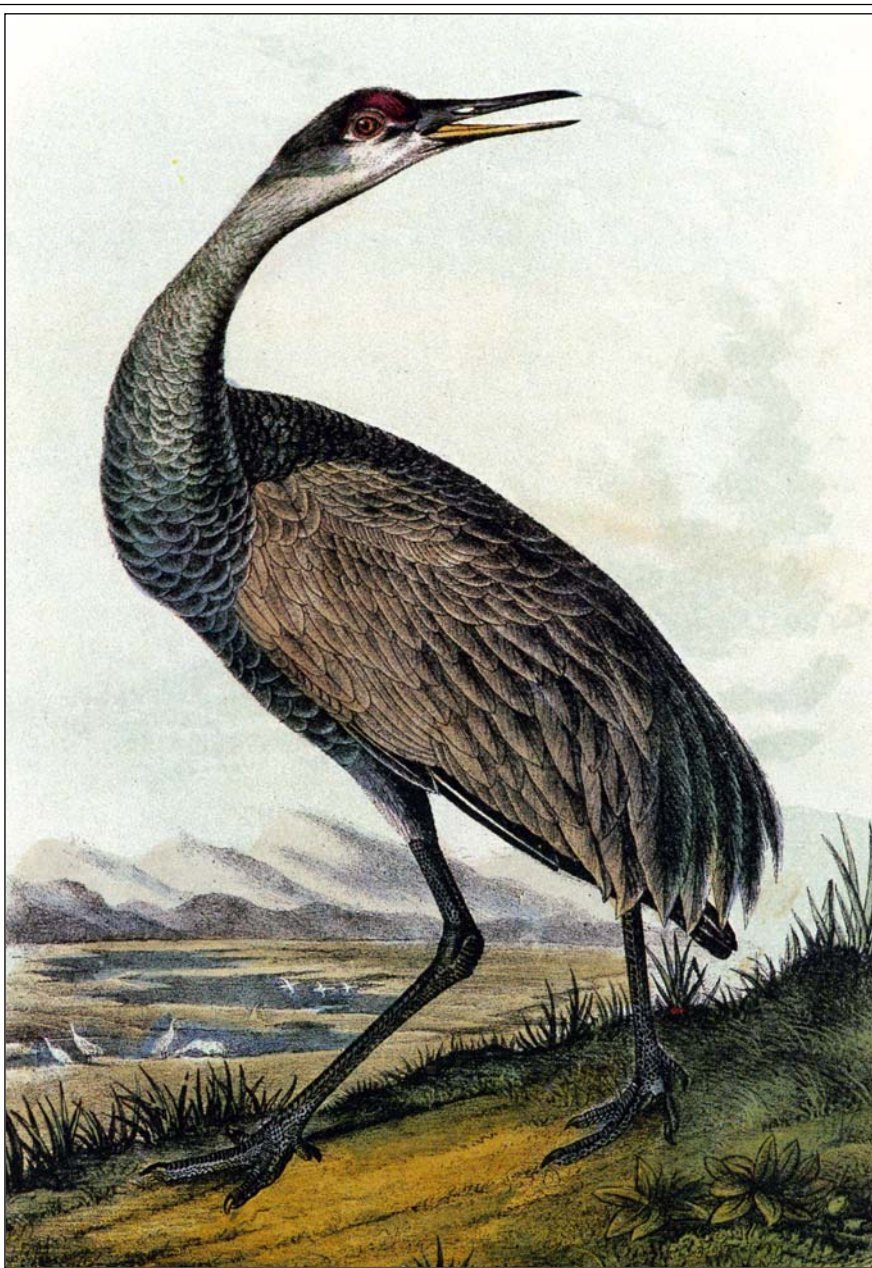


THE YELLOWHAMMER

VOLUME 28, NO. 4 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY WINTER 2008

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

FOUNDED 1952



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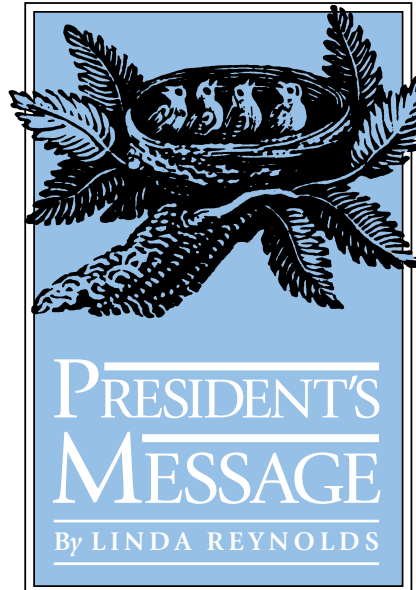
AOS Winter Meeting, January 23-25, 2009

HOLIDAY GREETINGS TO ALL members. It's a new year, time for a new start, and our winter meeting should be an exciting event. We will be meeting at the 5 Rivers facility across from Meagher State Park on the Mobile Causeway. 5 Rivers is operated by the State Lands Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. It is brand new and available to the public. It has conference rooms, an auditorium, exhibits and a gift shop. It sits on 81 waterfront acres and is truly the gateway to the Mobile Delta.

There are lots of hotels and restaurants in the immediate vicinity, some of which are listed on the registration page. The easiest hotel to access is the newly renovated Best Western Battleship Inn right next to the Battleship. They are blocking 20 rooms for us at \$99 per night. This seems to be the average going rate; however, prices vary considerably from the least expensive (Eastern Shore Motel) to the most expensive (the Hilton Garden Hotel). If you want to stay at the Best Western, call by January 14, 2009, and mention AOS.

We have numerous field trip opportunities, thanks to Chazz Hesselein, Bill Summerour and Howard Horne. The Pinto Pass pavilion next to the Battleship has been rebuilt so we can make use of that. The Blakely Island facilities are nearby (don't forget to send in your new 2009 permission form). Blakely State Park is close for winter woodland birds and a possible boat trip. The Magnolia Springs landfill is a possibility for unusual gulls, and if there are any winter hummingbirds in the area, we might check those out. If there are any unusual holdovers from the area Christmas counts we can check those out as well.

Our speaker is Roger Clay, Nongame Biologist with Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Roger leads an interesting life, and he will share insights on his



work with Alabama birds and some of the other species that he works with.

Greg Jackson has an article on another page concerning birders paying their share of habitat preservation costs. Please read it and let us know your ideas. He suggests that we might want to purchase Federal Duck Stamps and possibly sell them within our organization. He also suggests that we all purchase the Alabama Heritage License which we promoted last year. Greg is also a member of Ducks Unlimited because they do a great job of preserving and protecting prairie potholes where ducks breed. I agree with Greg that we all do our part in protecting habitat, and this is an easy way to do it.

There is a new book out on mussels of the Alabama River systems. This is the definitive edition on mussels and Howard Horne will probably have his with him. One of the authors is Jeff Garner, a malacologist with Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries in the Shoals area of Alabama. Another author is James D. Williams from Gainesville, Florida. Jim is usually at Dauphin Island birding when we have our spring meeting. Mussels are a very important part of our environment and are indicators of a healthy aquatic ecosystem. I highly recommend this book. It sells for \$70 and you can get it online at www.uapress or by calling 800-621-2736.

I look forward to our winter meeting and hope to see you there.

Important Dates

FOURTH FRIDAY—January 23–25, 2009

Winter Meeting, 5 Rivers, Spanish Fort, Alabama

THIRD FRIDAY—April 17–19, 2009

Spring Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

SECOND FRIDAY—October 9–11, 2009

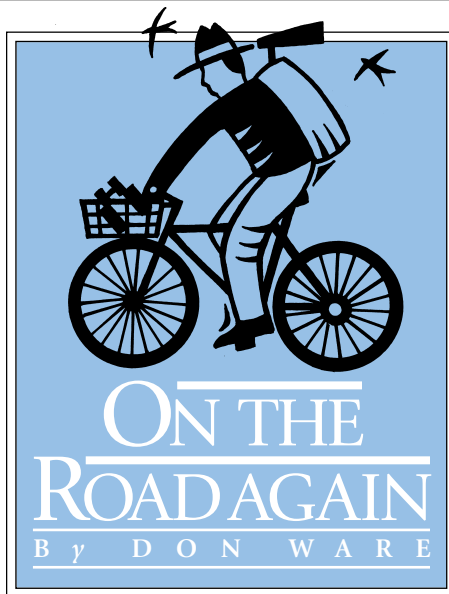
Spring Meeting, Dauphin Island, Alabama

Birding the Gulf Stream



RETURNED FROM OUR JANUARY birding trip to northeastern Brazil with 4997 species on my life list. The 5000th is a big milestone for world birders, because then you know you have found over half of the birds of the world. In March Carol and I went to Nebraska with the Audubon group in Pensacola for the Sandhill Crane spectacle, and there we watched Greater Prairie-Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse on their breeding leks—numbers 4998 and 4999.

The closest new bird for me was then off shore, so I registered for a pelagic trip off Cape Hatteras on August 8. I offered my Choctawhatchee Audubon Society friends a ride to North Carolina if they wanted to join me on the *Stormy Petrel II*, and Bob Penhollow decided that would be fun. Our birding on the barrier island on August 7 only netted us 35 species, but it was good to explore that historical place and make sure we knew where to get breakfast at 5:30 the next morning before a 6:00am departure, with a brown bag lunch.



Naturally, a small sub shop at the dock provides for the early birders. There were 14 people who had paid Brian Patterson \$145 for the 11-hour trip across the Gulf Stream, and his local assistant, Kate, and a Nature Conservancy expert, Dave, were quite helpful as spotters and in confirming or correcting our species calls. The pelagic species tally was: 44 Black-capped Petrels (my 5000th species), 45 Cory's Shearwaters, 63 Wilson's Storm-Petrels, 14 Red-necked Phalaropes, 2 Sooty Terns, and 5 Bridled Terns. We also counted one Common Tern, 3 Black Terns, lots of Royal Terns, and a Great Blue Heron 30

miles off shore, heading west. He was really lost.

After docking we drove up to Pea Island Nature Preserve on the way to Manteo to look for the Curlew Sandpiper that had been reported the day before, but the mosquitoes almost carried us away as we ran back to the car.

We logged only 47 species that day, but they included my 5000th species and seven life birds for Bob. I consider that good birding, and also more fun moments to remember.

Rusty Blackbird Hot Spot Blitz!

THE RUSTY BLACKBIRD HAS BEEN STEEPLY DECLINING OVER THE past 40 years! The cause for the decline is not known. Collaborating with Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's and National Audubon Society's e-Bird project, the Rusty Blackbird Technical Working Group (RBTWG) needs your help to find local concentrations of Rusty Blackbirds.

The Rusty Blackbird Hot Spot Blitz will occur February 7-15, 2009, throughout the bird's winter range, including Alabama. Participants will visit likely locations and submit their observations via e-Bird. There are no datasheets or daily time restrictions. You can go wherever you like, whenever you like, as often as you like anytime between those dates and record

the number of birds present at each location visited, along with very basic habitat information. The RBTWG will use the results to create maps of wintering Rusty Blackbird "hot spots" to direct research, monitoring and conservation efforts.

Watch for more information on the ALBirds webpage or contact Dwight Cooley at Dwight_Cooley@fws.gov or Eric Soehren at eric.soehren@dcnr.alabama.gov, the Alabama Blitz coordinators, if you are interested in participating.

Additional instructions and information on identification, habitat preferences, etc., will soon be posted on the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's Rusty Blackbird website: http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/MigratoryBirds/Research/Rusty_Blackbird/. Information and instructions will also be available on Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's e-Bird website: <http://ebird.org>.

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

Fall Meeting Report

By GREGORY J. HARBER



I WAS UNABLE TO ATTEND THE AOS SPRING MEETING on Dauphin Island so, like many who long for a place they treasure but are unable to visit as often as they'd like, I especially looked forward to the fall meeting. Once I crested the Dauphin Island bridge I knew in my heart that I had finally arrived at this place we all hold so near and dear, and it seemed as though the miles and months that had separated us dissolved to nothingness.

The Friday night gathering was held at Mary's Place in Coden. This was new for me and I enjoyed the chance to mingle with everyone and to try out the new cuisine offerings. The Chamber Hall had been a faithful standby all these years, but I know that readying that hall each meeting weekend was a challenge for the meetings committee. I know they appreciated the reprieve, and this reminded me how much I appreciate their dedicated efforts through the years. Following our usual members' favorite slides show and Linda's announcements, the gathering quickly disbanded to allow everyone the chance to get to bed early in anticipation of a good weekend of birding.

Saturday's field trips were limited to two choices: Linda and Dick Reynolds handled the island hotspots tour while I led a small group to Pelican Island. Unlike past years when we relied on Terry Hartley and John Stowers to ferry us across, this year we simply waded the shallows at the public beach. This had been my first chance to exploit firsthand the sand-shifting effects of recent hurricanes.

A variety of shorebirds, gulls, terns, and a clownish Reddish Egret greeted us on the flats beyond the pier. Everyone enjoyed close looks at Piping and Snowy Plovers, plodding and probing their way around the shallow puddles in the mud. The egret occasionally burst into the crazed dance routine so readily apparent when a meal is afoot.

Word soon reached us that a Bewick's Wren had been sighted behind Fort Gaines, so many in the group opted to pursue this rare visitor to Alabama. By the time I arrived

the bird had disappeared into the ample vegetation behind the fort and adjacent to the Sea Lab. We had no luck with the wren but the quest gave me a new appreciation for the myriad wildlife and birdlife that lies so closely underfoot, and yet which we so readily overlook.

Once again, John and Jenny Stowers hosted lunch for the meeting participants at their home overlooking the Sound. If ever there were a more enjoyable aspect of any of our island meetings I am certainly not aware of it. The combination of good food and camaraderie of good friends is one of the highlights I treasure most.

It wasn't long before news of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Western Kingbird at Albright Street began circulating. Drifting in from the west end were reports of a Lesser Black-backed Gull and a Peregrine Falcon among the thousands of birds loitering on the flats at the cut created and widened by the hurricanes. All weekend long, visitors wandered there to view the birds and the new island landmark. Time will tell whether the cut and the new land bridge to Pelican Island are permanent features.

Pete Conroy was the speaker at the Saturday night banquet and program, also held at Mary's Place. While I have admired Pete's conservation and educational outreach accomplishments for many years, I suspect that for many present this was the first time they were aware of these achievements. They offer a testament to the good that can happen when people of goodwill set goals and work together to achieve them. The people of Alabama are the ultimate beneficiaries and I salute Pete for guiding these determined efforts.

Following compilation at the Goat Trees Reserve on Sunday at noon we departed for home, comfortable with the knowledge that our beloved island—despite a few landscape alterations—was still the birdiest small coastal city in America. I look forward to seeing everyone at the 5 Rivers Delta Nature Center for the winter meeting in January. And by the way, 5 Rivers is another Alabama treasure we can call our own.

OCTOBER 11, 2008

Minutes of the AOS Board Meeting

By JOAN SIEGWALD, *Secretary*



THE AOS EXECUTIVE BOARD MET SATURDAY, October 11, 2008, on Dauphin Island, Alabama. President Linda Reynolds called the meeting to order and welcomed Mary Frances Stayton to the Board and thanked her for taking over the position of treasurer.

Treasurer's Report: Mary Frances Stayton reported an AOS checking account balance of \$23,119 with fall meeting expenses still to be paid.

Minutes: The spring meeting minutes were approved.

Vice President's Report: Eric Soehren reported that the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail has been taken over by Alabama State Lands and is being revised. Eric and John Porter drove the trail to review the current sites and see where there were problems (property has been developed, birding is not good there anymore, property is private and therefore has access problems, etc.). They also asked local birders for input. Thirteen sites have been selected for removal from the trail, and signs for those sites have been taken down. State Lands has developed a tentative list of new sites to replace the ones that have been removed; the additions highlight public sites like Forever Wild tracts, new and developing nature centers, and preserves. After a draft for the new trail has been finalized, additional comments will be sought.

Conservation Report: Greg Harber reported that he, on behalf of AOS, endorsed a letter circulated by the Bird Conservation Alliance calling for reauthorization of the North American Migratory Bird Conservation Act and an increase in funding. In addition, Greg submitted comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in opposition to the Department of the Interior's proposed change that would weaken the way the Endangered Species Act is enforced. Essentially the proposed changes would have allowed federal agencies taking actions that might harm endangered or threatened species to determine for themselves the potential effects of

their actions, rather than USFWS biologists determining those effects as they are required by law. He encouraged the Minerals Management Service to keep the ban on the Outer Continental Shelf Leasing Program in place. He wrote Governor Bob Riley opposing the LNG (liquefied natural gas) open loop terminal being proposed for the Gulf of Mexico south of Dauphin Island and Fort Morgan; the proposal was withdrawn when it was apparent that Governor Riley was going to deny it.

Bird Records Committee Report: Eric Soehren reported that the committee voted recently on 17 records; 15 were accepted and the remaining two are undergoing a second review. The Black Swift sighting was accepted as a first state record.

DIBS Report: Greg Harber said that DIBS is still pursuing the Steiner block properties and has made some progress there. He also reported on the status of Pelican Island. Now that Pelican Island is attached to Dauphin Island, many more people are using it; this increases the threat to the island's birds, especially during nesting season. One of the ten heirs associated with Pelican Island recently contacted John Porter, and DIBS is currently negotiating with the heirs about the possibility of obtaining permission to manage the island on an interim basis in order to protect the birds. DIBS's goals for Pelican Island are to put protective steps in place right now and ultimately to gain title to the island.

Old Business

Membership CD: After a discussion about options for a membership directory, the Board decided against a membership CD and decided instead to send a PDF membership list to all members with an e-mail address. Bob Reed will also print out paper copies of the membership list for distribution at meetings.

AOS Website: Eric Soehren summarized previous discussions about the AOS website; it is the Board's consensus that the AOS website is antiquated and difficult to navigate, and that it should be rebuilt. Since constructing a new website would be a huge project for member volunteers, Eric recommended that AOS hire someone to build a new website; he proposed that, before we approach anyone about doing this, we form a website committee consisting of people who are knowledgeable about website issues and can help us identify what we want in a website. The Board voted to approve Eric's proposal to form a website committee.

Alabama Birdlife: Tom Siegwald reported that he is in the process of scanning the 1973-1995 *Alabama Birdlife* issues so they can be posted on the website.

New Business

Late Fee: Linda asked the Board to revisit the issue of the meeting registration late fee since we are now meeting in a restaurant where meeting attendees can order off the menu and catering is no longer an issue. Several people commented that the late fee sends a negative message and discourages new members. The Board voted to drop the late fee.

Field Cards: John Porter proposed that the next edition of the AOS field card be distributed free of charge and put on the AOS website. The Board voted to approve John's proposal.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned.

2008 AOS Fall Meeting Compilation List Dauphin Island, Alabama, October 10–12

NOTEWORTHY BIRDS OF THE weekend included Great Black-backed Gull, Bewick's Wren, and Western Tanager.

Wood Duck
Mallard
Mottled Duck
Blue-winged Teal
Common Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Northern Gannet
Brown Pelican
Double-crested Cormorant
Magnificent Frigatebird
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Reddish Egret
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
White Ibis
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk

Broad-winged Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
American Kestrel
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Clapper Rail
American Coot
Sandhill Crane
Black-bellied Plover
Snowy Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Piping Plover
Killdeer
American Oystercatcher
Black-necked Stilt
Spotted Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
Willet
Lesser Yellowlegs
Marbled Godwit
Ruddy Turnstone
Red Knot
Sanderling
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Dunlin
Short-billed Dowitcher
Laughing Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull

Lesser Black-backed Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Least Tern
Gull-billed Tern
Caspian Tern
Forster's Tern
Royal Tern
Sandwich Tern
Black Skimmer
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
White-winged Dove
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Great Horned Owl
Chuck-will's-widow
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Trail's Flycatcher species
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Western Kingbird
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Loggerhead Shrike
White-eyed Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
Fish Crow
Tree Swallow
Barn Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Carolina Wren
Bewick's Wren
House Wren
Marsh Wren
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
Gray-cheeked Thrush
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Tennessee Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler
Nashville Warbler

Northern Parula
Yellow Warbler
Magnolia Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Pine Warbler
Palm Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Worm-eating Warbler
Ovenbird
Louisiana Waterthrush
Common Yellowthroat
Wilson's Warbler
Summer Tanager
Scarlet Tanager
Western Tanager
Eastern Towhee
Savannah Sparrow
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow
Seaside Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Dickcissel
Red-winged Blackbird
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.

Pulling Our Weight

By GREG D. JACKSON

BIRDERS IN ALABAMA HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO improve their image in the eyes of the public, the outdoor community, and government agencies. We've often suffered from a perception problem; many federal and state lands utilized heavily by birders have received little financial support from us (other than through tax dollars), whereas these same lands are, to varying degrees, purchased and maintained by fees and licenses paid by those who hunt and fish. We do pay entrance fees for some areas (and should *always* do so), and birders have supported purchase of private lands, such as through Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, land trusts, and The Nature Conservancy. However, public land support is often left to hunters and fishermen. This creates a credibility gap with other outdoor enthusiasts, and can influence the way governmental agencies view us and our concerns.

Several opportunities are available to improve this perception problem, some new, some old. Some of these programs involve a bit of cooperation with the hunting and fishing crowd, and for that reason a few members may feel uncomfortable. However, in my opinion that is a poor, and rather illogical, reason not to support these programs; the funds are used to purchase and maintain bird and wildlife habitat, not promote consumptive use. I'm not a hunter myself, though certainly I utilize animals in my daily life for food and clothing; I feel it would be hypocritical to condemn these programs on philosophical grounds, except perhaps by vegans! I would like to encourage AOS members to, at a minimum, look beyond the association with hunting, and embrace the idea of cooperating with other groups to protect the land and habitat needed for our birds.

One way to contribute, available for many years, is the federal Duck Stamp program. This is one of the most efficient ways to support the purchase of wetland habitat; a whopping 98% of all donations go directly into land purchases for National Wildlife Refuges. Several ornithological societies, such as our neighbors in Georgia, have arranged to sell Duck Stamps

to their members and others (look online at <http://www.gos.org/duckstamp/duckstamp.htm>). Duck Stamps cost only \$15 per year, and a side benefit is free admission to many National Wildlife Refuges which charge admission. This is a fantastic way to support wildlife conservation, and I encourage AOS to participate in the promotion and sale of these stamps. For more information on the benefits of the program, look at www.fws.gov/duckstamps/Info/Stamps/stampinfo.htm.

On a related subject, I urge birders to support Ducks Unlimited. I've been a DU member for several years. This organization does a tremendous job in conserving wetlands all across North America. They have a high efficiency rating in terms of dollars going to habitat conservation, not wasted on administrative overhead. For example, in fiscal 2005, DU conserved 220,000 acres of land in North America, and 87% of all donations went to land conservation; in fiscal 2006, this dropped slightly to 169,000 acres preserved and an 83% donation efficiency, still excellent. Better yet, they are impressively able to obtain an average of 6:1 matching funds, so your contribution is multiplied greatly. This group works well with corporations and those in government (regardless of political party); they are effective lobbyists in achieving legislative efforts positive for habitat issues. Check them out at www.ducks.org.

Alabamians now have a way to support wildlife habitat in our own state, through the new Wildlife Heritage License. This is only \$10 per year, and the monies generated are boosted by 3:1 federal matching grants. Funds are used to purchase and maintain habitats and support non-game research and monitoring programs. Notes about this program have appeared a couple of times in this newsletter, and I hope some of our members have taken advantage of this opportunity to support our local habitats. Yes, the license does also give one the right to fish and hunt small game, but purchase does NOT equate to support of hunting (if that is an issue for some). As this is an actual state license, AOS cannot sell these. They can easily and quickly be purchased online at www.ducks.org.



outdooralabama.com/licenses/WildlifeHeritageLicense.cfm; a downloadable brochure with more information on the benefits of the program is available there as well.

Another state program which secures bird habitat is Forever Wild. By purchasing a Forever Wild auto tag, or redirecting some of your Alabama income tax refund, you are supporting the purchase and maintenance of high priority wild lands in the state. This project has already purchased 53 tracts of special habitat totaling 113,000 acres, from the Tennessee

line to the Gulf. I know from seeing car tags at meetings, that many AOS members already support this effort, but I encourage more to do so.

The name of the game for all these programs is benefiting wildlife habitat, which helps the birds we love. If AOS and its members will support these ventures, and let it be known we do, I believe it will improve our credibility with other outdoor enthusiasts, who have shouldered a disproportionate share of the financial burden in the past.

A O S W I N T E R M E E T I N G , J A N U A R Y 2 3 - 2 5 , 2 0 0 9

Meet the Speaker: Roger Clay

Roger Clay is a certified wildlife biologist with the Alabama Nongame Wildlife Program in the Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and is a graduate of Auburn University with a degree in wildlife biology. Before graduating, Roger interned two summers while conducting surveys of Brown Pelicans and other colonial nesters on Gaillard Island. Joining the Nongame Program in October 1988, he is one of three biologists in the program. He works from the District V offices in Spanish Fort. Roger is a board member of the Mobile Bay Audubon Society, a member of the Weeks Bay Estuarine Research Reserve advisory committee, and is co-chair of the Mississippi/Alabama Initiative Team of the Gulf Coast Joint Venture.



AS PART OF THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION and Natural Resources, the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries' focus has primarily been on the management of the hunting and fishing resources. The Division enforces hunting and fishing regulations and maintains and monitors its 36 public wildlife management areas and 20 public fishing lakes. Recognizing the need to address the concerns of those species that are not necessarily harvested, the Nongame Wildlife Program was created in 1984 within the Division's Wildlife Section.

It has been my pleasure and privilege to work for the Nongame Program for over 15 years while stationed in the District V offices in Spanish Fort. During my tenure, I have had the opportunity to work with a variety of species of Alabama's abundant and varied wildlife.

Birds have always played a prominent role in the Nongame Program's activity. Since the program was ideally to be supported through voluntary state tax check-off proceeds, working with such a popular group of animals was a logical strategy. One of the earliest programs was "Bring Back the Bluebird." The Nongame Program built more than 10,000 bluebird boxes that were distributed to some 1,000 volunteers. Bluebird workshops were conducted in cities and towns across Alabama instructing bluebird enthusiasts on proper nest box construction, placement, and management. I feel confident that the Nongame Program can take some credit for the abundance of bluebirds across the state.

Perhaps the most rewarding project I have been involved in was the Nongame Program's efforts to restore the Bald Eagle as a breeding resident bird. The demise of the eagle in Alabama and the Southeast is well chronicled. When the nongame program began "hacking" and releasing its first juvenile Bald Eagles in 1985 there were no Bald Eagles nesting in the state. In 1991, the release program ended with a mega-hack, releasing 54 juvenile eagles that year. I manned and managed hacking towers in Choctaw and Lowndes County. The many hours devoted to this project certainly paid off. Today there are likely 100 eagle nests statewide and no doubt the Nongame Program had more than a hand in this bird's return.

While the bluebird program and eagle hacking had limited life spans, some activities annually recur. Contributing to the Breeding Bird Survey, I now run six routes in southwest Alabama. Over the years, I have conducted 81 BBS routes making many tick marks on BBS forms.

Gaillard Island, the dredge disposal island in Mobile Bay, is critically important to our Brown Pelicans, Laughing Gulls, and terns. Annual monitoring and coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ensures the continued success of this island for both bird and shipping interests alike.

Part of the job description for a state wildlife biologist includes the phrase "other duties as assigned." In 2002 another duty assigned to me was the oversight of Alabama's falconry program. Forty-nine falconers are currently permitted in the state. Falconers hold a joint state/federal permit that allows them to possess certain raptor species for the purpose of pursuing game. These bird enthusiasts of a different sort are very dedicated to their sport and must devote much time and effort to training and housing their raptors. I had very little exposure to the sport when taking over the permitting program, but have enjoyed the experience and have gained valuable knowledge and appreciation for this incredible group of birds.

Birds are not the only nongame animals in the state. The eastern indigo snake, the longest of North America's snakes, has all but disappeared from Alabama's landscape. Field efforts to find the snake in the wild recently concluded. Two field seasons to locate the snake in southern Alabama failed, leaving the question of the snake's presence debatable. Efforts are now underway in the Southeast to address the conservation needs of the species. Alabama's part will be a captive breeding program at Auburn University followed by reintroduction at Conecuh National forest.

The one animal I deal with on a near daily basis is the two-legged variety. Phone calls, emails, and site visits give the opportunity to instruct and hopefully educate people regarding our state's wildlife heritage. Frog problems, snake encounters, and mysterious creatures are just a few of the examples of the sometimes baffling inquiries I receive. Sometimes I am more counselor than wildlife biologist. All in all it's an interesting profession.

Deadlines for Yellowhammer Submissions

Spring 2009	February 10, 2009
Summer 2009	June 1, 2009
Fall 2009	August 10, 2009

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, electronically, as a PDF file, please email the editor at Robert.Reed@psc.alabama.gov.

Thanks for the Stories

IF YOU HAVE AN ARTICLE, STORY, OR AMUSING INCIDENT YOU would like to share, please send it 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 were interesting, different, or amusing.

Membership Dues

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR AOS MEMBERSHIP YET? We at AOS would like you to remain as a member, so we hope that you will renew. And we would be extra happy if you do it right away.

If you pay dues annually and you did not just join AOS in the last three months of 2008, you should renew by January 1, 2009.

AOS has no paid staff. Our officers volunteer their time to perform many tasks to keep the organization going. By sending in your renewal before someone sends out reminders, you can save AOS money and give the officers more time to spend on other AOS activities—or even more time to enjoy Alabama's birdlife.

Your mailing label, if you still receive a hard copy, has the date you are paid through in the upper right corner.

Do NOT send your dues to the editor. Send them to:

Mary Frances Stayton, Treasurer
952 Mockingbird Lane,
Leeds, Alabama, 35094

AOS WINTER MEETING 2009

Mobile, Alabama, January 23–25, 2009

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23 *(Dinner on your own)*

- 5:00 p.m. Registration—5 Rivers
 7:00 p.m. Announcement, Member's Slides—5 Rivers
 No Cash Bar Friday

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23 *(Breakfast on your own)*

- 7:00 a.m. Field Trips—Meet in parking lot behind Best Western Battleship Inn (next to Battleship)
 3:30 p.m. Board Meeting—Best Western (Suite TBA)
 6:00 p.m. Social Hour—5 Rivers Delta Room, cash bar provided
 7:00 p.m. Banquet—5 Rivers Delta Room
 8:00 p.m. Program—Roger Clay—5 Rivers Auditorium

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23 *(Breakfast on your own)*

- 7:00 a.m. Field Trips—Meet in parking lot behind Best Western Battleship Inn (next to Battleship)
 12:00 p.m. Compilation—Best Western (Suite TBA)

ACCOMMODATIONS IN MOBILE

Best Western Battleship Inn

20 rooms reserved. \$99 per night. Mention AOS.
 Deadline January 14. Phone: 251 432-2703;
www.bestwesternbattleshipinn.com

Hampton Inn in Daphne

Phone: (251) 626-2220

Hilton Garden Inn

Phone: (251) 625-0020; hiltongardeninn1.hilton.com

Eastern Shore Motel

Phone: (251) 626-6601; <http://local.yahoo.com/info/14833031-eastern-shore-motel-daphne>

Banquet price \$22 per person, provided by Wilton Catering.

AOS WINTER MEETING 2009 REGISTRATION FORM

Complete and return to:

Mary Frances Stayton, 952 Mockingbird Lane, Leeds, Alabama, 35094

Telephone: (205) 640-4502 • E-mail: lovingcats@alltel.net

Please make checks payable to AOS. Checks must be received by January 12, 2009.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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

Registration @ \$25 per person	\$
Banquet @ \$22 per person	\$
AOS 2009 Dues	\$
DIBS Land Purchase Fund Contribution	\$
Coastal Birding Association 2009 Dues (\$5)	\$
TOTAL ENCLOSED	\$

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Address correspondence concerning membership to:
Mary Frances Stayton, Treasurer
952 Mockingbird Lane,
Leeds, Alabama, 35094
e-mail: lovingcats@alltel.net

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



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