes, bayous, wet pine savannas, and estuarine waters, the Grand Bay complex offers exceptional habitat diversity that attracts birds year-round.

While birding here is excellent in every season and famously peaks in fall migration, spring brings its own magic—with migrating songbirds, soaring raptors, and vibrant coastal species moving through open savannas and along tidal edges. Key

hotspots include the 1,100-foot boardwalk off Old Marine Lab Road, perfect for close looks at marsh birds and waterfowl, and Henderson Camp Road, renowned for spring migrants, Whimbrels, and breathtaking Swallow-tailed Kite flyovers.

Beyond birds, this living landscape tells a powerful conservation story. Historically shaped by wildfire, the savannas are now being restored through seasonal controlled burns, transforming overgrown areas into open, grass-dominated habitats that support greater biodiversity. These healthy marshes also function as vital nurseries for more than 90% of Alabama's marine fish species, including red drum, flounder, and spotted seatrout, as well as shrimp and blue crabs—connecting bird life, fisheries, and coastal livelihoods.

MEET THE SPEAKER

*Jason Hoeksema:
 "Delta Wind Birds and
 the Ecosystem Services
 of Agricultural Pop-up
 Wetlands"*

JASON HOEKSEMA IS A PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY at the University of Mississippi, where his research examines bird responses to—and ecosystem functions of—temporary wetlands in agricultural systems, as well as the ecology and evolution of mycorrhizal mutualisms between trees and fungi. He teaches courses in Ornithology, Mycology, Biometry, Meta-analysis, and Coevolution.

In this keynote presentation to the Alabama Ornithological Society Spring Meeting on Dauphin Island, Dr. Hoeksema will describe the conservation problem of migratory shorebirds passing through the Mississippi Delta, how Delta Wind Birds is addressing that challenge by providing temporary habitat on working agricultural land, and research results from studies aimed to assess the habitat quality, shorebird movement ecology, and ecosystem services of the pop-up wetlands provided for shorebirds by DWB.



Jason Hoeksema earned his PhD in Ecology from the University of California-Davis in 2002 and conducted post-doctoral research at the University of California-Santa Cruz and at Duke University. He currently serves as president of the Mississippi Ornithological Society and of Delta Wind Birds, a non-profit founded by shorebird-loving birders in 2013.

AOS Silent Auction

Donate New & Gently Used Items



Funds Support AOS Education Committee

2026 AOS Spring Meeting Silent Auction

A HIGHLIGHT OF OUR SPRING MEETING EACH YEAR IS THE AOS Silent Auction, and we are once again looking forward to a wonderful selection of donated items. This year's auction will feature a wide variety of treasures, including birding and nature books, T-shirts and apparel, original paintings, framed prints, and figurines. Members are also encouraged to bring new or gently used items to donate, making this a true community effort. Whether you're contributing an item, bidding on something special, or simply browsing, there is always something to catch your eye.

Proceeds from the Silent Auction directly support the work of the AOS Education Committee, helping fund educational programs for teachers, students, and our own membership. These funds play a vital role in expanding learning

opportunities, supporting workshops and classes, and strengthening AOS's mission to promote birding education across Alabama. Every donation and every bid helps further this important work.

The Silent Auction will open Friday evening, April 17, and will remain open on Saturday, closing promptly at 6:00 PM on April 18. We encourage members to stop by starting at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday to place bids, check on favorites, and enjoy browsing the diverse assortment of items generously donated by fellow AOS supporters.

We also need volunteers to help make the Silent Auction a success. Assistance is needed to set out donated items at the start of the auction and again to gather and organize items at the close. If you are able to lend a hand—even for a short time—your help would be greatly appreciated. Volunteering is a wonderful way to support AOS, connect with other members, and ensure this important fundraiser runs smoothly.

*AOS T-shirts and Sweatshirts:
Made for migration mornings, compilation
bragging, and everything in between*

AFTER SEVERAL YEARS WITHOUT LOGO APPAREL, WE ARE excited to announce that AOS T-shirts and sweatshirts are back! Whether you're birding in the field, attending an AOS meeting, or simply showing your love for Alabama birds around town, our new apparel offers a comfortable and stylish way to represent the Society. The designs feature the classic AOS logo and are available in a variety of colors, making them perfect for all seasons—from spring migration to cooler fall mornings.

To make purchasing easy, AOS has partnered with Bonfire, allowing you to order directly online. You place your order, pay for shipping, and your items are shipped straight to your home—no pickups required. Best of all, a portion of the proceeds from every sale goes directly back to AOS, helping support our programs, outreach, and education efforts. We hope you'll wear your new AOS T-shirt or sweatshirt at the Spring Meeting and beyond, proudly showing your support

for the Society wherever your birding adventures take you. Be sure to check the information in this issue for details on how to order—or visit the Bonfire link to get yours today. <https://www.bonfire.com/2026-aos-t-shirts/>



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 _____

AOS DONATION _____

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Lori Oswald, AOS Treasurer, 303 Le Jeune Way, Birmingham, AL 35209

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 4% TO PAYPAL TRANSACTIONS**

AOS SPRING MEETING REGISTRATION FORM

Complete and return to:

Lori Oswald, AOS Treasurer, 303 Le Jeune Way, Birmingham, AL 35209

Telephone: (205) 381-0560 • Email: aosbirdstreasurer@gmail.com

Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by April 10, 2026

Name(s) _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Email Address _____ Phone _____

I (We) have never attended an AOS meeting before and claim a free one-year membership.

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 @ \$30 per person	\$
Banquet Buffet @ \$30 per person	\$
2026 DUES	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Donation	\$
AOS Donation	\$
TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$

I (We) plan to attend the Friday Night Social. I (We) plan to attend the lunch on Saturday.

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Family: \$40
Sustaining: \$50
Life (individual): \$350
Life (family): \$550

Alabama Ornithological Society

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<http://www.coastalbirding.org>

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<http://www.bamabirds.com>

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

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