

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 27, NO. 2 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SUMMER 2007

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

FOUNDED 1952



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IT'S EASY TO TAKE FAMILIARITY with our local breeding birds for granted. For those of you who travel to bird, you're no doubt familiar with how frustrating it can be to awaken to a beautiful early morning chorus in the tropics or American West and have little or no idea what you're hearing.

Dana and I have just returned from a birding trip to Southeast Arizona, so my experience is recent. We'd visited the area previously, but only in winter and late summer when few birds were singing. As usual, I'd hoped to find time to study the songs, calls, and chips of birds we were likely to encounter, but, increasingly, time seems to be in very short supply. As is often the case, by the time I'd gained some proficiency with identifying what I was hearing, we were on the airplane heading back home. Despite these shortcomings, we were able to successfully locate almost every one we'd hoped to see, including Spotted and Elf Owls, Gray, Zone-tailed, and Short-tailed Hawks, 10 species of hummingbirds, Elegant Trogon, all of the area's breeding warblers, Five-striped Sparrow, and an amazing array of flycatchers and kingbirds. Really easy area to bird in late spring; I highly recommend it.

That having been said, it certainly was pleasant to awaken at home and step outside to the dawn chorus of our central Alabama breeders. We have a neighborhood Wood Thrush that's been giving his best; that beautiful flutelike song may well be my favorite. Well, maybe the song of a Swainson's Warbler is my favorite, or maybe... I'm sure you understand. The thrush is usually joined by Summer Tanagers, Great Crested Flycatchers, Red-eyed, Yellow-throated, and White-eyed Vireos, and all our local residents. What a special way to start the day!

Tomorrow at 5:00 AM will find us in the parking lot of the D'Armanville (near Anniston) Post Office with the dawn chorus for the start of the first of our Breeding Bird Surveys for the year. For those of you involved in these surveys, you'll understand my excitement for heading back over a familiar route, hoping to locate the Grasshopper Sparrows and warblers we usually find and maybe a species or two not



yet recorded for the area (I'll have to be cautious with all the western calls so recently familiar—don't want to try to document a calling trogon!). This excitement is always offset by anxiety over the inevitable encroaching development of our once pristine rural areas and fear of destruction of historic breeding habitat for yet another subdivision named for what was destroyed to create it.

For the many of us that have dedicated our five previous summers to the Breeding Bird Atlas, I suspect we've all missed having a reason to get out and survey something this year (although I certainly was ready to have it completed!), so the BBS routes give a nice sense of purpose.

For those of you not involved with the Breeding Bird Surveys, you really should consider taking a route for next year. You'll have a wonderful time birding and contribute to an effort that has statistics dating back over 50 years. Give Eric Soehren a call; he'll be pleased to hear from you.

I'm already hearing reports of great birding opportunities for summer birding. The Scissor-tailed flycatchers, Mississippi Kites, and Wood Storks have arrived and the Swallow-tailed Kites can't be far behind. Birmingham Audubon Society, the Coastal Birding Association, the River Region Birding Club, and the North Alabama Birding Club all have exciting opportunities for group birding throughout the summer. Get out and enjoy! See you in October if not before.

Important Dates

SECOND FRIDAY—October 12–14, 2007
Fall Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

FOURTH FRIDAY—January 25–27, 2008
Winter Meeting, TBA

THIRD FRIDAY—April 18–20, 2008
Spring Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

APRIL 20-22, 2007, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA

Spring Meeting Report

By GREGORY J. HARBER



THE TRANQUIL, SUN-DRENCHED SHORES OF DAUPHIN Island once again hosted the Alabama Ornithological Society's Spring Meeting. While no major fallouts occurred during the weekend, a steady diet of splendid birds streamed past our eager eyes and eyepieces. As I re-collect my thoughts and memories of the weekend a few of the more superlative moments come to the fore.

I started birding as soon as I arrived on the island, opting to visit the Goat Trees Reserve, and I am glad I made that decision. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks seemingly were everywhere and a Black-billed Cuckoo loitering near the ditch along Grant Street was very accommodating and allowed easy looks for many passersby. Sadly, the truth of the matter was that this bird was exhausted and trying to regain its strength. Later I heard tales of one that died, literally in-hand, reinforcing the fact that the life of a neotropical migrant is a difficult one and only the strongest survive.

Down the street at Cadillac Square Park, a Warbling Vireo and Blackburnian Warbler were entertaining the crowds while Scarlet and Summer Tanagers held court in the canopy. Don McKee's water feature was a major attractant for many birds and a hit with the birders gathered there. It's a satisfying day of birding indeed when these species become routine sightings.

All weekend long, visits to the West End paid handsome rewards with a variety of shorebirds including several plover species, Marbled Godwits, knots and dowitchers. A boat trip to Sand Island, compliments of John Stowers and Terry Hartley, yielded the usual list of suspects for the island. A flyover Whimbrel was especially nice, its steady wing beats, ramrod straight body and long curved bill slicing through the salty breeze.

Rarities and other exciting birds seen were numerous Whimbrels and several Swallow-tailed Kites on Henderson Camp Road south of Grand Bay; a Yellow Rail at the airport on Saturday evening; a Great Black-backed Gull loafing on

the bar at Aloe Bay; and a Lawrence's Warbler to boot. The warbler count for the weekend was around 30 species. Not too shabby.

Friday night we were treated to the first of two speakers for the weekend. Clay Sutton delivered an informative program on the identification of hawks in flight. Pat followed suit with her Saturday night presentation on how to spot an owl. I thoroughly enjoyed both programs, my only regret being that we did not have these programs six years ago—before we began the Alabama Breeding Bird Atlas project!

A new wrinkle during the weekend was AOS's participation in the America's Birdiest City/County competition. Sponsored by the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, the birdathon was wildly successful with 203 species being recorded within the Dauphin Island town limits during the 72 hours of the competition. Members of the winning team included Frank and Shirley Farrell, Mac Braid and his brother Bob, and Pelham Rowan. This total was more than enough to ensure that Dauphin Island, for the third year in a row, was America's Birdiest Small Coastal City. Congratulations to all the participants for a job well done. Shall we try for four?!

Gathered in the shade of the grand Goat Trees on Sunday at noon, we compiled our final tally for the AOS weekend—a thoroughly satisfying 218 species. One hates to leave Dauphin Island at the end of these meetings, but leave we must if we are to return again. A healthy dose of birding surprises is sure to be found in the intervening summer months but the fall meeting will be here before you know it. Enjoy them where you may.

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Fall 2007	August 12, 2007
Winter 2007	November 15, 2007
Spring 2008	February 14, 2008

Spring 2007 AOS Compilation List Dauphin Island, Alabama, April 20-22

NOTEABLE BIRDS OF THE WEEK-
end included Yellow Rail,
Great Black-backed Gull, War-
bling Vireo, Lawrence's Warbler
and Shiny Cowbird.

Canada Goose
Gadwall
Mallard
Mottled Duck
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Lesser Scaup
Red-breasted Merganser
Common Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Horned Grebe
Northern Gannet
American White Pelican
Brown Pelican
Double-crested Cormorant
Anhinga
American Bittern
Least Bittern
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Reddish Egret
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
White Ibis
Plegadis sp.
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Swallow-tailed Kite
Mississippi Kite
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Yellow Rail
Black Rail
Clapper Rail
Virginia Rail
Sora
Purple Gallinule
Common Moorhen
American Coot
Black-bellied Plover

American Golden-Plover
Snowy Plover
Wilson's Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Piping Plover
Killdeer
American Oystercatcher
Black-necked Stilt
American Avocet
Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs
Solitary Sandpiper
Willet
Spotted Sandpiper
Whimbrel
Marbled Godwit
Ruddy Turnstone
Red Knot
Sanderling
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Baird's Sandpiper
Pectoral Sandpiper
Dunlin
Short-billed Dowitcher
Long-billed Dowitcher
Wilson's Snipe
Laughing Gull
Bonaparte's Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Gull-billed Tern
Caspian Tern
Royal Tern
Sandwich Tern
Common Tern
Forster's Tern
Least Tern
Black Skimmer
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
Mourning Dove
Common Ground-Dove
Black-billed Cuckoo
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Common Nighthawk
Chuck-will's-widow
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker

Pileated Woodpecker
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Acadian Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Western Kingbird
Loggerhead Shrike
White-eyed Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Black-whiskered Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
No. Rough-winged Swallow
Bank Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Carolina Wren
House Wren
Winter Wren
Sedge Wren
Marsh Wren
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Gray-cheeked Thrush
Swainson's Thrush
Hermit Thrush
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
Blue-winged Warbler
Golden-winged Warbler
Lawrence's Warbler (hybrid)
Tennessee Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler
Northern Parula
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Cape May Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Pine Warbler
Prairie Warbler

Palm Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Cerulean Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Prothonotary Warbler
Worm-eating Warbler
Swainson's Warbler
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Louisiana Waterthrush
Kentucky Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
Yellow-breasted Chat
Summer Tanager
Scarlet Tanager
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow
Seaside Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Painted Bunting
Dickcissel
Bobolink
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Common Grackle
Boat-tailed Grackle
Shiny Cowbird
Brown-headed Cowbird
Orchard Oriole
Baltimore Oriole
House Finch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow

All reported sightings will be accepted and published in *The Yellowhammer*. However, the meeting compilation list in *The Yellowhammer* is not an official record. Species that are bold-faced, or listed in the Hypothetical section of the AOS Field Card, must be supported by complete written details and submitted to, and accepted by, the Records Committee to become an official AOS record. *Italicized species* usually need written details but these may be brief. Out of season and locally rare birds should also be documented. Refer to the front page of the AOS Field Card for additional details.

FRIDAY, APRIL 20, 2007

AOS Board Meeting

By LINDA REYNOLDS



THE AOS EXECUTIVE BOARD MET FRIDAY, APRIL 20, 2007, at Chamber of Commerce Hall in Dauphin Island, Alabama. President Stan Hamilton called the meeting to order at 8:30 p.m.

Treasurer's Report: Frank Farrell reported an AOS checking balance of \$15,707 with spring meeting expenses still to be paid.

Conservation Report: Greg Harber reported that, as a result of a recent U.S. Department of Agriculture decision, all national forests are now open to oil and gas leasing; this means that the four national forests in Alabama, including the Bankhead, are now vulnerable. Greg is obtaining information on how birders can respond to this threat and will distribute it to AOS members when it is available.

Greg said that the American Bird Conservancy has asked AOS to join their Bird Conservation Alliance. The Alliance is a national network of organizations that share an interest in conserving birds. Membership dues are \$100; current members include DIBS, Florida and Georgia Ornithological Societies, and Pensacola's Francis Weston Audubon Society. The board agreed that AOS should join the Bird Conservation Alliance.

Membership Report: Larry Gardella reported that AOS is getting new members, but it is also losing members because some people do not renew their membership. This turnover makes it difficult to gauge overall membership growth. The increase in the number of young members is encouraging.

Larry mentioned that only about 20 people have responded so far to let him know they want to be included in the new AOS directory, which Larry would like to distribute at this fall's meeting. Stan said he would make an announcement at Saturday night's meeting asking people to contact Larry with information for the directory.

Bird Records Committee Report: Larry Gardella noted that the Bird Records Committee list in *The Yellowhammer* is not current. Bob Reed said he would update it as soon as he received a list of the current members.

Education Report: Shirley Farrell reported that Birmingham Audubon Society is the sponsor for Flying WILD, the environmental education bird curriculum put out by the Center for Environmental Education. The program needs to train 100 teachers a year, and Shirley is one of the facilitators who trains the teachers. AOS provides bird checklists for these teachers, and they make copies for their students. Shirley needs about 100 AOS brochures to give these teachers to let them know more about the organization.

Publications Report: Stan Hamilton thanked Annabel Markle for doing a great job on the new AOS tee-shirts. Annabel reported that Robin McDonald has the copy for the new AOS brochure and will begin working on it soon. Annabel hopes to have the new brochures by this fall.

DIBS Report: Greg Harber reported that last week's International Migratory Bird Day Festival was well received and did well even though it was cut a little short by the weather.

Greg asked John Porter to report on DIBS property acquisitions. John said that DIBS is currently focusing its efforts on the Steiner block and had recently acquired an additional lot in the block; it is on Bienville Boulevard across from Cadillac Square. Negotiations are in progress for the following Steiner block properties: the "ani tree" lot on Grant Street, seven lots recently put on the market by Grace Tyson, three lots in partnership with the Nature Conservancy and Fish and Wildlife, and several other lots in partnership with the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act project.

Old Business

John Porter reported that the new bird checklist is ready to go to the printer

New Business:

Imhof Award and Conservation Award: Stan Hamilton reported that the Imhof Award and the Conservation Award will be given at the fall meeting. After a discussion about the

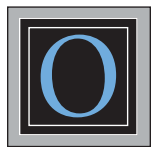
criteria for these awards, the board approved posting the criteria for the awards and a list of past award winners on the AOS website.

Site for Future AOS Meetings: John Porter reported that the Chamber of Commerce has sold its Chamber Hall, the site for our spring and fall meetings, to the Town of Dauphin Island. The town will ultimately own this whole block except for the post office, and this building will be torn down. John said we may be able to use this building for one more meeting (fall 2007), but we should look for another location for meetings after that. The Sea Lab is building a new facility that will accommodate 200 people for meetings but it probably will not be ready until 2008. Another possible meeting site is Mary's Place at Bellingrath Road and Highway 188 in Coden; it has a large room that could handle a group as large as ours. John will continue to talk to the town and the chamber about meeting here in the fall as well as investigate other possible locations in case we cannot meet here. Several board members noted that, if we meet here again in the fall, we will need more people to help with setup on Friday afternoon.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:10 pm.

AOS Membership Directory, Take 2

By LARRY GARDELLA



OUR ORIGINAL PLAN, AS EXPLAINED IN THE LAST *Yellowhammer*, had been to make directories available in CD form at the spring meeting. However, the membership was slow in getting me information to include in the directory. By the date of the spring meeting, we did not have nearly enough information to warrant burning a CD.

After the spring meeting, several more people sent information for a new directory. We still only have approximately 25 listings, however.

We are making two more efforts to solicit contact information for the directory CD. One is this follow-up article; the other will be an announcement on ALBirds.

We hope to get at least 50 listings and to distribute the CDs at the fall meeting. Please look to the Fall *Yellowhammer* for

the next installment of this series of articles on the directory.

Please remember that we can only have a directory if you and others get your information to me either at:

tapaculo@knology.net or

Larry Gardella
3549 Audubon Road
Montgomery, AL 36111

Please include:

- your name
- your mailing address (or N/A if you do not want people to contact you by mail)
- your phone number (or N/A if you do not want people to contact you by phone)
- your email address (or N/A if you do not want people to contact you by email)
- and "yes" if you are willing to show birding sites to other members.

"On the Road Again" Articles

FOR SOME TIME WE DID NOT NEED ANY "ON THE ROAD" articles, as we had several in reserve. Thanks to Carroll Pinckard the cupboard is no longer bare. He has sent me about two dozen different contributions.

If you, too, have articles you would like to submit, please send them to the Editor. Electronic versions are much easier to copy and paste, but send them by carrier pigeon if you have one. The addresses are on the back cover.

Please send other articles about your birding adventures, yard sightings, or just short vignettes that are interesting, different, or amusing.

Electronic Yellowhammer?

IT COSTS WELL OVER A DOLLAR AND A HALF TO PRINT AND MAIL *The Yellowhammer*. We are delivering, on a totally voluntary basis, *The Yellowhammer* via the Internet. If you would like to receive your *Yellowhammer*, in color, as a pdf file, please email the editor at Robert.Reed@psc.alabama.gov.

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 27, NO. 2 • SUMMER 2007

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The Yellowhammer, the newsletter of the Alabama Ornithological Society, is published four times a year. Editorial Office: 88838 Tallassee Highway, Tallassee, AL 36078. Send articles to be considered for publication to: Robert.Reed@psc.alabama.gov. Subscriptions to *The Yellowhammer* and *Alabama Birdlife* are included in the AOS annual membership dues. Single copies \$2.00. Complimentary copies available for review and promotional purposes.

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<http://www.alawildliferehab.org>

BIRMINGHAM AUDUBON SOCIETY
<http://www.birminghamaudubon.org>

DAUPHIN ISLAND BIRD SANCTUARIES
<http://www.coastalbirding.org>

FRANCIS M. WESTON AUDUBON SOCIETY (PENSACOLA)
<http://www.fmwaudubon.org>

THE HUMMER/BIRD STUDY GROUP
<http://www.hummingbirdsplus.org>

MOBILE BAY AUDUBON SOCIETY
<http://www.mobilebayaudubon.org>

SOUTH ALABAMA BIRDING ASSOCIATION
<http://www.bamabirds.com>

SOUTHEASTERN RAPTOR REHAB CENTER
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TENNESSEE VALLEY AUDUBON
<http://www.tvas.org>

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