

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 26, NO. 4 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY WINTER 2006

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

FOUNDED 1952



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ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 1325, DAUPHIN ISLAND, AL 36528-1325

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SOMETIMES, IT'S REALLY EASY to take things for granted, to just assume that everything will roll right on along as it always has because, well, it always has. We all do that; guess it's human nature. For an organization such as AOS, it's particularly difficult to keep track of how long folks have been giving their time and energies to ensure that we all have a great weekend meeting or a particularly good field trip or to ensure that our sales and treasurer areas are available to us during meetings. We just assume that our *Yellowhammer* will show up because it always does and all we'll need to do is wait for it.

I think most of us would be surprised to learn that some folks have given up their Friday afternoons at Dauphin Island for 12 years, spring and fall, to ensure that everything is set up and ready for the meeting or that others have led field trips for every AOS meeting for the last six or seven years. Quite frankly, I don't remember when Colonel Bob became editor of the *Yellowhammer* (this may, of course, be an indication of my aging memory, but you get the idea). It comes time to say thanks to all our volunteers for all they do, whether through service on the board of directors, on committees, as officers, etc. Thanks, everyone!

The key word in all this is volunteers. We are, of course, an organization run solely by volunteers; no one is paid for doing anything and, to my knowledge, almost no one really has the free time to do what they do for AOS. Everyone is incredibly busy with their jobs, families, and other projects but somehow makes the time to contribute. This all leads up to my asking you to try to find a little time to volunteer to help with AOS, perhaps to stop by the Chamber Hall for an hour or so on Friday afternoon to help set up for the Friday meeting, to assist with a field trip, or to relieve the folks at the registration/sales tables. This will help to ensure that everyone has a chance to get out to enjoy the birds and the weekend. If you can find a little more time, serve on a committee. It's your organization; your involvement can only make it better. For those of you who have served as officers or on committees in the past,



please consider volunteering again. Experience is always welcome!

I can't recommend trying to arrange a winter meeting at an Alabama State Park right now, unless you're interested in returning to Joe Wheeler State Park over and over again. Gulf Shores Lodge is destroyed, Guntersville Lodge remains closed, and Lake Point Lodge won't book anything into 2007 due to planned renovations. The lodges without good water access offer little for field trips. Not surprisingly, there are no suitable hotels in Eufaula that can handle all our meeting needs.

Many of you have requested that we hold a winter meeting near St. Mark's National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. Unfortunately, there's been no place near the coast

that could handle all our needs. Now there is, and our January 2007 meeting is set for St. Mark's. A new lodge, the Inn at Wildwood, opened earlier this year in Crawfordville, Florida, just 9 miles from Wakulla Springs and 10 miles from St. Mark's Refuge. They are totally non-smoking, a designated "green" hotel, can handle our meeting, early breakfast and banquet needs, and are very excited to have us in.

Linda Reynolds is making plans for excellent field trips to the refuge, for a boat trip into Wakulla Springs (bring your camera), and to several other wonderful birding areas nearby. Check out the details in the back of the newsletter, and make your plans to join us. You certainly don't want to miss Denver Holt's owl program; you'll be entertained and informed. We should also have an opportunity to join Denver for some owling. See you there.

PUBLICATIONS FUND

A NEW PUBLICATIONS FUND has been established, designated for such purposes as additional color, better paper quality, and print costs of our publications. This separate fund was started with a generous contribution from Jon Dunn. Members can designate that contributions be directed to this fund for future publication purposes.

A Trip to Belize

BELIZE (FORMERLY BRITISH Honduras) is a wonderful place, relatively close to home (two hours flying from Miami), where we can watch birds in safety and comfort. It is a land of astounding diversity in its geography, its people and its wildlife. In an area approximately the size of Massachusetts, more than 500 species of birds have been recorded. Approximately 70% of Belize is forested, approximately 80% of which has some form of private or federal protection.

Our trip began in the afternoon at the Belize airport a few miles northwest of Belize City. While waiting for two members of our small group to arrive on a later flight from Houston, we birded around the airport, straying no more than half a mile from the terminal while noting the markings on every arriving plane. In addition to many species easily seen in the States, we saw Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, White-tailed Kite, Gray Hawk, Laughing Falcon, Mangrove Swallow, Tropical Mockingbird, White-collared Seedeater and Black-cowled Oriole.

Once our group was complete, we traveled north on the Northern Highway to Orangewalk Town and then west to the La Milpa Research Station of the Rio Bravo Conservation Area, a trip of about two and a half hours, arriving before dark and in time to clean up before dinner.

The Rio Bravo Conservation Area is a 260,000-acre property owned, protected and operated by the *Programme for Belize*, a non-profit organization, established in 1988, to promote conservation of the natural heritage of Belize and the wise use of its natural resources. The La Milpa Research Station is in a semi-deciduous (seasonal) rain forest. Most of the 60 to 80 inches of rain falls in July. The weather during our visit was ideal; we had a rain shower one morning. The Milpa Mayan ruins on the property are about seven miles east of Guatemala and are the third largest of the known ancient Mayan cities in Belize.



The accommodations at the Station are simple, of good quality and comfortable. The cabins and other buildings are constructed of a variety of local building materials. Each cabin has two beds with mosquito nets and a private bath area with hot and cold purified water. Each cabin has a covered porch with chairs and a hammock (which we had little time to enjoy). Electricity is provided by solar and generator-charged batteries. The generator is not run in the morning or at night; thus the night offered only natural sounds.

We birded at La Milpa two full days and two evenings. Each day we arose early for a pre-breakfast birding walk, and we birded until dinner, with a lunch break. After dinner we searched for night birds and nocturnal animals.

All of the meals were local cooking style, delicious and plentiful. The meals were served family-style with platters and bowls of food on the table. The staff was very attentive to our needs.

During our birding here we were able to see more than 95 species. Birds of special interest and delight included Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, King Vulture, Gray-headed Kite, Bat Falcon, Crested Guan, Great Curassow, Ocellated Turkey, Short-billed Pigeon, Olive-throated Parakeet, White-crowned Pigeon, Red-lore Parrot, Mottled Owl, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift, Wedge-tailed Sabrewing, White-necked Jacobin, Green-breasted Mango, White-bellied Emerald, Rufous-tailed Hummingbird, Emerald Toucanet, Collard Aracari, Keel-billed Toucan, Black-cheeked, Golden-olive and Lineated Woodpeckers, Ruddy Woodcreeper, Dot-winged Antwren, Masked Tityra, Red-capped Manakin (everyone's delight), Red-crowned and Red-throated Ant-Tanagers, Yellow-winged Tanager, Green and Red-legged Honeycreepers, Black-headed Saltator, Blue Bunting, Melodious Blackbird and Montezuma Oropendola.

After breakfast on the fourth day we traveled back to Orangetown, birding as we went, stopping for lunch at a local Chinese restaurant. From there we traveled south on the Northern Highway to the Crooked Tree Sanctuary, which is on an island in the freshwater Crooked Tree Lagoon. As we neared the island, to our delight Snail Kites were common, feeding on snails close to the island. Again, the accommodations for our two nights at the privately-owned Paradise Inn on Crooked Tree were clean and comfortable with beds with mosquito nets, private bath with hot and cold water and 24-hour electricity via power lines.

A boat trip on the lagoon on day five provided Boat-billed Heron, Sungrebe (another group favorite), Pale-vented Pigeon, Squirrel Cuckoo, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, Green Kingfisher, Yellow-olive, Dusky-capped, Brown-crested, Social and Fork-tailed Flycatchers, Yucatan Jay, Green-backed Sparrow, Grayish Saltator and Yellow-tailed Oriole.

On day six we traveled a short distance north from the Paradise Inn to a boat landing at a river crossing where we boarded small power boats for a cruise up the New River to the Mayan ruins of Lamanai. The bird list for the Lamanai Outpost Lodge numbers more than 300 species. The ruins are being uncovered and restored, and there were numerous construction activities and tourists. On a walk away from the activities we saw (and photographed) another Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Jabiru (including nests), Black-collared Hawk (a real "wow" bird), Short-tailed Hawk, Yellow-lored Parrot, White-necked Puffbird, Blue-crowned Motmot and Rufous-tailed Jacamar. A group of Greater Fishing Bats at their day roost was a treat. Local boys fished with nets from their dug-out canoes.

Day seven we traveled south to Belize City and then west on the Western Highway, stopping for an hour or so at the Belize Zoo before continuing on to the Five Sisters Lodge in the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve. En route, we found a Ruddy Crake, which was the only life bird for every member of our group. The "Five Sisters" are five gushing waterfalls in the river below the lodge. The accommodations here were the most luxurious of the trip. Each cabin was constructed of native woods with traditional thatched roof and a richly-finished mahogany interior. Meals were chosen from a menu in the restaurant. Electricity is via the lodge's hydro-generator. Those willing to travel the 300 steps down to and up from the river bathed in cool, clear river pools.

The main magnets of the Mountain Pine Ridge area are the Mayan ruins of Caracol, three miles east of the Guatemalan border. We went there on day eight, hoping to find the two avian specialties, the Harpy Eagle and the Keel-billed Motmot. There were many birds in the Caracol area, but we did not see either of the target birds. We did have satisfying looks at the pair of Orange-breasted Falcons who nested on the rocks at the Hidden Valley Falls. Day nine we returned to the Belize City airport and began our trips home.

In eight days and nights of birding during the middle of February, our small group saw 252 species, met some engaging local people, all of whom spoke English, enjoyed the vast forested regions as well as the Mayan ruins, and ate some great local food while staying at clean, comfortable ecotourist facilities.

"On the Road Again" Articles

FOR SOME TIME I HAVE NOT NEEDED ANY "ON THE ROAD AGAIN" articles, as we had several in reserve. *The cupboard is bare.* Please send me your OTR stories. Electronic versions are easier for me 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 things that were interesting, different, or funny.

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.

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Spring 2007	February 10, 2007
Summer 2007	June 10, 2007
Fall 2007	August 12, 2007

OCTOBER 13–15, 2006, DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA

Fall Meeting Report

By GREGORY J. HARBER



OF TENTIMES WE HEAR OR READ THE WORDS “birding community” without really giving them much thought. The phrase can be so ambiguous, and we rely on its context within the sentence to define its meaning. At the AOS meeting this past fall I came to appreciate several new meanings, if you’ll allow me to elaborate.

On the day prior to the meeting I was working in the lab at UAB when I received word that there had been a tragic automobile accident on the interstate near Atmore. Eloise Rafferty had been seriously injured, and Van Chaplin—dear, sweet Van—had died. Eloise and Van have long been members of our AOS community and news of the accident cut deep into our hearts. Bob Tate and Harriett Wright offered poignant remembrances of Van at the Friday night gathering and we observed a communal moment of silence in Van’s memory. Thank you, Bob and Harriett, for giving voice to our silent recollections of a beautiful lady.

The Friday night display of members’ favorite slides provided the perfect treat to begin the weekend. Shirley Farrell began the occasion with a collection of images from regional birding trips she and Frank had taken in the past year. Seeing the “Autaugaville Swallow-tailed

Kites” brought back pleasant memories for several in the audience. Dee Patterson’s photographs from Panama and Floyd Sherrod’s photographs from Africa captured images of some truly spectacular bird life from far away lands. I closed with a few slides from my own recent travels to Florida and more shots of those splendidly acrobatic kites. Rick West, coming in just under the wire, gave a brief recap of the Alabama Breeding Bird Atlas. I think I speak for everyone when I say that even though this was most definitely a group effort, we never could have completed this project without Rick’s careful and ongoing oversight. Thank you, Rick.

Birding throughout the weekend was about as good as it gets for the protracted fall migration season. While the numbers were not overwhelming by any stretch of the imagination there was a steady supply all weekend long, with enough to satisfy everyone. Word of the next wonderful sighting was never more than a fellow birder’s “heads up” or cell phone call away. It’s funny how members of a community support each other that way; deciding where to go next was often determined by the most recent “bulletin”—no plans, no cares, and birds aplenty!

The West End and Sand Island provided ample opportunities to study shorebirds, gulls and terns (thank you Terry Hartley and John

IN MEMORIAM

Vandolyn L. Chaplin

ON OCTOBER 12, 2006, AOS LOST A DEDICATED member: Vandolyn L. Chaplin. Vandolyn Chaplin, better known as “Van,” was a regular participant at our Dauphin Island meetings. All who knew Van were especially fortunate, privileged and blessed. She was a gentle, sincere, caring lady. Wherever there was a need, Van was there to give concern and help to her friends and others in any way she could.

Van Chaplin was a person who was greatly admired. As a young widow with three small sons, she took her three boys with her to Chapel Hill, N.C. to earn her Master’s Degree in Biology at the University of North Carolina. Van retired from a career teaching biology at Shades Valley High School in Birmingham. After retirement, Van devoted her time to her family, her church and her nature interests. She is survived by three sons, their wives, six grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Van will long be remembered with much love by her family and her host of devoted friends.

—Harriett Wright

Stowers for the boat rides to and from the island) and the airport was the scene of some memorable sightings of Peregrine Falcons and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers. The Black-throated Blue and Nashville Warblers at the Shell Mounds were elusive at times but the Bay-breasted and Wilson's Warblers were most accommodating. The Black-billed Cuckoo at the Goat Trees, and later at the Shell Mounds, was arguably the best bird of the weekend.

Even more stunning, perhaps, were the untold thousands of Monarch and other butterflies cloaking the island. Their fluttering shapes appeared wherever one cared to look, and the oak trees near John Stowers' home were draped with their tiny bodies, heaving delicately as they opened and closed their wings in the warm sunshine. I think many others enjoyed the butterflies too, for the butterflies proved to be popular photography subjects as they fed on the blossoms at the Shell Mounds.

The saying goes, "The third time is always the charm." Never was this more true than in the case of our guest and featured speaker, Jon Dunn, for this was the third consecutive time we have tried to host Jon at our fall meeting. The previous two attempts were 'hurricaned out' due to Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina. Birding with Jon throughout the weekend was a delight for many, and his Saturday night treatise on sparrows gave us a new insight into the beauty and complexity of this under-appreciated group of birds. We were grateful for the reprieve from the hurricanes and for Jon's good nature.

The winter meeting, as you will note in this newsletter, will be held near St. Mark's NWR, one of my favorite places on God's green earth. Be sure to join us as we share together the wonderful birds and sights of the Florida Gulf Coast. The quiet stillness and solitude will be the perfect cure for your wintertime blues.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2006

Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting

By KAREN WILSON, *Secretary*



RESIDENT STAN HAMILTON CALLED THE MEETING to order at 2:05 pm.

Frank Farrell gave the treasurer's report, stating that the AOS checking account has approximately \$15,000 with expenses for the fall meeting still to be paid. Frank estimates AOS lost between \$1,500 and \$2,000 by missing the last two fall meetings.

Stan suggested and the board approved to give speaker Jon Dunn an honorary membership in AOS.

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE: Greg Harber, who has done an exceptional job in filling the shoes of Bob Reid, gave his report. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has asked Aloe Bay LLC to re-submit their development proposal. Greg wrote a letter to Wheeler Wildlife Refuge concerning AOS's input on their plan to improve public access to the refuge. He also has a letter ready to send to the Alabama State Parks concerning construction of chalets at Joe Wheeler State Park.

BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE: Larry Gardella reported that they are still working on a new Alabama checklist.

PUBLICATIONS REPORT: Annabel has not finished the new AOS t-shirt due to family problems but she will keep working on it. Bob Reed will have the draft brochures out soon.

A Breeding Bird Atlas report was filed with the board from Rick West, which stated:

"We have completed the field work for the AL BBA except for possible new reports for Cliff Swallow nests (under bridges) and Great Horned Owl for December 5-31.

"The data for the 585 targeted CE blocks has been compiled sufficiently to determine that we have equaled the Tennessee Atlas in their sample blocks so the comparison between states is possible. I choose Tennessee because their atlas was very well done, and because it is one of the best in the Southeast, and because it provided the basis for a very satisfactory publication. Our data far exceeded my hopes for us.

"Many thanks to the nine Regional Coordinators and Greg Jackson, all of whom did a fine job—and to the many contributors.

"A full report will ensue for the winter board meeting, when the polished database should be ready for final map generation. That will complete my responsibility when the data are delivered to the Board.

"Publication route is still to be finalized, but it appears that the Regional Coordinators and Greg Jackson will recommend to the Board that a prompt electronic publication should be made.

"The financial details will be, and must be, completed by December 31."

DIBS REPORT: Greg and John reported the purchase of two more lots on the island, one on Bienville Boulevard. and one on Infanta. DIBS is in the process of negotiating a "swap" between two lots on Grant Street. These are the lots with the mobile home on it and the one next to it. As we have already been told, the mobile home is actually on the wrong lot. Instead of moving to the next lot we hope to make the switch. There is \$22,000 left in land acquisitions and we have \$106,000 coming from a Nature Conservancy grant through the Neo-tropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Fund, which will go toward purchasing two other lots on Grant Street we currently have offers on.

Old Business

The committee for alternative locations for AOS meetings in the event of Dauphin Island not being available from hurricanes or other disasters reported that it seems impossible to find a suitable location on such a short notice. Even trying to have an alternative in place beforehand has proven fruitless. We decided that there is just not another location that we could find that would be satisfactory for migration.

It was reported that the Sea Lab has funding in place to build an auditorium that will seat 200 people that will be available to us in the future should the Chamber of Commerce building be closed.

Shirley and Frank Farrell (education committee) were given board approval for money necessary to purchase copies of AOS materials to distribute at the AOS booth at the Coastal Bird-Fest.

Larry Gardella, John Porter and Frank Farrell agreed to work on a new AOS membership list.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Important Dates

FOURTH FRIDAY—January 26–28, 2007

Winter Meeting, Crawfordville, Florida

THIRD FRIDAY—April 20–22, 2007

Spring Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

SECOND FRIDAY—October 13–15, 2007

Fall Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

JANUARY 1, 2006 – JUNE 30, 2006

AOS Financial Statement

STARTING BALANCE JANUARY 1, 2006 \$7,361.60

INCOME

AOS Dues	\$4,285.00
CBA Dues	480.00
DIBS	1,015.00
EBSCO	15.00
Book Sales	210.00
<i>Winter Meeting 2006</i>	
Registrations	985.00
<i>Spring Meeting 2006</i>	
Banquet	1,650.00
Registrations	2,220.00
Sea Lab	1,120.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$11,980.00

EXPENSES

CBA Disbursements	\$545.00
DIBS Disbursements	1,110.00
Printing	2,791.15
Postage	521.40
Website	75.00
P.O. Box	38.00
DICC Membership	50.00
Banking	100.90
Miscellaneous	21.78
<i>Winter Meeting 2006</i>	
Petty Cash	30.00
Room Rental	0.45
<i>Spring Meeting 2006</i>	
Books for Sale	341.51
Chamber Hall Rental	350.00
Sea Lab	900.00
Dick Russell's Barbeque	1,405.87
Speaker's Expenses	500.00
Meeting Supplies	66.31
Refunds	175.00
Petty Cash	100.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$9,122.37
ENDING BALANCE JUNE 30, 2006	\$10,219.23

Fall 2006 AOS Compilation List Dauphin Island, Alabama, October 13-15

NOTEWORTHY BIRDS OF THE weekend included Great Black-backed Gull, Franklin's Gull, Black-billed Cuckoo and Rufous Hummingbird.

Canada Goose
Gadwall
American Widgeon
Mallard
Mottled Duck
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Northern Pintail
Green-winged Teal
Redhead
Common Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Northern Gannet
American White Pelican
Brown Pelican
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Reddish Egret
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Black-crowned Night-Heron
White Ibis
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
American Kestrel
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Clapper Rail
Virginia Rail
Sora
Common Moorhen
American Coot
Black-bellied Plover

Snowy Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Piping Plover
Killdeer
American Oystercatcher
American Avocet
Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs
Willet
Spotted Sandpiper
Ruddy Turnstone
Red Knot
Sanderling
Western Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Dunlin
Short-billed Dowitcher
Long-billed Dowitcher
Laughing Gull
Franklin's Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring 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
White-winged Dove
Mourning Dove
Common Ground-Dove
Black-billed Cuckoo
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Great Horned Owl
Barred Owl
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Rufous Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Eastern Wood-Pewee

Empidonax species
Eastern Phoebe
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Loggerhead Shrike
White-eyed Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Tree Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
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
Wood Thrush
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Blue-winged Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Northern Parula
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Magnolia Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Pine Warbler
Palm Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler

American Redstart
Prothonotary Warbler
Worm-eating Warbler
Swainson's Warbler
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Kentucky Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Yellow-breasted Chat
Summer Tanager
Scarlet Tanager
Eastern Towhee
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow
Seaside Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak
Painted Bunting
Indigo Bunting
Dickcissel
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Common Grackle
Boat-tailed Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Baltimore Oriole
House Finch
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 **boldfaced**, or listed in the Hypothetical section of the AOS Field Card, must be supported by complete written details and submitted to, and accepted by, the Records Committee to become an official AOS record. *Italicized species* usually need written details but these may be brief. Out of season and locally rare birds should also be documented. Refer to the front page of the AOS Field Card for additional details.

MEET THE SPEAKER

The Snowy Owl

By DENVER HOLT

Denver Holt is a wildlife researcher and graduate of the University of Montana. He is founder and president of the Owl Research Institute and the Ninepipes Wildlife Research and Education Center, a non-profit organization, located in Charlo, Montana. Since 1978, his particular focus has been researching owls and their ecology. He has published about 65 papers and technical documents, including three species accounts for the Birds of North America project. He was the team leader for the Strigidae (owls) species accounts for The Handbook of the Birds of the World, covering 189 species of owls. He has also co-authored a science book on owls for children. In 2000, he was named Montana's Wildlife Biologist of the Year. This award is presented annually by the Wildlife Society of North America.

His work has been acknowledged on ABC, CBS, NBC, and featured on CNN's Science News, Audubon's Up-Close series, Disney, PBS's Bird Watch, and David Attenborough's Life of Birds, among others. His research on Snowy Owls was featured on the November 18, 2002, National Geographic Explorer television program and in the December 2002 issue in National Geographic magazine.



BARROW, ALASKA, IS THE MOST NORTHERLY POINT in the United States. It is located on the northern coastal plain and lies over 300 miles north of the Arctic Circle. It is home to the Inupiat Eskimo people, and the Snowy Owl. Barrow was once called Ukpeagvik, an Inupiat name that roughly translates to—a place where owls are hunted or can be found. Here in Barrow, Ukpik (Snowy Owl) and the Inupiat have had a long history. The owls have been hunted and their eggs gathered for food, their young have been raised as pets, and the owl symbolized in ivory carvings, artwork, masks, dance and other traditions.

In Barrow, the summers are brisk, cool and moist. Although there are 24 hours of light from mid-May to early August, the daily average temperature is just under 40 degrees. Daily humidity is about 80%, and a daily average

wind speed of 12-13 mph. Furthermore, almost 40% of precipitation falls as rain during the summer months. It is in this climate that Snowy Owl breed and raise their families.

The Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiaca*) is a large owl that breeds on the tundra of the Northern Hemisphere. Although it is one of the largest owl species in the world, the Snowy Owl is best recognized by its white plumage. It is the second largest bird of prey in the arctic tundra, surpassed only by the Golden Eagle. During the non-breeding season, Snowy Owls migrate and wander throughout Canada, the northern United States, and a few scattered locations at mid-latitudes and the southern states. It is the non-breeding season when this species is most often observed.

Adult males can be almost pure white, weigh about 3 pounds and stand 22–23 inches tall. Indeed, on the breeding grounds, male plumage seems to glow as if a fluorescent white, and can easily be seen from over one mile. Females, on the other hand, are more mottled with a base color of white and dark brown bars and spots on various areas of the body. They are more difficult to locate when nesting on the tundra. They are larger than males and can weigh between 5 and 6 pounds and stand about 24–25 inches tall.

Snowy Owls are a ground owl. On the Arctic tundra, they nest on tall mounds that average about 3 feet high. Here they have a commanding view of the surrounding tundra and monitor potential threats to their eggs and young. Only females incubate and care for nestlings, while males provide most food and protection of the females and young. Males and females have been observed to drive caribou, bears, wolves, and people from their nesting areas. Although they are capable of killing animals as large as Arctic Fox and White-fronted Geese, I found in my study at Barrow, Alaska, that Snowy Owls do not breed unless the 2–3-ounce Brown Lemming is abundant. And the Brown Lemming populations can vary substantially from year to year.

Although bird observations indicate a general north to south migration in winter, recent satellite telemetry studies also show that some owls will stay on the tundra or high latitudes all winter. In fact, a non-traditional east-west migration has recently been observed. In these cases, a few females have moved from Alaska to Russia, back to Alaska and then to Canada, having barely moved south for the winters.

Join this slide show and lecture, and learn more about these white owls of the north.

AOS WINTER MEETING 2007

The Inn at Wildwood, Crawfordville, Florida, January 26-28, 2006

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26

- 4:00 p.m. Registration in the Manatee Room
- 6:00 p.m. Social Hour in the Manatee Room
- 7:00 p.m. Announcements and Members Slide Show in the Manatee Room
- 8:30 p.m. Board Meeting, Manatee Room

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

- 6:00 a.m. Continental Breakfast
- 7:00 a.m. Field Trips—meet in the parking lot
- 6:00 p.m. Social Hour in the Manatee Room
- 7:00 p.m. Banquet at the Bistro
- 8:00 p.m. Business Meeting and Program in the Manatee Room

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

- 6:00 a.m. Continental Breakfast
- 7:00 a.m. Field trips—meet in the parking lot
- 12:00 p.m. Compilation (location to be announced)

ACCOMMODATIONS AND INFORMATION

The next AOS meeting will be at The Inn At Wildwood, Crawfordville, Florida, January 26-28, 2007. Denver Holt is the speaker.

AOS has a block of rooms for \$79 (primarily king and queen rooms with fridges, etc.) and it's all non-smoking. This is \$10 less than their normal rate. All rooms must be booked by January 14, 2007, for reduced AOS rate, and you must mention AOS when booking. The Inn can be contacted at (850) 926-4455 or (www.innatwildwood.com). There will be a continental breakfast Saturday and Sunday at 6:00 a.m.

The cost of the banquet will be \$22.50 per person, and advanced reservations are required.

Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park and Lodge is also nearby. To reserve a guest room, please call the park at (850)224-5950. It is located 14 miles south of Tallahassee on State Road 267 at the intersection with State Road 61.

There will be no Friday Night Pot Luck Supper.

AOS WINTER MEETING 2007 REGISTRATION FORM

Complete and return to:

Frank Farrell, 2744 Darlene Circle, Birmingham, Alabama 35235
 Telephone: (205) 815-3554 • E-mail: frank_far@msn.com
Please make checks payable to AOS and remit by January 12, 2007

Name(s) _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 E-mail Address _____

AOS DUES Student: \$10 • Individual: \$20 • Family: \$30 • Sustaining: \$40
 Life (individual): \$300 • Life (family): \$500

Registration @ \$15 per person	\$
Banquet @ \$22.50 per person	\$
AOS 2007 Dues	\$
Coastal Birding Association 2007 Dues (\$5)	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Contribution	\$
TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$

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