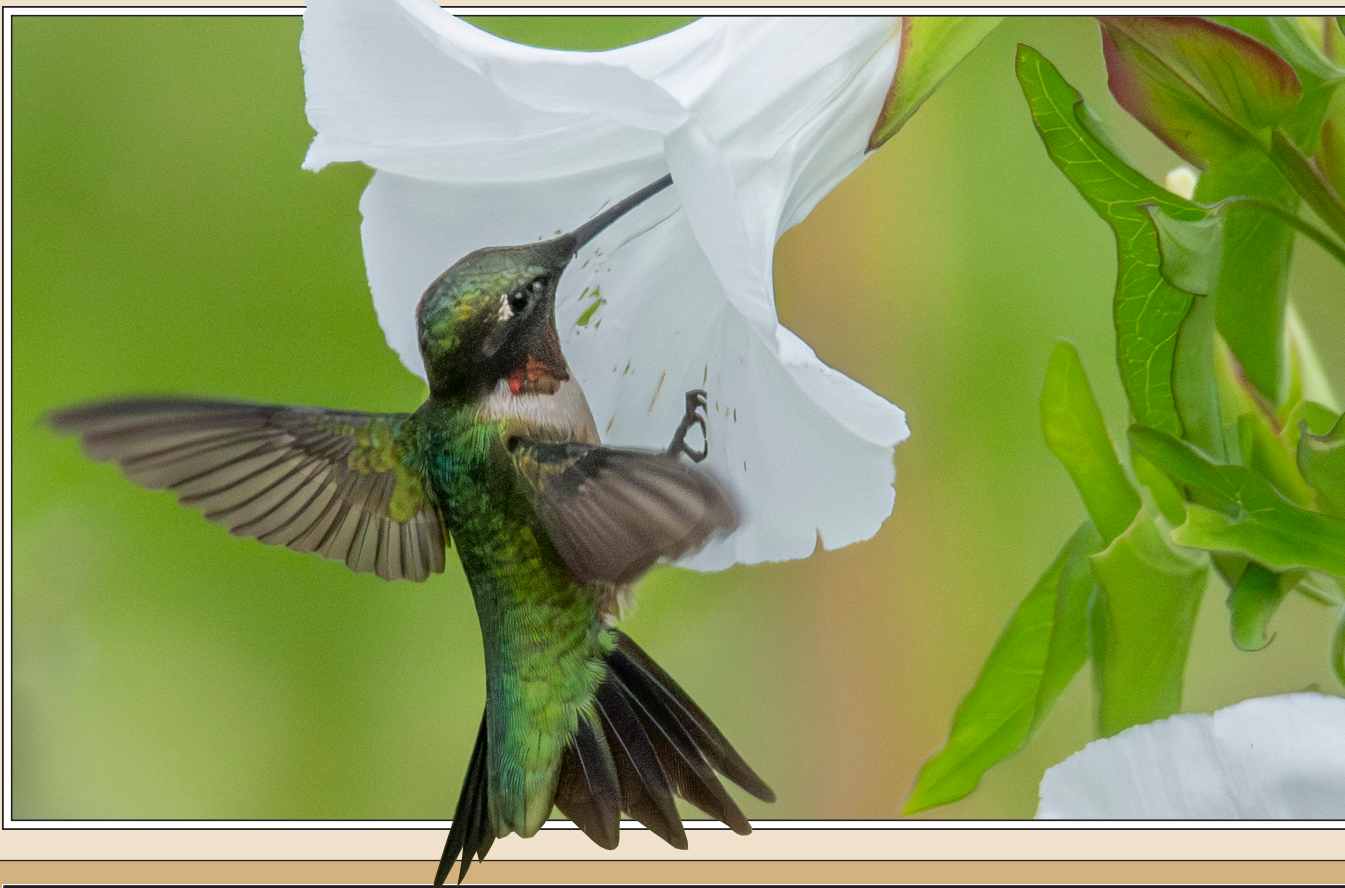


THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 46, NO. 3 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY FALL 2026

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

FOUNDED 1952



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ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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 MOUNTAIN REGION.....Stan Hamilton
 COASTAL PLAIN.....Annabel Markle
 GULF COASTMike Wilson
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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

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 Stan Hamilton, Mike Wilson

SOCIAL MEDIA

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 Dana Hamilton, Debi Jackson,
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 Annabel Markle

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

Eric Soehren
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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



FTER I BECAME PRESIDENT OF the Alabama Ornithological Society, one of the things that surprised me most was hear-

ing from former members who thought AOS was no longer an active organization. I quickly realized that we needed to do more than continue the important work AOS has always done—we needed to make sure people could see us doing it.

Thanks to our new Outreach Committee and the enthusiasm of AOS members across the state, that is certainly changing. AOS is out and about in Alabama!

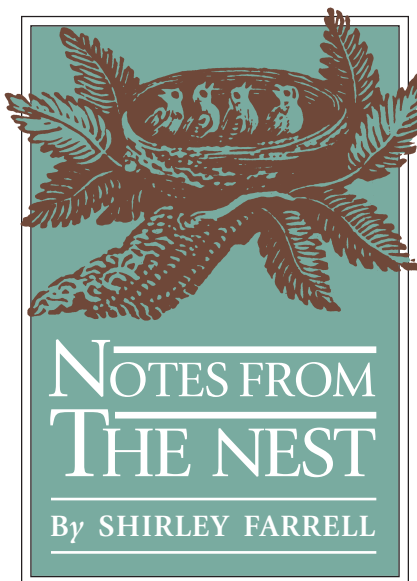
This summer has been an especially busy one. Members have led birding field trips, staffed exhibits at festivals and museums, worked with children and families, and taught workshops for educators. Most important, we have been introducing AOS to new birders and reconnecting with people who may not have heard from us in a while.

Greg Jackson, chair of our Outreach Committee, is doing a tremendous job organizing field trips led by AOS members throughout the state. He also created a Google Calendar that can be accessed through the AOS website, making it easy to see when and where upcoming trips will take place. Molly Caldwell, our Social Media Chair, has been creating wonderful graphics to promote these opportunities on Facebook. Membership is not required to attend a field trip!

Have you attended a free AOS field trip yet? If not, I hope you will join us soon. These trips are a wonderful way to meet other birders, explore new places, sharpen your birding skills, and introduce someone new to the joy of birding.

AOS is also receiving invitations to participate in festivals, library programs, museum events, and nature center activities throughout Alabama. This summer, our outreach exhibit had a recurring theme: feathers! We have been providing chicken and duck feathers for children and adults to examine as they learn about the structure and function of feathers—and, of course, everyone gets to take a feather home.

In May, we participated in Monte Sano State Park's Feather Fest, which drew more than 400 people. Jared Sapp and his wife joined me in staffing the AOS table and sharing our love of birds with visitors.



In July, Larry Gardella and Mike Wilson represented AOS at the Spanish Fort Public Library's Science Discovery Day. Larry created a short presentation connecting dinosaurs and birds, and feathers once again provided a hands-on way for attendees to explore ornithology.

Then, on August 1, Stan and Dana Hamilton joined me at the McWane Science Center's Party Animals event, attended by more than 2,000 people. Children and adults were fascinated by the feathers and eager to learn more about birds and AOS. And, on a personal note, it was also my first official day of retirement from Troy University! What better way to spend

it than talking about birds?

Our outreach this summer has not been limited to birding trails and festivals. We have also been looking for birds in some unexpected places—on the walls of buildings throughout Alabama and the Florida Panhandle!

This summer, we challenged AOS members and friends to keep their eyes open for murals featuring birds as they traveled throughout the state and the Florida Panhandle. When someone discovers a bird mural, we have encouraged them to take a photo and share it on the AOS Facebook page. Several murals have already been posted, giving all of us another reason to explore Alabama's communities while celebrating the connection between birds, art, and the places we call home.

And the summer challenge is becoming something even bigger! By our Fall 2026 AOS Migration Celebration we plan to have the Bird Mural Trail of Alabama available online. The trail will bring together the bird murals we have discovered and provide a fun new way for birders, families, travelers, and communities to explore Alabama. You may even find a few murals just across the state line in the Florida Panhandle worth adding to your travels.

But we still need your help finding them! As you travel this summer and fall, watch downtown buildings, museums, restaurants, parks, nature centers, and other public spaces for painted birds. When you find one, snap a photo and share your discovery with AOS on Facebook.

How many bird murals are hiding in plain sight across Alabama? Let's find them!

Who knows? Between our birding field trips, AOS benches, official bird checklist, and now a Bird Mural Trail, we may soon have bird-related destinations to explore in every corner of Alabama.

Our outreach has extended to educators as well. In June and August, I had the opportunity to lead professional development workshops focused on birds, birding, and ways teachers can bring ornithology into their classrooms.

On June 25, AOS partnered with Legacy, Partners in Environmental Education, to present a session at the Cahaba Biodiversity Center in Centreville. We worked with teachers and state park educators from across Alabama, sharing activities and resources they can use to engage students in learning about birds and the natural world. We even took a bird walk to see what birds were out and about in the woods.

On August 5, Baldwin County gifted education teachers invited me to lead a full-day workshop on ornithology and birdwatching at Weeks Bay. One of the highlights for me was spending the day with Kathy Hicks! Kathy led us on a birding hike, and that afternoon we headed onto the bay by pontoon boat. Between those immersive experiences, we explored questions such as: What makes a bird a bird? Why is it important to study birds? How can birds become a vehicle for teaching science, conservation, observation, and inquiry? Teachers left with activities and resources they can take back to their students.

The invitations keep coming—and that is wonderful news. But it also means *we need more volunteers*.

A handful of us cannot do all this work—although, to be fair, much of it feels more like play! Whether you can help at an exhibit table, talk with visitors, assist at an AOS weekend, or represent AOS at an event in your part of the state, there is a place for you.

You will find a link and QR code in this newsletter for our volunteer survey. Please consider completing it. We need members who can help not only during our spring, fall, and winter weekends, but throughout the year and throughout Alabama. *We are becoming known again—and our members are making it happen.*

Keep your eyes open at nature centers, welcome centers, museums, and hiking trails for the AOS Bird Checklist of Alabama. This is Alabama's official bird checklist, and AOS maintains the state's bird records.

New checklists are produced each fall to reflect new records approved by the AOS Records Committee. In an age

of eBird, iNaturalist, and smartphones, it is easy to think of a paper checklist as something from the past. But have you really looked at ours?

It is much more than a list—it is an infographic about Alabama's birds. On one piece of paper, you can see the birds documented in our state, identify species that nest here, recognize birds for which additional documentation may be needed, and see species that are extinct or extirpated from Alabama. There is a wealth of information packed into that checklist. We have also added a QR code that takes users directly to the AOS website, where they can learn more about our organization, activities, publications, and opportunities to become involved.

I have mentioned our AOS benches before, but this project deserves another mention. We continue to purchase and place benches at birding locations around Alabama. At this rate, perhaps one day we really will have an AOS Bench Trail!

Each bench bears an AOS plaque and provides something simple but meaningful—a place for birders, families, hikers, and other visitors to sit quietly and enjoy the birds around them. Donations to support the purchase and placement of additional benches are always welcome.

I am especially excited about our Fall Migration Celebration Weekend. We will hear two presentations featuring some of the latest technology being used in the birding and research world, with Kyle Shepard and Dr. Emma Rhodes sharing their work with hummingbirds and hummingbird tracking. What makes their participation especially meaningful is that many of us have watched Kyle and Emma grow up in the birding community. Both volunteered with and learned from Bob Sargent and the Hummer/Bird Study Group, and today they are carrying that work forward through the nonprofit Banding Coalition of the Americas. They are helping lead the way as we learn more about these remarkable tiny flying jewels. We are in for a treat with their Friday and Saturday evening presentations!

You may also have noticed a few changes to meeting registration. Registration is now completely online, and you may choose whether to add the 4% credit card processing fee to your payment or not. We have also clarified the wording regarding the Saturday evening banquet. The banquet is an optional part of the weekend; however, you must register for the weekend to participate in AOS field trips and optional events, including the banquet.

Like almost everything else, our costs have increased, particularly food costs, and we have had to increase the banquet price accordingly. In recent years, AOS has lost money on the banquet, so this adjustment was necessary. We are very grateful for our partnership with the Town of Dauphin Island, which provides AOS with a significant discount on the community center rental and helps us keep meeting costs as reasonable as possible.

Don't forget that AOS members will receive the first opportunity to register for our 2027 AOS Spring Migration Celebration weekend featuring David Allen Sibley. Because the Dauphin Island Community Center can accommodate only 200 attendees, space will be limited. Walk-ins will not be accepted.

If you know someone who is thinking about joining AOS, now would be an excellent time to encourage them!

As I look back over this busy summer, I am encouraged by what I see. AOS is not simply an organization that gathers a few times each year. We are birders, educators, researchers, conservationists, volunteers, and friends who share a love of Alabama's birds and the places they call home. We are getting out into communities, welcoming new birders, supporting education, sharing knowledge, and creating opportunities for people across the state to experience birds. AOS is out and about—and people are noticing.

Thank you to every member who has led a trip, staffed a table, taught someone about a bird, shared one of our posts, volunteered at an event, or simply invited someone to join us. I hope you will be part of what comes next. See you this fall—and see you out birding!

Upcoming AOS Events

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING—Friday,
October 2, 2026, 6:00 p.m. via TEAMS

FALL MIGRATION CELEBRATION—
October 9–11, 2026, Dauphin Island, Alabama

WINTER BIRDING WEEKEND—January 22–24,
2027, Lake Guntersville Park Lodge

SPRING MIGRATION CELEBRATION—
April 16–18, 2027, Dauphin Island, Alabama

What's Happening

By LARRY GARDELLA



ON JULY 21, MIKE WILSON AND I REPRESENTED AOS at Spanish Fort's Discovery Science Day. Approximately 100 children and many of their parents came to learn about dinosaurs and related topics. The children were thrilled by a live snake at the Weeks Bay table and a replica of a mastodon femur at a table for the University of South Alabama's Earth Sciences Department. They also enjoyed looking at the feathers we had on display along with jeweler's loup magnifiers for studying feather barbs. They walked away with our bird stickers and temporary tattoos. I talked on birds and dinosaurs using a Google slide show that Shirley helped me with. At least some of the people picked up on my main points, but young children's excitement interfered with the presentation.

Shirley Farrell, Stan Hamilton, and Dana Hamilton also recently had a table at a "Slow Animals" special event at the McWane Science Center in Birmingham. Approximately 2,000 people attended.

Events such as these provide excellent opportunities for AOS to reach out to members of the community. If your community holds any, please consider getting AOS included. Shirley would be happy to give you ideas and an assortment of things to hand out. If there is an opportunity to speak, the slide presentation we put together can easily be adapted for talks in front of various groups, either including bits on dinosaurs or just doing the focus on what makes a bird a bird. You should be able to make a copy from https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1tXs0d63E6zdO0pHNfe_fPIaTA-DSIc6muNT5l1qOdc/ copy and then edit that.

This is a great time for your friends and fellow birders to join AOS, too. Registration for the Spring 2027 Migration Celebration will be opened to members before opening registration to the public (see page 15 for new registration instructions). Please help us to spread the word.

AOS BOARD OF DIRECTORS SUMMER MEETING, JULY 26, 2026

AOS Board Meeting Minutes

By DANA HAMILTON, SECRETARY



THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY BOARD of Directors Meeting met July 26, 2026 via TEAMS. President Shirley Farrell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The minutes of the April 10, 2026 board meeting were approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Lori Oswald reported as of July 17, 2026, AOS has funds (cash + CD) of \$46,572. The total income through July 17, 2026 was \$14,264. The total expense amount through July 17, 2026 was \$16,506. On a cash basis, through July 17, 2026 expenses have exceeded revenues for a net loss of \$2,242 and it is estimated that the full net loss for the year 2026 will be approximately \$6,365. The loss in 2026 includes a \$3750 deposit made for the AOS 2027 Spring Meeting. Lori Oswald also noted that AOS lost income this year because we cancelled the AOS 2026 Winter Meeting. A detailed Financial Treasurer's Report was submitted to substantiate the estimated losses through Fiscal Year 2027.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Shirley Farrell provided an update on several upcoming events as follows:

Update on AOS Fall Meeting: The keynote speaker for the AOS 2026 Fall Meeting will be Dr. Emma Rhodes, co-founder of the Banding Coalition of the Americas (BCA), who will speak about hummingbirds. Additionally, on Friday night, Kyle Shepherd will present a program about BCA's tracking hummingbirds.

Update on AOS Winter Meeting: The AOS 2026 Winter Meeting will be held at Guntersville Park, which is no longer part of the state parks system. The keynote speaker will be Bonner Black. There will be multiple field trips including a trip to Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge.

Update on the 75th anniversary Committee: The 75th Anniversary Committee is planning to have exhibitors, merchandise featuring a new special event logo designed by Annabel

Markle, an update to the History of Alabama Ornithological Society document, and a very special keynote speaker, David Allen Sibley. Note that AOS members will have access to priority registration for the AOS 2027 Spring Meeting and the capacity is limited to 200 registrants.

Update on the Search for a Vice-President: President Shirley Farrell advised the AOS Board that the search for an AOS Vice-President is ongoing. She asked the Board for recommendations for strong candidates.

Update of the Bird Mural Challenge: President Shirley Farrell advised the Board that she has received several submissions of Bird Mural Photos from all over the state of Alabama (and even one submission from the South of France). She thanked Molly Caldwell for posting these submissions to the AOS social media accounts. President Shirley Farrell plans to build a virtual Bird Mural Trail across the state.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CONSERVATION: Greg Harber reported that he has submitted comments regarding three separate issues on behalf of the Conservation Committee:

First among these was joining and/or signing on to the comments submitted by the Center for Biological Diversity regarding the Bureau of Land Management's decision to offer oil and gas leases in the Conecuh National Forest. AOS previously objected to the U.S. National Forest Service's decision to open up the forest to oil and gas leasing and followed up with that when the BLM did not even follow their own guidelines and rules in the process. AOS is objecting to the BLM's decision to offer the leases using the NFS's flawed process.

After a brief discussion, Greg Harber moved for AOS to join the lawsuit proposed by the Center for Biological Diversity. Additionally, AOS will donate \$500 to the Center of Biological Diversity to help fund the legal expenses associated with the lawsuit. The motion passed unanimously.

Second, Greg Harber submitted comments objecting to the Trump administration's new rule-making that sig-

nificantly weakens the Endangered Species Act by redefining "harm" to mean only those activities that directly injure or kill an endangered species. In other words, destroying the habitat in which they live or other detrimental effects is fair game. For example, DDT could not be banned because it doesn't directly kill birds, even though we know DDT is responsible for causing the eggshell thinning that led to the demise of the Bald Eagle or the California Condor.

Thirdly, Greg Harber submitted comments in favor of The Great American Outdoors Act 250, which is intended to create the America's Legacy Restoration Fund to address infrastructure improvements, support habitat restoration and stewardship initiatives on public lands. The fund requires no new taxpayer funding, but instead relies on utilizing onshore energy royalties, Department of Interior Licensing fees, private donations and other funding streams.

MEMBERSHIP: Larry Gardella reported in addition to participating in some of the activities Greg Jackson has reported, Larry Gardella and Mike Wilson attended a Science Day event in Spanish Fort. The slideshow can be made available to anyone who gives a presentation at an event.

Bob Reed raised a membership issue. Out of 342 lines of membership, 119 have not paid their AOS membership dues for 2026. Current instructions provide that members are left on *The Yellowhammer* distribution list for two "grace years" prior to being dropped from distribution.

Currently, the numbers are as follows:

Membership lines:	342
Life Members:	100
Members who have paid 2026 (and beyond):	120
"Members" who have not paid since 2025:	50
"Members" who have not paid since 2024:	69

In five months, based on current instructions, 69 "members" will be dropped from the distribution lists. This represents a 20% loss of membership. While we have ongoing efforts to recruit new members, we must also be equally proactive about retaining existing members.

The AOS Board discussed the most effective method to generate reminder emails or personal letters to members to remind them that their membership dues are overdue. We must also safeguard the member's contact details. The Membership Committee will work to find a resolution to this issue.

SOCIAL MEDIA: President Shirley Farrell complimented Social Media Chair Molly Caldwell for all her work to keep the AOS Social Media accounts current. The recent outreach initiatives have produced a large volume of items (field trips announcements, meeting announcements, bird sightings, etc.) to be posted to social media. Molly has single-handedly kept the AOS social media accounts current. It is time to add a few people to the social media team. Debi Jackson, Marshall Reid, and Dana Hamilton will join the AOS Outreach Committee.

BIRD RECORDS: Greg Jackson reported that a large batch of records is currently under evaluation by the records committee following a similar batch this spring. Together, these should make the Bird Records Committee current. Steve McConnell organized an ABRC committee meeting where five of seven members attended last weekend in Montgomery to discuss multiple items and replace three members whose terms were expiring. Standard work on bird records for the AOS state database and eBird continue as usual.

PUBLIC RELATIONS: Greg Jackson reported on behalf of Joe Watts that the AOS website is being updated to utilize some of the large buttons at the bottom of the page and to remove and/or update content that is out of date. These changes have now been completed.

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE: Eric Soehren reported that *Alabama Birdlife* Vol. 71 No. 1 was distributed via email on June 26, 2026. and was mailed to the mail recipients. He also reported that due to a slight glitch in the recent changing from one print vendor to another, Alabama Power has not sent invoices to AOS for the last two issues of *Alabama Birdlife*. We are awaiting the invoices for the last two issues soon.

THE YELLOWHAMMER: Bob Reed advised that the deadline for *The Yellowhammer* is August 10, 2026. He would appreciate additional content submissions.

CENSUSING: Greg Jackson reported that we had a successful Autauga County Summer Bird Count in June with 12 parties. The final party tally is due soon. Preliminary results look interesting with a wide range of species observed (including multiple Painted Buntings) and collection of good breeding data.

OUTREACH: Greg Jackson reported that we are making

progress in the attempts to increase birder awareness of AOS, be relevant and useful to the birding community, and retain our unique identity. We need significant help from AOS members to properly achieve these goals, and we need to solicit volunteers for many activities.

"BENCHES FOR BIRDERS" PROJECT: We have placed 14 benches already. Greg recently arranged for 5-6 more (of a different type) at a prominent birding reserve in north Alabama. Multiple other promising possibilities remain, and we request ideas for sites.

LOCAL FIELD TRIPS: There have been 37 local field trips successfully completed since program inauguration in early spring; several other scheduled trips had to be canceled due to poor weather. We are in an expected summer lull, but already several events are scheduled for the coming weeks. So far, these trips have been run by 12 leaders, with hopes that many other team members will participate this fall.

This program is intended to be a long-term activity of the organization. Success will depend on the help and initiative of the leader team, as well as success in spreading the news of individual trips and the program in general on social media. Molly and her social media team are vital to this and many other outreach efforts. Once we get this program fully on its feet, Greg would love to expand it to NW Florida, if possible.

COOPERATION WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS: Greg has been reaching out and meeting with a few nature-related organizations for cooperative activities. This includes AOS leaders doing bird walks, which will be advertised by the groups. We are starting slowly with this to ensure staffing, but there is significant potential benefit for both AOS and those organizations. Greg is also working with a major local visitor center to add a birding section to their online visitor's guide including a detailed list of local birding sites.

BIRD CHECKLISTS: We have been actively distributing the enhanced AOS Field Checklist to a wide variety of venues as an educational tool and to increase awareness of AOS. There is information on the card about our group with a prominent QR code leading to the website. Greg has compiled a target distribution list for this project with many remaining to be fulfilled. We need volunteers to help distribute these in the fall and winter. Greg will be significantly updating the checklist in September.

BUSINESS CARDS: We need to get these in the hands of members (including the Board) to have available to share with other birders met in the field or other spots where conversations might make a turn toward AOS. It is very easy to carry a few in a wallet or pack.

WATER FEATURES: Our first attempt at setting up a water feature partition at a good birding site was deferred by the organization to next year, but Greg continues to pursue this possibility. If there are other thoughts about good, feasible locations please share.

EDUCATION: Greg Jackson reported on behalf of Paul Franklin. Paul has several educational initiatives under development. The initiatives include speaking engagements at libraries and other meeting spaces and possible classes. Paul would like to assemble a small speaker's bureau. The Education Committee plans to develop curricula and a photo pool to aid speakers.

MEETINGS: Paul and Dianna Porter reported that have already begun discussions with the caterers for the AOS 2026 Fall meeting. President Shirley Farrell thanked them for the attractive seasonal décor and for their efforts to make the meeting space welcoming.

NEW BUSINESS

Treasurer Lori Oswald requested that the AOS Board of Directors consider the following proposals:

In preparation for the expected high demand and limited capacity (200) for the AOS 2027 Spring Meeting and to streamline the registration process for future AOS meetings, Lori proposed limiting the signup for the meetings to online only through the website beginning with the 2026 AOS Fall Meeting. Lori stated that we can give members the option to "opt out" of paying the 4% PayPal fee. The AOS Board of Directors agreed with this recommendation.

In recognition of the actual cost of the banquet caterer and the continued inflation, we are experiencing, Lori proposed raising the price for the banquet to a price within a range of \$37 to \$40 per person. She provided a detailed analysis of the actual banquet cost per person (caterer only) from 2024 through the estimated cost for FY 2027. Lori also commended Dianna Porter's efforts to reduce the cost per person amount for the AOS 2026 Spring Meeting. However, the analysis con-

tinued to show that the \$30 per person banquet fee has been less than the actual cost per person since the AOS 2024 Spring meeting. AOS has been losing money on every banquet since at least 2024. The AOS Board of Directors discussed this proposal and decided to raise the AOS banquet fee to \$38 per person beginning with the AOS 2026 Fall Meeting.

Greg Jackson canvassed the AOS Board of Directors regarding a possible “rebranding” of the AOS Events. Greg

suggested a few ideas for rebranding the AOS events and asked the board members to suggest other event names to consider. After a brief discussion, the AOS Board agreed that re-branding AOS events is an issue that we should pursue. The topic has been referred to the Outreach and Executive Committees for decision.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

AOS Building Partnerships for Birds and Birders

By SHIRLEY FARRELL & GREG JACKSON



ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING PARTS OF AOS’s growing outreach is the opportunity to build partnerships with organizations that share our interests in birds, conservation, education, and Alabama’s natural places. Several new relationships are beginning to take flight, and we look forward to seeing where they lead. Much of this outreach has been spearheaded by Greg Jackson, chair of the AOS Outreach Committee, who has devoted countless hours to reaching out to organizations, nature centers, museums, and other potential partners across the state. His efforts to plant the seeds of new partnerships are already beginning to bear fruit.

This fall, Greg Jackson will lead bird walks in partnership with both the Alabama Wildlife Center, and Jared Sapp will lead bird walks in partnership with the Land Trust of North Alabama, with hopes that these walks will become part of an ongoing relationship. Greg is also working with the Land Trust to place a series of AOS-sponsored benches at one of its preserves, providing visitors with places to stop, observe, and enjoy the birds and other wildlife around them. We hope bird walks and benches will be just the beginning of future collaborative activities.

In September, AOS will partner with the Cahaba River Coalition to assist with the birding portion of a BioBlitz at the Living River Retreat on the Cahaba River. A BioBlitz brings people together to document as many species as possible within a particular area and time—a perfect opportunity for AOS members to contribute their birding



knowledge while supporting a broader understanding of Alabama’s biodiversity. Scan the code to join this project:

Our educational partnerships are growing as well. Following our participation in McWane Science Center’s Party Animals event this summer, we are exploring additional opportunities to work with McWane on bird education and programming. Greg Jackson, on behalf of AOS, is also working with the Greater Birmingham Convention & Visitors Bureau to help develop an online birding page highlighting birding opportunities in the Birmingham area. This collaboration has the potential to introduce visitors—and perhaps future AOS members—to some of Alabama’s wonderful birding destinations.

These budding partnerships are exciting because they allow AOS to do more than promote our organization. They connect our members’ knowledge and enthusiasm with organizations already serving communities throughout Alabama. Together, we can introduce more people to birding, encourage appreciation and conservation of Alabama’s natural resources, and create new opportunities for people to experience birds.

And these are only the beginning. AOS is building partnerships, strengthening connections, and finding new ways to put birds—and birding—on Alabama’s map.

In Memorium

IT IS A SAD FACT THAT OUR MEMBERS DIE. WE WOULD like to honor each one appropriately in *The Yellowhammer*, so please notify the editor, treasurer, or membership chair if you are aware of the loss of one of our friends.

Autauga County—Hot Fun in the Summertime

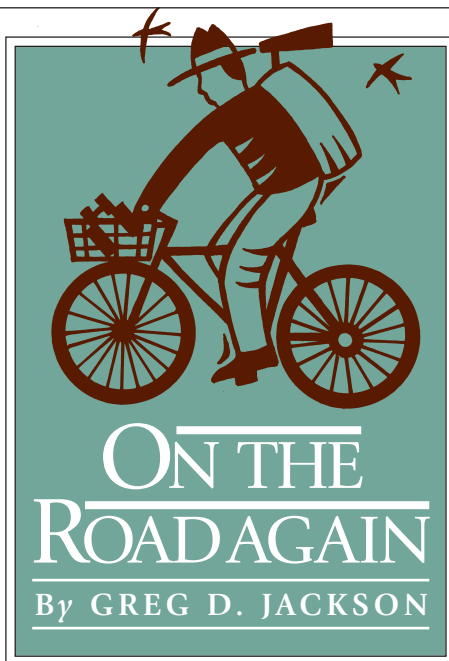


LY & THE FAMILY STONE must have known the secret—birding in the hot summer can be fun! And that includes Autauga County. On the north bank of the Alabama River just northwest of Montgomery, the area has a rich history in the bird lore of Alabama. Perhaps most notable of the early investigators of the avifauna in this area were Lewis Golsan and Ernest Holt in the first decades of the last century. Reading the old texts will make you want to pull out the swamp waders, especially the enticing tales of (sadly) long-gone nesting Bachman's Warblers.

The Autaugaville Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) has been an active route since 1996, and AOS explored select blocks in the county during the Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) from 2000 to 2006. But we had not yet conducted a Summer Bird Count (SBC) there, so to Autauga County we went this June!

The SBC has different goals than the BBS program. It's more of an exploratory "group dive" into the breeding bird population of the selected county. The survey is conducted in a fashion similar to a Christmas Bird Count (CBC) or migration count, with USGS 24K quads as party areas; the party leader picks a single morning to do the count within a two-week window in early June. Besides counting numbers of birds, there is an additional twist of noting signs of breeding as in the atlas project. Certain species are targeted for special attention, but the party tries to sample as many habitats as possible in their assigned quad.

Though there are parameters to follow, mostly it's a great excuse to bird in the early summer and explore new sites. The SBC takes you into areas you'd likely never visit otherwise, often seemingly ordinary parts of a county usually neglected by



birders. The challenge is to find the special spots yielding interesting breeding birds. Almost every quad in the state has some pearls, even if just pockets of good habitat tucked here and there. And these places can yield wonderful singing birds at that season, making it well worth the early rise and drive.

Early this June, eleven teams of explorers dug into nearly all the quads of Autauga County, from the winding Alabama River in the south to the upland woods and farms of the north. We uncovered 103 species in this quest, a great total at this season; just over 60% of these were passerines, with 11 types of warblers. Of the 28 "special attention" species, some of which were just

wild hopes, we found 11 targets. Based on BBA guidelines, breeding confirmation was obtained of 32 species (31%), 38 species were noted as "Probable" breeders, 26 were "Possible" breeders, and another seven species were indeterminate ("Observed").

Some of the more noteworthy discoveries were:

Three **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks**, an expanding species in the state, were seen in the Prattville quad; the first county record was only in 2017.

Autauga County is at the northern margin of the nesting range of **Common Ground Dove**, so it was good to see individuals in the Marbury and Old Kingston quads.

White-winged Dove is expanding in the Inland Coastal Plain. Though numbers have been in Montgomery for years, away from the city it is less readily found. One was noted on the count in the Autaugaville quad.

Anhinga is a localized nesting bird in this part of the state and was found in two areas not far from the river; this species can wander widely, and local nesting is not assured by simple observation.

Least Bittern is another spottily-distributed breeder, with one heard in Forester quad.

Mississippi Kite is an expected nesting bird in this area, but it was fun to record 31 of these graceful kites in nine quads.

Tree Swallow isn't a common breeder in any region of the state but is at the southern margin of the range at this latitude; six were found in the Prattville quad with nesting confirmed.

Lark Sparrow is a rare but regular breeding bird in this part of the Black Belt; two were seen in both the Autaugaville and White City quads.

Though not an unexpected species in this swampy forest country, a total of 40 **Swainson's Warblers** in eight quads was excellent.

Painted Bunting has been slowly increasing in the Black Belt, present in summer in small numbers in the Montgomery area since the 1990s. Still, finding five of these lovely creatures in the Prattville and Forester quads was exciting.

Dickcissel becomes thin on the ground in the eastern part of the Black Belt, so it was good to record three in the Forester quad.

In addition to all the birds, reports came in of a variety of other critters including Coyote, Virginia Opossum, Common Raccoon, White-tailed Deer, North American Beaver, Eastern Cottontail, and Eastern Gray Squirrel.

Nishant K. C. and Todd DeVore were in the Autaugaville quad and fortuitously found a Red-eyed Vireo nest. From Nishant: "Our route next entered a more wooded area, where we found a Louisiana Waterthrush bobbing its tail, Hooded and Kentucky warblers, along with several Red-eyed Vireos. We stopped along a creek to spend some time birding. Just moments earlier, we had been talking about how vireos build their distinctive hanging nests and how nice it would be to find one. We soon spotted a Red-eyed Vireo high in a tree along the creek. Looking more closely, we realized it was actually building its hanging nest."

Bob Reed surveyed the Milton quad and recounted interesting historical aspects: "My family home, built in 1888, is in Milton. Except for a few years during the great depression, my family has lived in it, and we have owned it continuously. My parents were the last to occupy it before their deaths; it



This Red-eyed Vireo nest was spotted by Nishant K. C. and Todd DeVore in the Autaugaville quad. (Nishant K. C.)

came to me, and after a period, I sold it to my cousin who lives much closer, and frankly has a lot more money to keep it up. When Pat and I drove up on a scouting trip, she asked if it felt like coming home. It did.

"In 1880 Milton had a population of about 2,000 souls, but in 1886 a flood on Little Mulberry Creek washed a huge gully and dumped about two feet of red clay on top of Milton. The town displaced uphill about a mile. The only evidence of the town today is pile after pile of bricks left by chimneys. My great grandfather had a grist mill on the creek; the foundation is still visible. He moved up to New Milton and built the house that still stands. Lady Bird's Johnson's father is buried in the old Milton cemetery on family property."

Autauga County is rich in history and birds – a fun place to visit in the hot summertime!

Greg D. Jackson is the chair of the AOS Census Committee.

More Than a Meeting: AOS Weekends Get New Names!



WHAT'S IN A NAME? QUITE A LOT, ACTUALLY! For years, we have referred to our three annual AOS gatherings simply as the Spring, Fall, and Winter Meeting. But if you have ever attended one, you know that calling it a "meeting" doesn't come close to describing what happens.

We don't spend the weekend sitting around a conference table! We get up before sunrise, grab our binoculars, explore some of Alabama's best birding locations, search for migrants and resident species, learn from outstanding birders and ornithologists, reconnect with old friends, welcome new birders, share stories and sightings, and—most important—go birding!

So, Greg Jackson, chair of the Outreach Committee, asked the AOS Board about changing the names of our weekends to reflect the experience. With Greg's coordination, the Outreach Committee developed a list of names, then narrowed the list, and the executive committee approved the final selection.

Beginning with our upcoming events, our AOS weekends will be known as:

AOS Fall Migration Celebration

AOS Winter Birding Weekend

AOS Spring Migration Celebration

The spring and fall names celebrate one of the most exciting events in the birding year—migration. For generations, AOS members have gathered on Dauphin Island during these remarkable seasons to experience the movement of birds along Alabama's Gulf Coast. "Migration Celebration" better captures the excitement, discovery, and sense of community that make these weekends special.

Winter offers a different kind of birding adventure. Our winter gathering moves to different locations around Alabama and northwest Florida, giving members opportunities to explore new habitats, discover birding destinations, and experience the diversity of winter birdlife across our state, which says exactly what we intend to do—get outside and go birding!

Our names may be changing, but the traditions we love are not. You can still expect great field trips, outstanding speakers, opportunities to learn, and plenty of time with fellow birders.

We think our new names say it much better: Less meeting. More birding. More learning. More celebrating. More AOS!

AOS Volunteer Opportunities Help Us Take AOS Across Alabama!

AOS IS OUT AND ABOUT—AND WE WOULD LOVE FOR you to be part of it! As the Alabama Ornithological Society expands its outreach throughout the state, we are receiving more invitations to participate in festivals, nature center and museum programs, library events, educational workshops, bird walks, and other community activities. We also need volunteers to help with AOS meetings, projects, publications, and behind-the-scenes activities.

You do **not** have to be an expert birder to volunteer! Whether you can lead a field trip, greet visitors at an AOS table, share a special skill, help with technology, take photographs, or simply lend an extra pair of hands, there is a place for you.

Completing this survey does not commit you to a specific activity. It simply helps us learn more about your interests, skills, and availability so we can contact you when opportunities arise. Together, we can introduce more people to Alabama's birds, support ethical birding and conservation, and continue building a welcoming and active birding community across our state.



Click this link, <https://tinyurl.com/AOSVolunteer>, or scan the QR Code to volunteer or suggest partnerships and other volunteer opportunities.

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Winter 2026	November 10, 2026
Spring 2027	February 10, 2027
Summer 2027	May 10, 2027

AOS FALL MIGRATION CELEBRATION, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, OCTOBER 9-11, 2026

AOS Fall Migration Celebration



UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL EVENTS WILL TAKE place in the Dauphin Island Community Center (DICC), 412 Lemoyne Drive. Casual attire throughout. See following pages for detailed descriptions of field trips.

NOTE: All field trips meet at Green Park (next to Ship and Shore)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2

6:00 p.m. AOS Board meeting: via TEAMS

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

6:30 a.m. Field Trips

1. **Daphne Bayfront Park**
2. **Exploring Dauphin Island: Off the Beaten Path** (Gorgas Swamp, Longfellow lots, Porter lot, Eco-Park, and Bienville Beach)

5:00 p.m. Registration/Social hour at the DICC

6:00 p.m. Member social shrimp boil and sides. Monetary contributions are welcome.

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

7:00 p.m. Speaker: Kyle Shepard—Introduction to HumTrack: International Efforts to Document Hummingbird Movement Ecology

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

6:30 a.m. Field Trips

1. **Exploring Dauphin Island** (Shell Mounds, Goat Trees, Audubon Sanctuary)
2. **Coden Mudflat Area and Pelican Peninsula**
3. **Across the Bay: Fort Morgan Birding and Bird Banding**

7:00 a.m. Field Trip

4. **Through the Lens: Photographing Dauphin Island's Birds and Nature**

5:30 p.m. Registration at DICC

5:30 p.m. Social Hour

6:30 p.m. Banquet Buffet

7:20 p.m. Announcements & Discussion of Field Trips

7:30 p.m. Keynote Speaker: Dr. Emma Rhodes—Elucidating the Full Annual Cycle of Rufous and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and Its Relevance to Conservation

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

6:30 a.m. Field Trip
Blakely Island Mudflat Lakes

Noon Compilation (Includes all bird sightings in Mobile and Baldwin Counties from Friday, October 9 to noon, October 11, 2026)
Meet: Goat Trees (Cadillac Ave. and Grant St.)

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 FALL MIGRATION CELEBRATION, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, OCTOBER 9-11, 2026

Fall Migration Celebration Field Trips

NOTE: All field trips meet at Green Park (next to Ship and Shore)

Friday, October 9, 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.

DAPHNE BAYFRONT PARK

Daphne 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 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.

Friday, October 9, 6:30 a.m.

EXPLORING DAUPHIN ISLAND: OFF THE BEATEN BIRDING PATH

(Gorgas Swamp, Longfellow lots, Porter lot, Eco-Park, and Bienville Beach with a \$10 parking charge)

JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE SOME OF DAUPHIN ISLAND'S lesser-known birding locations. Rather than concentrating on the island's familiar hotspots, we'll visit a variety of protected lots, wetlands, wooded areas, and coastal habitats. Each stop offers a different birding experience—and during migration, there is always the possibility of a surprise!

GORGAS SWAMP

One of Dauphin Island's important freshwater wetland areas, Gorgas Swamp provides a striking contrast to the surrounding coastal environment. Its forested wetlands and tupelo gums provide valuable habitat for both resident and migratory birds. We'll watch the canopy, understory, and wet areas for warblers, vireos, thrushes, flycatchers, wrens, and other woodland and wetland species.

LONGFELLOW RESERVE

Tucked behind the island's water tower, the Longfellow Reserve protects heavily wooded lots just inland from the main dune line. A short loop trail takes us through this small but valuable patch of habitat, where mature vegetation provides food and shelter for migrating songbirds. We'll care-

fully work the trees and understory in search of warblers, vireos, tanagers, thrushes, flycatchers, and other migrants.

PORTER LOT

This small protected property demonstrates just how important even a single undeveloped lot can be to birds on a barrier island. We'll take our time scanning the vegetation for birds feeding, resting, or seeking shelter. Stops such as this are a great reminder that on Dauphin Island, productive birding does not always require a large preserve—a small patch of suitable habitat can hold a wonderful assortment of migrants.

ECO-PARK

At Eco-Park, we'll explore another piece of the island's diverse natural landscape. Open areas, edges, shrubs, and nearby coastal habitat give us opportunities to look for a different mix of species. We'll keep an eye out for both migrant songbirds and resident island birds while also watching overhead for raptors and other birds moving across the island.

BIENVILLE BEACH & TIDAL POOLS

We'll trade trees for sand and open sky at Bienville Beach, where the **tidal pools and shallow wet areas can attract feeding and resting shorebirds**. We'll scan the pools, beach, wrack line, and Gulf waters for plovers, sandpipers,

gulls, terns, herons, egrets, and other coastal birds. Bring a spotting scope if you have one—this is a great location to slow down and practice identifying shorebirds while enjoying an entirely different side of Dauphin Island birding.

Please Note: This field trip includes several short walks and travel by vehicle between locations. Bring binoculars, water, insect repellent, sun protection, and a spotting scope if available. **Paid parking is required at Bienville Beach** through ParkMobile (Zone 95202). The same daily payment may be used at the town-owned beaches that day.

Saturday, October 10, 6:30 a.m. **EXPLORING DAUPHIN ISLAND**

(Shell Mounds, Goat Trees, Audubon Sanctuary)

BIRDWATCHING ON DAUPHIN ISLAND DURING FALL migration is admittedly a touch and go proposition. Known as a classic migrant trap along the Gulf Coast, birds pause to tank up on calories before jumping off across the Gulf. Many factors affect the saturation of birds at any given moment including wind, available food, and weather farther north, but generally fall migration birding is quite good. 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, which sadly succumbed to winds this summer. These cool, sheltered woods are prime habitat. 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

NOTICE

Effective immediately, registration for all celebrations will be on the website at <https://www.aosbirds.org/fall-2026/> only. No mail-in registrations will be accepted. You have the option of adding 4% to cover the cost of the online registration or not.

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 forest, 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, plus alligators, 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, October 10, 6:30 a.m. CODEN MUDFLAT AREA AND PELICAN PENINSULA

DAUPHIN ISLAND HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF the “ten most globally important sites” for bird migration. We will visit two hotspots on this trip.

CODEN MUDFLAT AREA

Coden Mudflat area (30.35, -88.12) 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 PENINSULA

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.

Saturday, October 10, 6:30 a.m. ACROSS THE BAY: FORT MORGAN BIRDING & BIRD BANDING

ALL ABOARD FOR A BIRDING ADVENTURE ACROSS MOBILE Bay! We’ll leave Dauphin Island aboard the Mobile Bay Ferry (the first ferry departs at 8:00 a.m.) and travel across the mouth of Mobile Bay to historic Fort Morgan, combining birding, bird banding, and a little Alabama history in one memorable field trip.

BIRDING THE FERRY CROSSING

The birding begins before we even reach Fort Morgan! During the ferry crossing, we’ll scan Mobile Bay and the surrounding waters for gulls, terns, Brown Pelicans, cormorants, herons, egrets, and other coastal birds. Keep your binoculars handy throughout the trip; you never know what may fly past or appear on the water. And, while they aren’t birds, dolphins are always a welcome bonus!

FORT MORGAN BIRD BANDING STATION

Once across the bay, we’ll visit the bird banding station operated by the Banding Coalition of the Americas. Our keynote speakers, Kyle Shephard and Dr. Emma Rhodes operate the bird banding. Here participants will have the special opportunity to see migratory birds up close while learning how trained, federally permitted banders collect important information about migration, bird populations, and individual birds.



A host of Snowy Egrets visiting the Coden Mudflat area of the Dauphin Island Causeway Shoreline Restoration Project. (Robin McDonald)

Depending on migration and weather conditions, we may see a variety of warblers, vireos, thrushes, flycatchers, tanagers, buntings, and other migrants. Watching a tiny bird being carefully measured, banded, and safely released provides a perspective that even the best view through binoculars cannot duplicate.

BIRDING FORT MORGAN

We'll also spend time birding the grounds surrounding historic Fort Morgan. Located at the tip of the Fort Morgan Peninsula, this area can be especially exciting during migration. Its trees, thickets, open areas, and surrounding coastal habitats provide places for migrating birds to rest and refuel before continuing their journey.

We'll explore the area in search of migrant songbirds while also watching for raptors, wading birds, shorebirds, gulls, terns, and other coastal species. As with all Gulf Coast migration birding, what we find will depend on the weather and the birds; part of the fun is never knowing what might turn up!

FEES & IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Participants are responsible for both ferry transportation and admission to Fort Morgan. The Mobile Bay Ferry carries both walk-on passengers and vehicles between Dauphin Island and Fort Morgan. Ferry fees vary depending on whether you walk aboard or take a vehicle.

An entrance fee is also required to enter the Fort Morgan State Historic Site. There is no additional charge to visit the bird banding station after entering the historic site. Ferry schedules and fees are subject to change, so participants should check current information before the trip. Because ferry

space for vehicles is limited and service operates on a first-come, first-served basis, participants should plan accordingly.

WHAT TO BRING

Binoculars, water, sunscreen, insect repellent, hat, comfortable closed-toe walking shoes, and a folding chair if you would like to spend an extended period watching the banding operation. A spotting scope may also be useful for birding from the ferry and around Fort Morgan.

Come prepared for a field trip that is as much about the journey as the destination—from birding across Mobile Bay to seeing migrating birds in the hand and exploring one of Alabama's most historic and productive coastal birding areas.

Saturday, October 10, 7:00 a.m. THROUGH THE LENS: PHOTOGRAPHING DAUPHIN ISLAND'S BIRDS & NATURE WORKSHOP/FIELD TRIP

JOIN WELL-KNOWN VETERAN NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER Kathy Hicks for an instructional outing on Dauphin Island. This field-based workshop will include tips and tricks for finding and photographing birds and nature with an artist's perspective. Attendees should be familiar with their camera and also be prepared to take a leisurely stroll down the beach. A number of species of shorebirds, herons & egrets, gulls and terns is possible during this trip.

Sunday, October 11, 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, where 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.

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 tops of 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, possibly hot, and exposed walks.
- 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.

In Memoriam

LORNA MARIE WEST, 88, OF OPELIKA, ALABAMA, A life member of AOS, passed away peacefully on the morning of June 3, 2026.

Born on July 9, 1937, in Mobile, Alabama, Lorna devoted her life to education and service. She enjoyed a 30-year career as a classroom teacher with Opelika City Schools.

Outside the classroom, Lorna was an avid birder who found great joy in nature and the beauty of God's creation. She logged with many friends over 700 birds in her travels here in United States and abroad.

Lorna is survived by her beloved fur babies, Jack and Ivan, her cherished teacup poodles; her nephew, Dana West, and family; and many friends, and former students.

New members

Phillip Brackin • John Michael Chappell
 Kathryn Firsching • Susan Grantham
 Anne Hoos • Kathryn Jenkel
 L. Winn LeVert • Will & Carolyn Ratliff

Honoraria and Acknowledgements

A total of \$4,300, including \$3,000 for benches, has been donated to AOS this year. Thank you.

AOS DONATIONS

Anonymous
 Greg and Debbie Jackson

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.

AOS FALL MIGRATION CELEBRATION, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, OCTOBER 9-11, 2026

Meet the Speakers

Tracking Hummingbirds

FRIDAY NIGHT SPEAKER

Introduction to HumTrack: International Efforts to Document Hummingbird Movement Ecology

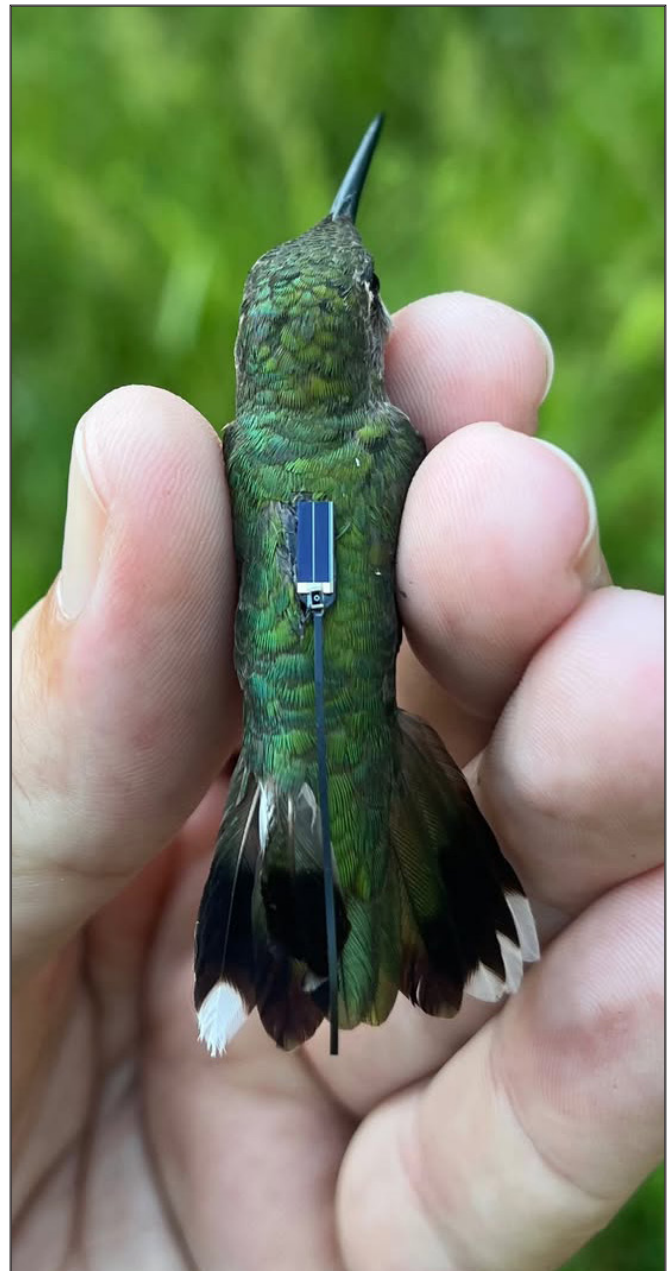
Kyle Shepard

*Director and co-founder of BCA
(Banding Coalition of the Americas)*

THE AGE OF TRACKING HUMMINGBIRDS HAS ARRIVED! Join Kyle for a look into the when, where, why, and how of hummingbird movement and the international coalition of researchers behind new discoveries.

Originally from Mobile, Alabama, Kyle Shepard began banding when he was 12 years old with Bob and Martha Sargent at Fort Morgan, Alabama. Kyle's background is in outdoor recreational management. He worked as a kayak/canoe guide in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta for three years, then course manager of the Hummingbird Ziplines in Gulf Shores, Alabama, for five years before accepting a seasonal position at Stoney Creek Canopy Adventures in Seward, Alaska, in 2019. He enjoys all things outdoors and not only appreciates birds but also reptiles of all sorts. He is the co-founder and director of public relations and outreach for Banding Coalition of the Americas. Currently, he is the field manager for a USFWS grant out of University of Memphis to coordinate and deploy BluMorpho transmitters on hummingbirds throughout the Southeastern U.S.

A BluMorpho transmitter attached to the back of a hummingbird.



SATURDAY NIGHT KEYNOTE SPEAKER

*HumTrack: Elucidating the Full
Annual Cycle of Rufous and
Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and
Its Relevance to Conservation*

Dr. Emma Rhodes

*Director and co-founder of BCA
(Banding Coalition of the Americas) &
Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Memphis*

DR. EMMA RHODES IS AN ORNITHOLOGIST AND Master Bird Bander originally from Baldwin County, Alabama. She has been an avid birder since she was seven and in 2009, while in high school, she began training with Bob and Martha Sargent with the Hummer/Bird Study Group at the Fort Morgan State Historic Site. She has worked and volunteered for both state and national Audubon chapters and teaches every summer at National Audubon's Hog Island in Maine since 2019. She received her BS in Biology from the University of South Alabama in 2017 and her PhD from Auburn University in 2025 where her dissertation focused on the underpinning physiological mechanisms of migration. She has authored multiple peer-reviewed papers and her PhD work received both national (including National Science Foundation) and Auburn University awards in recognition of exceptional avian research and outreach. She is the co-founder and director of conservation and scientific research for the Banding Coalition of the Americas. Currently, she is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Memphis in the College of Human and Health Sciences where she studies cellular physiology in the context of muscle regeneration in avian migrants and conducts her on-going independent hummingbird research supported by her host professor, Dr. Yufeng Zhang. She was recently awarded a 2026 Multistate Conservation Grant Program Award by USFWS for her work titled "Deploying Ultralight Solar Transmitters on Rufous (*Selasphorus rufus*) and Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) to Document Movement Ecology."



*Dr. Emma Rhodes (top) holding a Common Yellowthroat and
Kyle Shepherd (above), examining a Painted Bunting.*

PHOTOGRAPHY CLASS LEADER

Kathy Hicks

KATHY HICKS IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR, conservationist, and an award-winning, internationally published nature photographer from Alabama's Gulf Coast. Her work has been used by Forbes, US Science & Daily News, NOAA, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, and frequently in Mobile Bay Magazine, among others. When she's not teaching the public about estuaries and the outdoors at Weeks Bay Reserve, you'll find her birding along the coast. She's taught several popular nature photography classes for the University of South Alabama and Faulkner State Community College (now Coastal Alabama Community College). Growing up along the shores of Mobile Bay instilled in her a profound appreciation for nature—a passion that shines through in every project she undertakes.

A Reddish Egret by Alabama nature photographer Kathy Hicks.



*Banding Coalition of the Americas (BCA)
Bird Banding Event at Fort Morgan
October 3-10, 2026*

INTERESTED IN LEARNING ABOUT THE BIRDS AROUND us in a fun and engaging way? Then come join us this fall at our public bird banding event in Fort Morgan, Alabama! Not only will you have the opportunity to get an up-close look at a wide range of native and migratory birds, you'll also be able to observe and learn about the process of bird banding and why it's important to avian conservation efforts.

Since 2019, BCA operates an annual public fall bird banding session. As former trainees of Bob and Martha Sargent, who operated the site for nearly 30 years through the Hummer/Bird Study Group, our goal is to continue this important research and public outreach effort.

Our crew of licensed banders and experienced volunteers will share life history information about each species, and will be happy to answer any questions you may have throughout the event. Photos are encouraged! Times for banding are October 3 to October 9 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and October 10 from 8:00 a.m. to noon.

This unique experience is our most anticipated public outreach event of the year. We can't wait to see you there! BCA is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We rely on public donations to be able to do events such as this one.

Please note: Even though our event is free, the Fort Morgan Historic Site charges an entrance fee. Please make sure to pay the fee to help maintain the fort.

Things to keep in mind when visiting the station: Remember bug spray, sunscreen, water/snacks, and chairs (if you plan to stay for an extended amount of time). Closed toe shoes are recommended. If you have a disability and are concerned about access, please reach out to us in advance so we can arrange your visit. Email: kyle@bandingcoalition.org. Bring your friends and families, but please leave your pets at home. Website link for more information: <https://www.bandingcoalition.org/fort-morgan-bird-banding>

All banding is being conducted under a federally authorized Bird Banding Permit issued by the U.S. Geological Survey's Bird Banding Laboratory.

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An Osprey floats above the Dauphin Island airport. (Robin McDonald)

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Alabama Ornithological Society

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