

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 28, NO. 1 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SPRING 2008

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

FOUNDED 1952



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HE TIMES, THEY ARE A'CHANGIN'. Change seems to be the buzzword this year and it is certainly true for AOS.

For the first time since I can remember, the spring meeting place will be off-island. (Not too far off, but somewhat.) Most of us will continue to stay on the island, bird on the island, eat on the island, but we will meet at Mary's Place, a restaurant on AL Hwy. 188 just west of Alabama Port. The owner has very graciously agreed to let us use her big back room on Friday and Saturday nights. She will cater Saturday night's banquet and since we will be meeting in her restaurant on Friday night we will not have our usual potluck supper. You may of course order off her menu on Friday night. Or you may eat anywhere else. We will be able to still have our Happy Hour with the proceeds going to the DIBS land acquisition fund. Parking may be a bit tight but we can all carpool over. The distance is not great. From the bridge to Mary's Place is about 7 miles.

We have a new brochure thanks to Annabel Markle and Robin McDonald. It should be ready for the Spring meeting. It is gorgeous.



Change is coming to the Soehren household also. Our vice president, Eric, is about to add a new job—Daddy—to his resume. Eric will miss the Spring meeting because of his new duties: night feeding, diapers, burping, etc. We'll miss you, Eric and Jennifer, and our very best wishes for the little one.

Stan Hamilton has been begging for younger members for years, and now we are growing our own.

We have a little bonus for our members on Friday evening. Our own Bert Harris from Huntsville has been in Ecuador for several months searching for a hummingbird that has not been seen for a long time. He will be in the U.S. for a few months before entering graduate school in Australia, and will give a short program on Friday evening to describe his exciting results.

One last thing: I just read a new book *Bringing Nature Home* and I recommend it highly. It's written by Douglas W. Tallamy, Professor of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He encourages the use of native plants to benefit all of nature, especially birds.

So, hope for good weather, good birds and be safe. See you on the island in April.

Important Change to the AOS Membership Directory!

AT OUR LAST BOARD MEETING IN JANUARY, THE BOARD VOTED to proceed with a membership directory using our membership records that we have on hand. **If you do not want to be included, or if you want us to use only part of your information, you must opt out by June 1, 2008.** Your name, address and email address will be used unless you opt out of all or part of the directory.

This project is long overdue, and we need to get on with it. Remember, **if you do not want your information included**, please contact Larry Gardella at email: tapaculo@knology.net or by mail: 3549 Audubon Road, Montgomery, AL 36111.

—Linda Reynolds

AOS 2008 Dues Due

YOUR 2008 DUES ARE DUE AS OF JANUARY 1. IF YOU HAVEN'T paid, be sure to send your dues in with your registration. The number in the upper right of your address label is the last digit of the year your membership expires.

Electronic Yellowhammer?

IT COSTS 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 *The Yellowhammer* in color, as a pdf file, please email the editor at Robert.Reed@psc.alabama.gov.

The Lure of Churchill

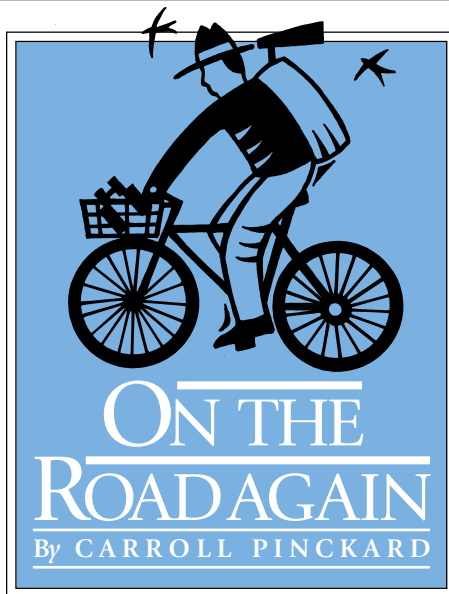


IF YOU GO TO THE AMERICAN Ornithologists' Union *Check-list of North American Birds*, Sixth Edition,

1983 to learn where in North America you might have more than just an outside chance to see a Ross's Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*), you will learn that these birds breed mainly in northern Siberia, winter along the ice pack in open Arctic waters, and in migration have been seen along the Arctic coast of Alaska and in Arctic Canada. Ross's Gull has been known to breed at Churchill, Manitoba, Canada, and it has also been seen wandering southward in winter along the coast of Massachusetts at Newburyport, and for several days in early spring at the sewage tanks of the Baltimore, Maryland, wastewater treatment plant. Therefore, one should not be surprised to be directed to the sewage lagoons at Churchill where Ross's Gull had been seen regularly for several years.

Our six-day trip to Churchill in the middle of June began at a motel close by the airport in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where our group of five eager birders, two couples and a single man, gathered to spend the night and board an early morning non-stop flight from Winnipeg to Churchill. After a two-and-one-half hour flight we arrived under leaden skies and in a cold drizzle of rain. By the time we took possession of our aged rental vehicle and checked in at our motel the weather had improved; the sky had cleared, the sun was shining brightly and there was a moderate, but cold, breeze. This weather was typical during the five full days we birded in the vicinity of Churchill.

There are a number of very satisfactory motels in Churchill, as well as several restaurant choices. The rental car situation is different; there are very few cars available, and during the busy birding season in June the choices are limited. We had been advised to reserve both a car and our rooms long in advance of our visit, and you should do likewise if



you are not going there as a member of an organized birding tour. There were four tours in the area at the time of our visit, and the friendly exchanges of up-to-date bird sighting information were helpful.

We did not travel far from town since there are only a couple of maintained roads and there are some restricted areas closed to visitors. Because of this we spent little time traveling by vehicle and used the maximum time birding and pursuing other related interests. One member of our group was an accomplished artist, and two of us devoted considerable time to photog-

raphy. Even so, each member saw every bird species on our trip list. And the looks were exceptional. Our trip list was not great in number, but it contained many high-quality birds.

The very first day we found Ross's Gull; rather, we found a crowd of about thirty birders, with scopes set up, looking at the Ross's Gull at the sewage lagoons. During our visit the ice in the Churchill River broke and so we also enjoyed the marine mammals in the area. Daylight each day consisted of at least 18 hours of light suitable for birding, artwork and photography, and so our pace was very relaxed. There were mosquitoes and flies, but the breezes and the fact that we were clothed to protect against the 30°-50° temperatures reduced our discomfort. Sunscreen was necessary.

Most of the area is true tundra, marshes, small evergreen forest patches, shore line and rain pools. There is enough habitat variety to provide a wide variety of bird species. We identified only foxes, ground squirrels, and marine mammals. Our bird list included American Bittern displaying, paired Tundra Swans, Harlequin and Long-tailed Ducks in breeding plumages, all three scoter species, Spruce Grouse and Willow Ptarmigan, Hudsonian Godwit and Baird's Sandpiper in breeding plumages, large numbers of Red Phalaropes in roadside rain pools, all three jaegar species: Pomarine, Parasitic and Long-tailed, some perched close enough for full-frame

photographs, Thayer's, Ross's and Sabine's Gulls, Arctic Tern, Northern Hawk-owl, Short-eared Owl nesting and allowing close approach for full-frame (telephoto lens) photography. Harris's Sparrow and Smith's Longspur in breeding plumages, Hoary Redpoll, and countless shorebirds including Yellow-legs vocalizing while perched in treetops.

Our trip totaled 76 species, including the targeted Ross's Gull. The morning of day six we left Churchill aboard the first flight out and made our flight connections in Winnipeg for our homeward journey. A very satisfying trip.

EDITOR'S NOTE: It is my understanding that Ross's Gull has been absent from Churchill in recent years.

Birding from Paradise



ABOUT 60 MILES NORTH OF THE BRIDGE OVER THE Straits of Mackinac, connecting Lake Michigan and Lake Huron and connecting the Lower Peninsula of Michigan with the Upper Peninsula, lies the little town of Paradise. Ten miles further north is the northernmost point of eastern Michigan, Whitefish Point. Whitefish Point is one of our favorite places to bird in Michigan, and indeed it is favored by many knowing birders. To some travelers Paradise is just a place along the road where you can gas up, eat, buy some trinkets and purchase a bumper sticker for your car: "I DROVE THROUGH HELL TO GET TO PARADISE." Many years ago when we first stayed in Paradise a common practice for the locals was to go to the town dump at sundown to watch black bears come in and forage. This practice is now illegal; all garbage must be buried by nightfall. There are several motels and B&Bs in Paradise, but many of them are closed except in the summer tourist season. So too are the places to eat. But Whitefish Point provides exceptional birding opportunities during late winter and early spring, and Paradise is the most convenient place to stay.

Our most recent trip to Whitefish Point was during the second week of May. The road to the point and the parking area there had been cleared, but there was still a considerable amount of snowpack all around. We stayed in a motel in Paradise where the gracious couple who owned and managed the place were birder friendly. There was no place open for an early breakfast, so we ate in our room, enjoying the hot coffee provided by our hosts, who each night before retiring placed a large electric coffee maker/urn connected to a timer on a table in the covered passageway outside the rooms.

At Whitefish Point there is a lighthouse, a shipwreck and historical society museum, and a small visitor center and gift

shop. The Michigan Audubon Society leases the property from the U.S. Coast Guard, and the society has established the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory. The movements of migratory birds and a seasonal census of resident birds are documented. Late morning may bring a busload of tourists, but they usually do not stay long, especially if the weather is challenging; in any case there are enough out-of-the-way birding areas to satisfy even a recluse. There was no food or drink available at the gift shop. We brought our own.

An important birding area is "the point," an area overlooking Whitefish Bay at its confluence with Lake Superior. At the point we saw tens of thousands of migrating birds: large numbers of Red-throated Loons, Red-necked Grebes, Greater Scaup, Mergansers, Surf and White-winged Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, Common Goldeneyes, Bonaparte's, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, Common Terns, and shorebirds including Piping Plovers. Land birds encountered elsewhere included a few Boreal Chickadees, Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins. We saw a couple of perched Hawk Owls and a Great Gray Owl which sat quietly all day on the broken-off trunk of a dead tree at eye-level as if to say, "Take my picture." We did.

We saw 15 species of sparrows at Whitefish Point, many of which came to feeding stations behind the gift shop. In a marshy area we found the most beautiful Le Conte's Sparrow we have ever seen. Magnificent!

Birding is also very good in the Sault Ste. Marie area, where we found Sharp-tailed Grouse at the edges of fallow fields. We did not stop this time at the Wilderness State Park or the Headlands Park, both of which are located at the top of the "mitten" of the Lower Peninsula. We did stop on our way southward in the town of Grayling to see Kirtland's Warbler again. All things considered, another very satisfying trip.

Attracting Birds to Your Property



WITH GROWING RECOGNITION that our climate is warming, native plants are the best choice for creating bird friendly habitats for the future. Native plants are adapted to temperature extremes of the past, and they are the best bet for future changes because of their long history with local climates. If you are trying to bring more birds to your backyard, the single best thing to do is plant native shrubs, vines, and trees.

PROVIDE A WATER SOURCE near protective shrubs during the summer months. On hot days, birds are especially eager to bathe and drink. Bird baths should be only an inch or two deep with a shallow slope; a dripping effect will lure more birds. Mount the bath on a pedestal if cats prowl your neighborhood. Clean it once a week with a stiff brush.

CREATE A SONGBIRD BORDER along your property edge by planting trees and shrubs that meet the needs of birds throughout the year. Select native plants adapted to the weather extremes of your local climate. The border can take the form of a hedge or windbreak, depending on your property size. Plant several of each species adjacent to each other, selecting a mix of plants, with the tallest planted at the edges of the property, and shorter species tiered toward your home. Include at least one species of thorny tree, such as hawthorn or raspberry, for nesting. Also include evergreens, such as spruce, holly, or juniper, for cover. Plant berry-producing shrubs such as dogwood, serviceberry, and viburnum that will provide fruit throughout the seasons.

CREATE A BRUSH PILE in a corner of your property. Each time a storm drops limbs, heap them up. During spring



clean-up, save those downed branches and tree trunks from the community wood chipper. Layer the larger logs as a foundation, then build up the pile in successive layers. In large fields that are growing into young forest, create living brush piles by cutting neighboring saplings most of the way through the trunks, then pulling them into a collective heap. Songbirds will find shelter from extreme weather in such cover throughout the year.

RAKE LEAVES UNDER SHRUBS to create mulch and natural feeding areas for ground-feeding birds such as sparrows, towhees, and thrashers. Earthworms, pill bugs, insects, and spiders will thrive in the decomposing leaf mulch, and will in turn be readily eaten by many songbirds. In general, overly tidy gardeners are poor bird gardeners!

REDUCE YOUR LAWN BY AT LEAST 25% to favor meadow plants and taller grasses. Tall grasses provide seeds and nesting places for birds. Cut this meadow just once each year, and let the remainder of the lawn grow 3 to 4 inches tall before cutting. Take the "healthy yard pledge" to avoid lawn pesticides and wasteful sprinklers (www.audubonathome.org/pledge). Currently, 50 percent of U.S. households treat their lawns with chemicals that kill about 7 million birds each year. These chemicals also leach into our groundwater where they move to wells, streams, lakes, and oceans.

CLEAN OUT OLD BIRD AND MOUSE NESTS from nest boxes in early spring. When setting out new nest boxes, consider the preferred habitat for different species, as well as the size of the entrance hole, and its distance above the ground. Face boxes to the east in northern latitudes to provide extra warmth. In forests, play "woodpecker" by

using a power drill to create 1-inch holes into dead snags 4 to 5 feet off the ground. These holes will serve as nest cavity starts for chickadees and titmice.

CLEAN TUBE FEEDERS with a bottle brush and a 10% solution of non-chlorine bleach solution. Rinse thoroughly and dry in the sun before refilling. Rake up soggy seed from under feeders that could grow deadly mold. Move feeders close to the house to avoid window strikes. Collisions with windows may kill as many as a billion birds in the United States each year. Birds at feeders that are spooked by a hawk or other predator will scatter in all directions. Move feeders within three feet of a window. At such close distances, birds are less likely to gather lethal momentum when startled. The birds will be safer, and you'll get a better view!

KEEP YOUR CAT INDOORS for the safety of both the birds and your cat. There are about 100 million pet and stray cats in the United States. They kill hundreds of millions of birds each year, especially in the spring when young songbirds are fledging, often on or near the ground. And cats themselves are safer from collisions with cars, predators, diseases, and parasites when kept indoors.

Compiled from The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds, published by Cornell University Press.

Alabama Wildlife Heritage License

IN 2007, THE ALABAMA LEGISLATURE PASSED A BILL ESTABLISHING a voluntary license for people who observe and appreciate the natural world but do not hunt, fish, trap, etc. In other words, it is for people who use the outdoors in a non-consumptive manner.

The license is on sale now online at www.outdoor-alabama.com or at any location that sells hunting or fishing licenses. The license is \$10, but here is the good part: for every \$10 the state gets \$30 in federal funds for the purchase of habitat.

The AOS Board endorsed this license at the winter meeting. We think it's a win-win deal for Alabama birds and birders.

Nightjar Survey

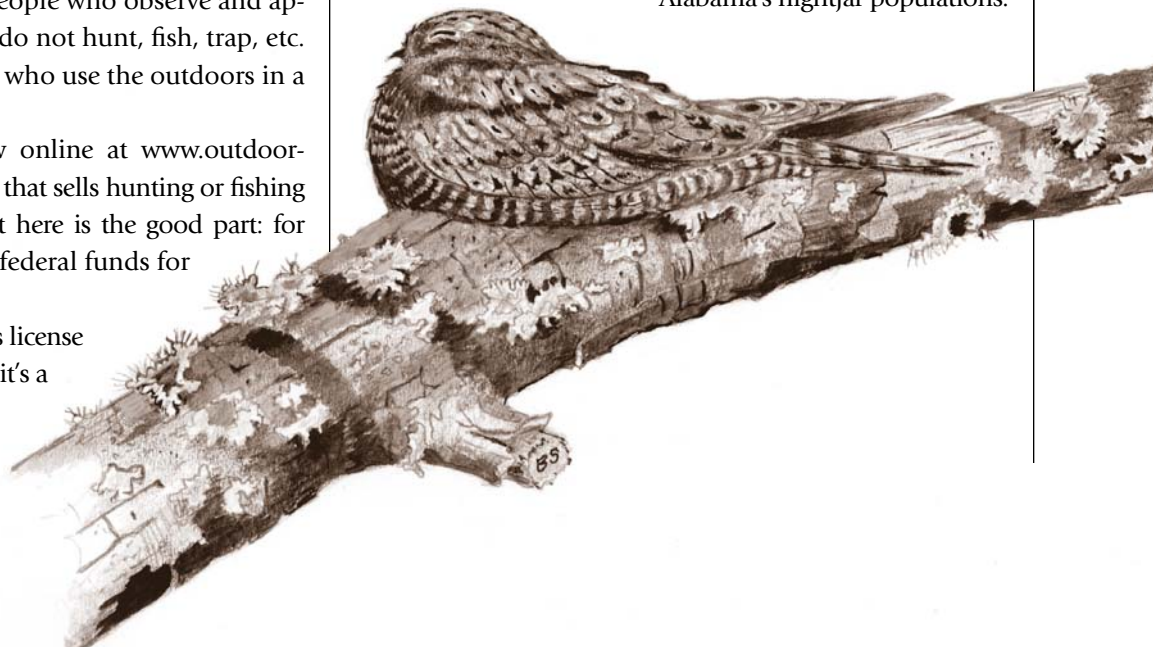
By MIKE WILSON, *Center for Conservation Biology*

THE CENTER FOR CONSERVATION BIOLOGY (CCB) at the College of William & Mary constructed the Nightjar Survey Network in 2007 to begin the process of collecting data on the population distribution and population trends of nightjars across broad regions of the United States. The Network was initially introduced into the southeast and is being expanded in 2008 to provide coverage throughout the contiguous United States.

A summary of 2007 results are posted on the Network's website, www.ccb-wm.org/nightjars.htm.

The Nightjar Survey Network relies on volunteer participation by conservation-minded citizens, biologists, and other like-minded groups to adopt and conduct survey routes. Nightjar Surveys are easy to perform and will not take more than two hours to complete. Volunteers conduct roadside counts at night, during specific time windows when the moon is > 50 % illuminated, by driving and stopping at 10 points along a predetermined 9-mile route. At each point, the observer counts all nightjars seen or heard by species during a 6-minute period. No artificial broadcasts of the species' calls are used. Please visit the United States Nightjar Survey Website for more details including location of routes, instructions, and results: www.ccb-wm.org/nightjars.htm.

Participation by volunteers is critical to provide insight to Alabama's nightjar populations.



JANUARY 25–27, 2008, JOE WHEELER STATE PARK, ALABAMA

2008 Winter Meeting Report

By GREGORY J. HARBER



TRANQUILITY AND IDLE VICE: THOSE WERE THE names of two sailboats moored in their slips in the marina at Joe Wheeler State Park, site of the Winter AOS meeting. I spied them through the dining hall window while eating breakfast that Sunday morning and thought to myself how nicely they summarized the weekend's events.

Frank and Shirley Farrell greeted us at the registration table after we'd checked into our room late Friday. Soon, the gathering twilight brought the day's birding to a close and herded everyone indoors for some socializing. Linda Reynolds welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced our guests and made a few announcements before we began the member's favorite slides program—a perennial favorite enjoyed by all. Certainly, the Short-eared Owl reported by Stan and Dana Hamilton at Key Cave NWR caught our attention and whetted our appetites for the weekend's birding trips!

Saturday morning dawned cold and overcast, the mist gingerly clinging to the river's surface. Predictions of wintry weather did not materialize and so the birding plans laid out Friday night went forward as planned; but still, the Ring-billed Gulls loitering on the dock outside our room didn't seem inclined to depart quite yet. Linda and Dick Reynolds led a group through the park and surrounding environs, Eric Soehren marshaled the troops traveling to Wheeler NWR to join Dwight Cooley, the refuge manager, while Stan and Dana led a smaller caravan to Florence, where Paul Kittle and Damien Simbeck were waiting. I joined this last group headed west to Waterloo—Ron and I were in search of Bald Eagles and we thought the Tennessee River in northwest Alabama was a sure bet.

Our first stop at the huge gravel bar scored the first of many impressive birds for us that morning. Two eagles, an adult and an immature, were visible from where we stood on the rocky shore. Coots, coots and more coots were visible in all directions, but incredibly even these numbers were less than what had been recorded on the CBC weeks earlier. The next stop provided one of the most exciting birds of the

weekend when Damien found a female Black Scoter. The sighting was species #300 on Damien's Tennessee Valley list, adding even more significance to the find.

Following several stops near the community of Waterloo, located in the extreme northwest corner of the state, we drove back east toward the Natchez Trace. Along our route we encountered more eagles (!) and a Ross's Goose to boot. Purple Finches feeding on the ground beneath the cedar trees at Colbert's Ferry boat landing, on the south side of the river, were a bonus for me. I hadn't seen any for the past several years.

Lunchtime found us indoors at the Oakland Café, a mom and pop place plunked down at a rural Limestone County crossroads. Key Cave NWR was next on the itinerary, but alas no Short-eared Owls were to be found upon our mid-afternoon arrival. Savannah Sparrows were plentiful in the grassy windswept expanses, however, and the temperatures began to fall as the clouds slowly cleared away, revealing a bright blue sky in their absence. When we made it back to our rooms, we were greeted by an even dozen American White Pelicans feeding right behind the lodge.

The evening program featured Jill Wick and Lisa Garner-Barillas, two graduate students under the direction of Yong Wang at Alabama A&M University in Huntsville, whose field study sites are in the Bankhead National Forest and the Forever Wild Walls of Jericho tract. The two spoke of their work and research methods and offered us a glimpse of the birdlife in these two remote areas of Alabama. It is encouraging to know their research may lead to a better understanding of the intricacies of bird migration and more knowledge-based management decisions in the future.

Sunday morning was bright and crisp by comparison, and birding was on one's own. News of the very accommodating Red-breasted Nuthatches near the new lakeside cabins (very nice, by the way) had many staying close to the lodge. They led to some folks having a three-nuthatch weekend. Others, knowing it is a long way back to south Alabama, opted to leave early and make a stop at Wheeler NWR on the way home.

Compilation was a small affair, with a handful of birders on hand to tally the 115 species of birds observed over the course of the weekend. The Cackling Geese and Whooping Cranes at Wheeler NWR were at the top of the ooh-ah list, for sure, but the cast of characters—consisting of all the other birds seen during weekend—completed the scene. It had indeed been an idle and tranquil weekend, and as for the vice—merely a loose collection of thoroughly satisfying birding moments with friends. I can hardly wait for spring!

2008 AOS Winter Meeting Compilation List, Joe Wheeler State Park, AL, January 25-27

NOTEWORTHY BIRDS OF THE weekend included Cackling Goose and Whooping Crane.

White-fronted Goose
Snow Goose
Ross's Goose
Cackling Goose
Canada Goose
Gadwall
American Wigeon
American Black Duck
Mallard
Northern Shoveler
Northern Pintail
Green-winged Teal
Canvasback
Ring-necked Duck
Greater Scaup
Lesser Scaup
Black Scoter
Bufflehead
Common Goldeneye
Hooded Merganser
Red-breasted Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Wild Turkey
Common Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Horned Grebe
American White Pelican
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron

Great Egret
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
American Kestrel
Peregrine Falcon
American Coot
Whooping Crane
Sandhill Crane
Killdeer
Greater Yellowlegs
Least Sandpiper
Wilson's Snipe
Bonaparte's Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Forster's Tern
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
Mourning Dove
Short-eared Owl
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Eastern Phoebe
Loggerhead Shrike
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Horned Lark
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-headed Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
Carolina Wren
Winter Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird
Hermit Thrush
American Robin
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
American Pipit
Cedar Waxwing
Orange-crowned Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Pine Warbler
Palm Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow

Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Lapland Longspur
Northern Cardinal
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Rusty Blackbird
Brewer's Blackbird
Common Grackle
Purple Finch
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 **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.

Important Dates

THIRD FRIDAY—April 18–20, 2008

Spring Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

SECOND FRIDAY—October 10-12, 2008

Fall Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

FOURTH FRIDAY—January 23–25, 2009

Winter Meeting, TBA

Summary of Minutes from the Winter AOS Board Meeting

By JOAN SIEGWALD, *Secretary*



THE AOS EXECUTIVE BOARD MET SATURDAY, January 26, 2008, at Joe Wheeler State Park in Rogersville, Alabama. President Linda Reynolds called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Membership Report: Larry Gardella still has not received many responses for the AOS membership directory. After some discussion, the board decided that the next *Yellowhammer* would contain an announcement that anyone who does not want his/her name and address information in the membership directory must contact Larry by June 1 and opt out. Linda will announce this at tonight's meeting and again at the April meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Frank Farrell reported an AOS checking account balance of \$17,086 with winter meeting expenses still to be paid.

Conservation Report: Greg Harber reported that the National Raptor Migration Corridor project is asking for a letter of support for designating a portion of the raptor migration route as a National Raptor Migration Corridor. Greg will check on the project and send a letter of support from AOS if appropriate. Greg also asked if AOS wanted to join the Bird Conservation Alliance, which is an organization of conservation groups devoted to lobbying and public outreach efforts on behalf of bird conservation. Dues would be \$100 a year. The board agreed to join the alliance.

Breeding Bird Atlas Report: Linda said that Rick West has six boxes of Breeding Bird Atlas materials that need to be stored. After the board discussed options for storing these materials, Linda said she will research the issue and report back at the spring meeting.

DIBS Report: Greg Harber reported that DIBS is close to finalizing the arrangements for swapping the trailer lot for the "ani tree" lot in the Steiner block. DIBS is also working on acquiring several other lots in the Steiner block.

Old Business:

New AOS Brochure: Annabel Markle presented a draft of the new AOS brochure which the board reviewed and approved.

New Business:

Meeting place for spring and fall 2008 meetings: The spring and fall 2008 meetings will be at Mary's Place in Coden. Mary's has a large back room where we will meet on both Friday and Saturday nights. Mary's will cater the Saturday night dinner. There will not be a Friday night pot luck supper; Linda said she hoped AOS members would patronize Mary's restaurant for dinner on Friday night. We will have to carpool there from the island since parking is somewhat limited.

Eagle shooting reward: Linda reported that AOS had agreed via e-mail and telephone to contribute \$500 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person who shot the eagle on Dauphin Island. John Porter noted that the reward was now up to \$4,500 in addition to the \$1,000 from U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

Meeting fees: Linda said that she has received numerous requests for AOS to modify its new punitive registration fees. After some discussion, the board agreed to change the registration fees to \$25 for on-time registration, \$50 for member late registration, and \$30 for nonmember walk-up registration.

On-line publications: The board discussed the possibility of converting all issues of *Alabama Birdlife* to PDF files and putting them on the AOS website. Tom Siegwald volunteered to work on this project.

AOS website: The board discussed various options for revising and improving the AOS website. Several board members agreed to research this issue and report back at the spring meeting.

Ornithological meeting in Mobile in April: The Wilson Ornithological Society and the Association of Field Ornithologists will be having a combined meeting in Mobile in April. The meeting will coincide with the AOS weekend and will include field trips to local birding sites. Eric Soehren suggested that AOS welcome attendees and offer them information on birding sites in the area. John Porter commented that this is also the weekend for the America's Birdiest City competition on Dauphin Island; several board members suggested giving the meeting attendees a field card for the competition and asking them to fill it out while they are birding on the island.

New wildlife heritage license: Linda mentioned that a new heritage license will be offered soon by the Conservation Department. The heritage license is a voluntary license that can be purchased online and at other locations where fishing and hunting licenses are sold. Linda thinks the license is a good idea and thinks AOS should support and promote it as individuals and as a group. There is also a match involved; for each \$10 contribution paid for the license, the state gets \$30.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:20 p.m.

Rare Bird Alert Changes

THE RARE BIRD ALERT PHONE PREVIOUSLY LISTED ON THE BACK page is no longer correct. **The new number is: 256-773-8560.** This is only a number to leave messages at. There is no recording of the transcript anymore.

The only way to obtain the RBA is by email or the internet. Two website possibilities are: <http://www.virtualbirder.com/vbirder/realbirds/RealBirdsMid.html> or <http://birding-onthe.net/>. To be added to the email distribution list, send an email to swmavocet@aol.com.

—Steve McConnell

New AOS Membership Brochure to be Ready

THE AOS PUBLICATIONS committee is pleased to announce that the new four-color brochure will be ready for distribution at the spring meeting on Dauphin Island. The brochure was designed and produced by Robin McDonald and utilizes the illustrations of Bill Summerour. The publication committee would like to thank both AOS members for their wonderful work on this project.

—Annabel Markle

JULY 1, 2007 - DECEMBER 31, 2007

2007 AOS Financial Report

By FRANK FARRELL, *Treasurer*

BEGINNING BALANCE: July 1, 2007 \$11,777.73

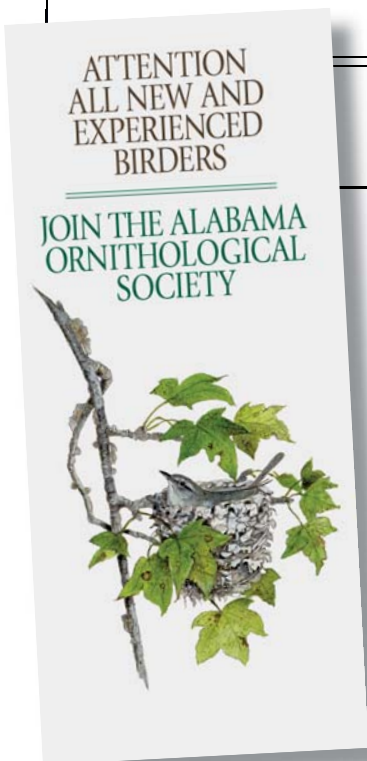
INCOME

AOS Dues	2,675.00
CBA Dues	190.00
DIBS Contributions	1,050.00
Book/T-shirt Sales	404.00
Petty Cash Deposit	153.00
Fall Meeting 2007	
Banquet	1,425.00
Registrations	1,850.00
Sea Lab	675.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$8,422.00

EXPENSES

CBA Disbursement	190.00
DIBS Disbursement	1,050.00
Printing	443.98
Postage	246.00
Website	75.00
Reimbursements	301.05
Fall Meeting 2007	
Banquet	1,290.00
Speaker Fees and Expenses	665.60
T-shirts	572.25
Sea Lab	645.00
Isle Dauphine Event Planners	600.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$6,078.88

ENDING BALANCE: December 31, 2007 \$14,149.43



A O S S P R I N G M E E T I N G , A P R I L 1 8 - 2 0 , 2 0 0 8

America's Birdiest City/County Competition



THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS DAUPHIN ISLAND BIRD Sanctuaries, Inc. has participated in the America's Birdiest City/County competition, a fun nationwide effort to proclaim America's Birdiest Places. Thanks to your diligent efforts, Dauphin Island has been able to claim and defend its title as America's Birdiest Small Coastal City! This year we expect serious competition from Cape May, New Jersey, so we'll need all hands on deck if we are to successfully defend our title.

DIBS will host the America's Birdiest City birding competition the weekend of the AOS Spring Meeting—April 18-20, 2008. Participating is easy, and the rules are simple. At compilation on Sunday we will total the species list for each team and award prizes to the members of the winning team. We'll then tally a grand total for Dauphin Island and pray that it will withstand the challenges from small coastal cities nationwide!

1. Our 72-hour window starts Thursday, April 17 at 12:00 noon and runs until noon Sunday, April 20, when the compilation will be held.

2. Teams of 2-4 people will have the entire 72-hour period to count birds, i.e., they don't have to adhere to a 24-hour window.

3. All birds recorded must be seen from dry land within the town limits of Dauphin Island. This includes Sand/Pelican Island but birds must be seen from dry land, and not from a boat while in transit. There is no need to record individual numbers of birds, only bird species.

It's as simple as that! To facilitate keeping track of your checklist for the weekend, DIBS will provide copies of the island bird list, printed on colored paper, at the Friday night AOS gathering at Mary's Place. Or, you may wish to download a copy in advance from the DIBS web site:<http://coastalbirding.org>.

Silent Auction to Benefit Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries



THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY OF SEVERAL DONORS and artists, a Silent Auction benefiting Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries will be held April 18 and 19 at the Spring Meeting of the Alabama Ornithological Society. Several original works and some very fine limited edition prints are among the items being auctioned.

While the spring meeting will take place on Dauphin Island as always, Mary's Place in Coden, Alabama, will host the Friday and Saturday night AOS activities since the Chamber of Commerce Hall on the island is no longer available. Currently, we plan to display the artwork on Friday night at Mary's Place, with the Silent Auction taking place on Saturday night.

Beginning on March 15, images of the artwork will be available for viewing on the DIBS web site at <http://coastalbirding.org>. Please visit to the site to view the pieces, and then come to the Spring Meeting prepared to take home your favorite!

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Summer 2008	May 20, 2008
Fall 2008	August 20, 2008
Winter 2008	November 10, 2008

A O S SPRING MEETING, APRIL 18-20, 2008

Meet the Speaker: Mark Bailey

MARK BAILEY is the current president of the Alabama Chapter of the Wildlife Society, a member of the Board of Directors of the Alabama Wildlife Federation, and co-founder of Conservation Southeast, a consulting firm specializing in the conservation of the biodiversity of the Southeast. Mark is a lifelong Alabamian and has long been active in the conservation community. He has a master's degree in zoology from Auburn, where he specialized in herpetology, but his interests are broad and varied, and he is a long-time member of AOS. He worked as staff zoologist for The Nature Conservancy's Alabama Natural Heritage Program for nearly ten years before starting Conservation Southeast in

1998. He co-authored three books resulting from Alabama's Second Nongame Wildlife Conference in 2002, and he assisted in developing Alabama's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy in 2005. Mark was invited by Dr. Geoff Hill to lead one of three Ivory-billed Woodpecker search teams in the Choctawhatchee River in 2006-07 and he is conducting limited searches along the Yellow River this year. He has been actively involved in Red-cockaded Woodpecker conservation and management on private lands in Alabama for nearly a decade. He lives with his wife Karan and daughter Ava south of Andalusia near Conecuh National Forest.

Conserving the Red-cockaded Woodpecker on Private Land in Alabama

By MARK BAILEY



ONCE WIDESPREAD, ALABAMA'S RED-COCKADED Woodpeckers are today primarily restricted to National Forests, but a few populations still remain on private lands. The largest is along Mitchell Lake in Coosa and Chilton counties where thirteen groups of the birds are shared by three private owners and the state's Forever Wild program, all of which are cooperatively managing for the species. The habitat there is roughly 2,000 acres of longleaf pine in rugged terrain not unlike like that found at the Mountain Longleaf Pine National Wildlife Refuge near Anniston. Some very old trees bear "catface" scars from the turpentine industry of a century ago. Recent management has involved pine and hardwood midstory control, prescribed burning, provisioning of artificial cavities, annual monitoring, and banding of both adults and chicks.

Another population is a critically small aggregation of four groups on the adjoining Enon and Sehoj plantations in the Union Springs-Hurtsboro area of Bullock and Russell counties. Owned by Mr. Cam Lanier and managed primarily

for quail hunting, together these beautifully managed tracts have more than 12,000 acres of mature, park-like pine forest, most of which is under a permanent conservation easement. The land is capable of supporting far more Red-cockaded Woodpeckers than are currently present, so in 2005, the Alabama Forest Resources Center, which administers the easement, applied for and received a federal grant to restore the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. In the fall of 2007, eight new recruitment clusters (four artificial cavities each) were created to accommodate seven young birds that were translocated there, six from nearby Fort Benning and one from private land in south Georgia. This was the first translocation of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers to private land in Alabama. Some of these birds may leave, but some are expected to stay. Success will be measured in the number of nests initiated in April or May of 2008.

Conservation of wildlife on private lands can be a challenge, particularly when dealing with federally protected species. For decades, landowners in Alabama have lived in fear of "the woodpecker" invading their longleaf pine forests,

followed closely by government agents eager to confiscate their property rights. Of course, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are poor dispersers and are extremely unlikely to colonize even the best of habitats in today's landscape without some assistance. But if the land-owning public is largely ignorant of woodpecker ecology, they *have* heard of the Spotted Owl, and fear of regulation has motivated many to cut mature timber and/or stop managing with fire when they otherwise would have preferred not to. Perhaps the most unfortunate result of this misapprehension is the collateral damage to other species when a landowner attempts to manage *against* Red-cockaded Woodpeckers: the incidental eviction of resident Brown-headed Nuthatches, Bachman's Sparrows, Gopher Tortoises, Pine Snakes, Fox Squirrels, and dozens of other declining species that depend on a fire-maintained pine-dominated ecosystem.

Fortunately, times have changed, and as one property manager recently told me, the government "finally got it right." The disincentive to manage for



healthy, mature longleaf pine forest has been all but erased through the Safe Harbor program, through which landowners can get "woodpecker insurance" so that they are responsible in the future for no more woodpeckers than were on their property at the time of enrollment, which for most is zero. (Probably no more than a half dozen or so private landowners in Alabama even have Red-cockaded Woodpeckers.) The idea is that, if landowners are not worried about future problems if they attract neighboring birds (or grow more of their own), they will manage their land better and everyone will benefit. All they have to do to participate is to agree to conduct certain management practices, such as prescribed burning, or even mowing, and if at any point in the future they decide to cut the trees the new birds are using, they must give the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 60 days notice so the birds can be moved. So far this program has been highly successful in other states and several Alabama landowners have either already signed on or have pledged to do so.

If You Get to the Island Early

THE BEST THING TO DO ON EARLY ARRIVAL is to check out all the sites on the Coastal Birding Trail. One new idea is to ride down Henderson Camp Road in Grand Bay and look for flocks of Whimbrels in the fields.

Yes, I said flocks. April 18 is when the Whimbrels start arriving in large numbers, and for the last four years there have been flocks of Whimbrels in fields about a mile or mile and a half down this road. Swallow-tail Kites are possible also. Just don't block the road. We will have a field trip to this site on Saturday if you prefer to wait.

—Linda Reynolds

Mary's Place Restaurant

MARY'S PLACE RESTAURANT is located at 5075 Highway 188, Coden, AL 36523-3711. The telephone number is 251-873-4514.

From the water tower on Dauphin Island, go north on AL 193 about 8.0 miles to the intersection with AL 188. Turn left (west) and go about 2.9 miles. Mary's Place will be on the south side of the road, just past Fowl River and the intersection with AL 59.

From Mobile, go south on AL 59 past Bellingrath Gardens to AL 188. Turn right (west) and Mary's Place will be about 100 yards on the left.

AOS SPRING MEETING 2008

Dauphin Island, Alabama, April 18-20, 2008

FRIDAY, APRIL 18

- 4:30 p.m. Sea Lab Registration at Mary's Place
- 6:00 p.m. Check-in begins at Mary's Place
Open Bar Social at Mary's Place
- 7:00 p.m. Bert Harris Program
- 7:30 p.m. Members Slide Show

SATURDAY, APRIL 19

- 6:00 a.m. Complimentary Danish and coffee at the Sea Lab
- 7:00 a.m. Field trips—Meet at Sea Lab parking lot
- 3:30 p.m. Board meeting—Galathea Hall
- 6:00 p.m. Open bar social at Mary's Place
- 6:45 p.m. Seafood banquet at Mary's Place
- 8:00 p.m. Program—Mark Bailey

SUNDAY, APRIL 20

- 6:00 a.m. Complimentary Danish and coffee at the Sea Lab
- 7:00 a.m. Field trips—Meet at Sea Lab parking lot
- 12:00 p.m. Compilation—Goat Tree

ACCOMMODATIONS AND INFORMATION

Sea Lab—Double occupancy rooms with bath on hall available for 42. (First come, first served.) Bring your own linens, blankets, and towels. Available at 5 p.m. Friday, October 12. See registration form.

Motels—Gulf Breeze and Harbor Lights Motel: (800) 286-0296

Rentals—Boardwalk Realty, Inc: (877) 861-3992; Dauphin Island Real Estate: (888) 707-6444; Tyson Real Estate: (251) 861-8312; Pickett Real Estate: (800) 861-3646; Island Realty Corp.: (877) 219-7392; Angel Realty: (888) 473-5534

Websites—www.gulfinfo.com and www.dauphinisland.cc

FRIDAY NIGHT POT LUCK

There will be no pot luck suppers until further notice. Please consider eating Friday evening at Mary's Place.

AOS SPRING MEETING 2008 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. Checks must be received by April 10, 2008. After April 10, registration fee is \$50.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

AOS DUES Student: \$10 • Individual: \$25 • Family: \$40 • Sustaining: \$50

Life (individual): \$350 • Life (family): \$550

SEA LAB

(See Box Opposite)

Friday Night

How Many _____ Amount \$ _____

Saturday Night

How Many _____ Amount \$ _____

Registration @ \$25 per person (\$50 after April 10)	\$
Banquet @ \$18 per person	\$
Sea Lab @ \$15 per person per night	\$
AOS 2008 Dues	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution	\$
Coastal Birding Association 2008 Dues (\$5)	\$
TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$

THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 28, NO. 1 • SPRING 2008

EDITOR.....Bob Reed
DESIGN.....Robin McDonald
ILLUSTRATIONS.....Annabel Markle

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2744 Darlene Circle
Birmingham, AL 35235
e-mail: frank_far@msn.com

Annual Membership:
Student: \$10 • Individual: \$25 • Family: \$40
Sustaining: \$50 • Life (individual): \$350
Life (family): \$550



AOS ONLINE
<http://www.bham.net/aos/>
AOS RARE BIRD ALERT
TELEPHONE HOTLINE:
256-773-8560

THE NEW AOS ONLINE RETAIL STORE
<http://www.withoutbricks.com/aosstore>

ALABAMA WILDLIFE CENTER
<http://www.awrc.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
<http://www.vetmed.auburn.edu/raptor>

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUDUBON
<http://www.tvas.org>

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