

A FIFTY-YEAR
HISTORY OF
THE ALABAMA
ORNITHOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

REMEMBRANCES
AND
RECOLLECTIONS



IN CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF AOS



CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR
(*Calcarius ornatus*)

November 16-18, 2001, south Baldwin County, Alabama
Watercolor by Bill Summerour

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HISTORY COMMITTEE

Dwight Cooley, Julian Dusi, Sharon Hudgins, Jim Keeler, Helen Kittinger, Bob Reid, Bill Summerour

Larry Gardella – ex officio, Dan Holliman, Chairperson

All illustrations by Bill Summerour

PART ONE

THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY . . . Who are we, what are our interests—our beginnings and early history, trials and tribulations? Hindsight is just as important as foresight. Sometimes it's better to turn around and see where we've been before forging into the unknown.

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LEAD ON KINDLY LIGHT . . . We must be resilient, adaptable, and forever searching for ways to accomplish our mission. Without this effort, the quality of our lives will be greatly diminished and lost to a changing world.

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P A R T O N E

— THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY —



HIS HISTORY IS ABOUT THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY (AOS) and the legions of members who have passed through its portals. It chronicles how we got started, where we've been, and what the future might hold. It is written by its members—told in their own words. They have contributed interesting accounts and personal stories that they thought should be known. Much information has been gleaned from *Alabama Birdlife*, numerous newsletters, and extant minutes of stated meetings. During the early stages of this arduous task, it became painfully obvious that complete records of our early history have been eroded by time. The attrition of many of our older members, and the lack of a “corporate memory” of those who have recently joined, have almost depleted our data bank.

*It is high time we record what we remember
so that others may know what
the Alabama Ornithological Society is about.*

Our Archives are a treasure trove of information that has yet to be completely mined. This resource is stored in the Scientific Collections Building of the Alabama Museum of Natural History in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. It is available to anyone interested in research.

What we write tells of our interest in birds.

After scanning 50 years' worth of *Alabama Birdlife*, the following nine areas have been identified as topics for proper papers. (Collectively, we have written 506 papers that are published in *Alabama Birdlife*.) The percentage (listed in parentheses) indicates approximately how many papers have been devoted to each subject area since the first issue.

Population Data (65%): One would expect this to be the most written-about topic because of the inclusion of compilations. This population data includes distribution records and

seasonal occurrence of species. It includes summaries of Christmas Counts, seasonal columns, breeding bird surveys, and various records for the state.

Life History Studies (21%): This category includes papers that describe stages of the life cycles of birds. Detailed observations and notes carefully recorded characterize these writings. Food, nesting habits, and predation are described for several papers.

Ecology (6%): Usually the writers of these papers address ecological relationships. Land management, land usage, and avian competition are the subjects. Papers include both game and/or nongame birds.

Banding (4%): Banding data appeared more frequently during the first 30 years of issues. Probably this reflected a time of greater interest in banding and a relatively high number of active master banders.

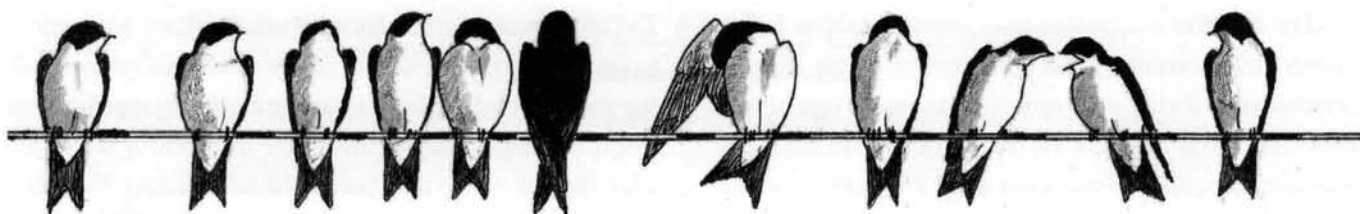
Bird Mortality (1%): Most of this data came from tower collisions during migration. A fair amount of regional climatic information accompanies each account.

Systematics (1%): Several good taxonomic papers appear in this category. These papers usually include a review of the literature and scientific analyses of comparisons. In some cases, data came from museum skins.

Human Health and Safety (1%): There are a few papers that concern avian diseases with arthropod vectors. Most of these deal with birds as the definitive host. One, at least, involves humans. Data in some papers describe large black-bird roosts close to airports. This information could be used for risk assessment.

Education (.5%): These articles are written by teachers for teachers. Emphasis is placed on teaching about birds in classroom and field.

Biohistorical (.5%): Frequently, writers will make a literature review of papers published in *Alabama Birdlife*. Citations from *Alabama Birdlife* are scattered throughout our holdings. Two indices summarize references from our archives.



Our writings also reveal the various strategies that we employ to enjoy our hobby. We all may have a little bit of each of the following traits in us.

A *bird watcher* prefers just to watch and enjoy birds. One can watch birds at their feeder, perhaps from the duck blind or from venues in foreign lands. *Birders*, on the other hand, are people who have a marked interest for finding and listing birds. They may spend less time observing birds. In Great Britain, *listers* are called *twitchers* because of their excitement of adding a new bird to a list. *Lumpers* are people who prefer to include all closely-related birds in the same taxonomic category. *Splitters* prefer to divide a large geographic race into various species and subspecies. *Descriptive Ornithologists* make careful observations and record notes about birds in their natural environment. The *Analytical Ornithologist* forms hypotheses and designs methods to test hypotheses.

We find strength in our diversity . . . each bringing our own special talents and interests. Our career paths run the gamut, and include educators at all levels, nurses, homemakers, biologists, writers, a fingerprint examiner, realtors, lawyers, secretaries, geologists, a taxidermist, bus driver, chemists, a television broadcaster, social workers, network analysts, professional ornithologists, engineers, psychologists, marketing specialists, plant managers, electricians, naturalists, doctors, and construction workers.

"What bird got you into birding?" For many of us, that's not an easy question. We grew up watching Mother feed them in the backyard, but what one bird really clicked? Some of the responses from members at the 2001 Fall Meeting included Tufted Titmouse, Great Blue Heron, Scarlet Tanager, Carolina Wren, Northern Cardinal, Red-tailed Hawk, Dark-eyed Junco, Northern Parula, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Phoebe, American Goldfinch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Hooded Warbler, Carolina Chickadee, Baltimore Oriole,

Pileated Woodpecker, Great Horned Owl, Cooper's Hawk, Painted Bunting, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Bluebird, White-throated Sparrow, Wood Duck, Bobwhite, Blackburnian Warbler, Ring-necked Pheasant, and Puerto Rican Parrot. What a varied and wonderful list! Whether we start before dawn hunting owls and end at dark hunting Chucks or Woodcocks, or simply enjoy watching birds from our kitchen window, birds are an important part of our lives.

A vision . . . In 1998 Charles Kennedy approached me with his vision of having a published 50-year history for the Alabama Ornithological Society. Larry Gardella in 2000 officially appointed a History Committee to begin the task. I reluctantly agreed to serve as Editor. I immediately began to canvass the membership for ideas, stories, and the names of people who our membership thought had made contributions to the Society, and had interesting stories to tell. Announcements and requests for information appeared in *The Yellowhammer*. Numerous appeals were made at both annual and winter meetings for ideas. In addition I began to search *Alabama Birdlife*, the newsletter, and minutes. I made many phone calls and email requests for people to take part. It was from this data bank that I began to put together our story. By and large these are not my accounts, but belong to those who felt moved to share them. The names of the Legends and Pilgrims were submitted by others. I did not select them.

I want to personally thank all of those contributors who shared their stories. After all, any history is about the members. You will find their names associated with their accounts. On a personal level, I want to thank Sharon Hudgins who made all of this possible with her word-processing skills. Her encouragement and advice made it worth the while. Birmingham-Southern College supported the related costs for the Reviewer's and Curator's Editions of the history. Robin McDonald added his layout expertise and handled the final printing responsibilities. Alison Glascock helped with the proofreading.

The mention of brand or trade named products and/or services do not represent the endorsement of the Alabama Ornithological Society or its agents. The views of contributors do not necessarily represent the policies or views of the Society or its members. Contributors are solely responsible for their views and opinions.

One of the least favorite tasks of an editor is assigning titles of academic degrees for folks mentioned in a text. In a Society such as ours, there are many different types of professional people scattered throughout many diverse occupations. Also, there are those members in "earlier years" with whom we have long since lost contact and have no way of knowing about their accomplishments. While agonizing over this dilemma, a humorous situation came to mind. This anecdote, often told in academic circles, involved a new Ph.D and his family who moved into a neighborhood where he was unknown. It wasn't long before an elderly neighbor called to make an appointment concerning a bad cold that she had.

The faithful housekeeper, knowing exactly what to say, tactfully replied, "Oh! He's the kind of doctor that doesn't do anybody any good!" So to keep from assigning the wrong appellation or simply missing someone, this editor has decided not to use titles. Besides, we are members of the same family. We'll keep this informal just like we do on field trips or when we sit around the compilation table.

I think as you read through this History you will get to know many friends in our Society, as well as feel the "vital heat" that has motivated us to complete our mission. Hopefully, this collection of essays will give us a start in preserving our heritage as well as giving us a sense of tradition.

Welcome to the family!

—Submitted to the Board of the
Alabama Ornithological Society
Dan Holliman, 2002

THE BEGINNING

By Dan Holliman

BLANCHE E. DEAN, THAT GRAND LADY OF Alabama conservation, long had recognized the need for a state organization for bird study. Perhaps she sensed this need through contact with many Alabamians that attended her then-famous Outdoor Nature Camps held throughout the state. Perhaps it was the "teacher in her" who recognized a need for statewide education concerning our natural resources. Her keen sense of organization and perception of this need surfaced on Saturday, April 5, 1952, when she convened the leading birders in the state for a field trip and later a dinner at Britling's, a well-known restaurant in Birmingham. In her book, *LET'S LEARN THE BIRDS IN ALABAMA* (May 1958), she spells out the mission of the Society:

April 5, 1952, after a field trip to Lake Purdy, twenty-two people who were interested in birds met at Britling's for

supper and organized an Ornithological Society. Morton Perry, geologist with the Tennessee, Coal and Iron Company, was elected the first president. This group, known as AOS, meets twice a year in a different part of the state. The meetings are for fun as well as learning more about birds over the state. They have a field trip, some kind of "get-together" as a dinner or banquet, and talks on some pertinent problem or findings. The membership is open to students as well as adults. The dues are very low. The purposes of AOS are:

- a. To promote scientific and educational activities.
- b. To promote legislation to protect birds.
- c. To stimulate interest in the study of birds.
- d. To bring together those interested in birds.
- e. To make available for the public the findings of such observations.

 OUR FIRST PRESIDENT

By Dan Holliman

MORTON PERRY BROUGHT WITH HIM TO THE office of the President a professional sense and a knowledge of surface geology of Alabama. Throughout his tenure, he strove to develop Society activities that “promoted scientific and educational activities in the field of ornithology.” He was quite clear that the Alabama Ornithological Society should not be

just a club for social activities. His position with Tennessee Coal & Iron (later U.S. Steel) opened some doors for our members to provide distributional data of birds to a major surface mining company that controlled much of the lands of the Warrior Coal Basin. The following is his President’s Page that appeared in the first edition of *Alabama Birdlife*, Vol. 1, No. 1-2, 1953:

 THE PRESIDENT’S PAGE

JULY FIRST BRINGS TO A CLOSE THE FIRST FULL YEAR FOR THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY. Although we look with impatience on many things that were left undone we feel that our first year, as a whole, has been a successful one.

Much of our effort, this first year, has been devoted to the tedious job of organization. It is always a difficult job to organize any group and these difficulties have been accelerated by the state-wide scope of this organization. We believe that for any organization to be successful it must adhere to democratic principles and, as we realize, they can sometimes be painfully slow. We have chosen this first year, therefore, to withstand the rebuffs of the impatient few and try to lay a firm foundation based on the ideas of the entire Society as expressed through your directors.

Many members have worked hard to make this first year a success. I believe I express the feelings of the entire Society in thanking Mrs. Blanche Dean for the wonderful job she did in the original organization work which led to our first meeting. Many of us, I am sure, have thought of the need for such a state-wide organization but it was Mrs. Dean’s energy and enthusiasm that made it a reality.

The committee which framed the constitution should be commended for a job well done. We believe that the objectives of the Society are plainly stated and the Articles and By-Laws are adequate to operate the Society.

The Membership Committee has turned in a good report. The membership has reached a total of 65 which we feel is very good for the first year. As our program broadens out to reach more people we hope the membership will continue to grow.

It is with great pride that we bring out this first issue of the publication. The obstacles, both technical and financial, have been large. Our congratulations and warm thanks are given to our editor, Dr. Julian L. Dusi. We believe the editorial policies are sound and will result in a publication that will be a credit to our Society and to our State.

As this first year ends I would like to express my appreciation to all the members of the Society who have worked to make this year a success. It has been a pleasure, and indeed, an honor, to serve as the first president of the Alabama Ornithological Society. It is my sincere hope that as we move forward into our second year that we keep before us the objectives as set forth in our Constitution. May we leave the lighter side of bird watching to our local bird clubs and garden clubs and strive “to promote scientific and educational activities in the field of ornithology.”

THOSE EARLIER YEARS

By Julian L. Dusi



T FIRST, OUR SOCIETY WAS COMPOSED MOSTLY of members of the Birmingham Audubon Society. The following are people who assumed a role in getting AOS up and running:

Frederick T. Carney, Blanche H. Chapman, Blanche E. Dean, Thomas A. Imhof, Clustie McTyeire, Morton H. Perry, Millard F. Prather, and Harriett Wright. Others from Alabama and surrounding states who added strong support were: Thomas Z. Atkeson, [Decatur]; Oliver L. Austin, Jr., [Montgomery]; William J. Calvert, Jr., [Jacksonville]; J. L. Dorn, [Mobile]; Rosemary and Julian Dusi, [Auburn]; M. Wilson Gaillard, [Mobile]; Henry G. Good, [Auburn]; James E. Keeler, [Auburn]; Harold S. Peters, [Atlanta]; H. Severn Regar, [Eufaula]; Daniel W. Speake, [Auburn]; Henry M. Stevenson, [Tallahassee]; and F. M. Weston, [Pensacola]. The initial membership was 65. By 1954, more than 100 members were present.

The first officers were: Morton H. Perry, President; James E. Keeler, Vice President; Blanche E. Dean, Secretary; Frederick T. Carney, Treasurer; Julian L. Dusi, Editor—*Alabama Ornithologist*; and Henry G. Good, Librarian. The state was divided into six districts. The following regional directors were chosen for each district: (1) Thomas A. Imhof, Fairfield; (2) William J. Calvert, Jacksonville; (3) Henry G. Good, Auburn; (4) Bert Williams, University [Tuscaloosa]; (5) M. Wilson Gaillard, Mobile; and (6) H. Severn Regar, Eufaula.

The Constitution was framed by a committee that met the first year and copied from those of adjacent states. It served for about a decade with modest change. The Society's journal became *Alabama Birdlife*. The June meeting, later changed to mid-April, was set as the Annual Meeting and time for change in officers. Meetings held at Dauphin Island, or Fort Morgan,

soon were recognized as the site for the Annual Meetings. Other meetings, especially a winter meeting, were held at a variety of sites: Decatur, Eufaula, Auburn, etc.

As with most organizations, it has at times been difficult to fill the slate of officers. In AOS there were many persons interested in birding but not willing to serve as officers, or good editors for *Alabama Birdlife*, or the newsletter (which was started in 1957). Few had the ability and determination to produce an ornithological journal and not just a newsy birding scrapbook, so good editors were hard to find.

Of the 106 members listed in *Alabama Birdlife*, Vol. 2 (1-2), 1954, at least 18 (T. Z. Atkeson, Oliver L. Austin, Jr., Charles L. Broley, W. C. Calver, Blanche H. Chapman, H. B. Cunningham, Blanche E. Dean, M. W. Gaillard, Albert F. Ganier, Clustie McTyeire, H. Severn Regar, Julian Rice, F. E. Rogan, R. W. Skinner, H. M. Stevenson, F. M. Weston, Grace Whiteman, and D. O. Wright) are deceased and perhaps another 50 or more, of whom I have no knowledge. So, the present-day AOS has a very different membership.

The early meetings were very structured. The Annual Business Meetings, during the early years, were conducted following Robert's Rules of Order, and formal papers were given to present new ornithological information. Many informal field trips were also available, much like recent past meetings. Present-day meetings must be planned to interest a much larger membership of birders.

There is a vast difference in the way ornithological records were established in the past. In the 1950s and 1960s new records were accepted only if a specimen or photograph was taken, so it was accepted behavior to collect birds and make up the skins. Oliver Austin collected specimens for the National Museum, Robert Skinner was building a display and teaching collec-



tion for the Alabama Department of Conservation, Henry Stevenson collected for the University of Florida Museum, Julian Dusi for the Auburn University Collection, and Dan Holliman for the Birmingham-Southern College Collection. Now, specimens and photographs are still the ultimate in

establishing records, but most birders are satisfied with sight records and to collect birds during an AOS meeting would cause great criticism, in part, because no other birders could add the specimen to their life lists, unless they saw the bird alive and free.

— DAUPHIN ISLAND: A SENSE OF PLACE —

By Dan Holliman

EVERY ISLAND IS A PART OF THE MAINLAND, and we cannot look upon Dauphin Island without considering the coast of Alabama, from which it stands out as a guardian against the great Gulf . . . It stands about fourteen miles from Bayou la Batre. It is fourteen or fifteen miles long, and on a true map, it resembles a long, narrow sailfish, north and west of Fort Morgan at the mouth of Mobile Bay. At one time, it was like a lobster, with one long claw swooping around almost all the way to Fort Morgan, on the east—for Sand Island and Pelican Island were the claw, and in olden times, they were not the tiny dots they are now. The other claw reached around back to Cedar Point on the mainland—the western shore of Mobile Bay.

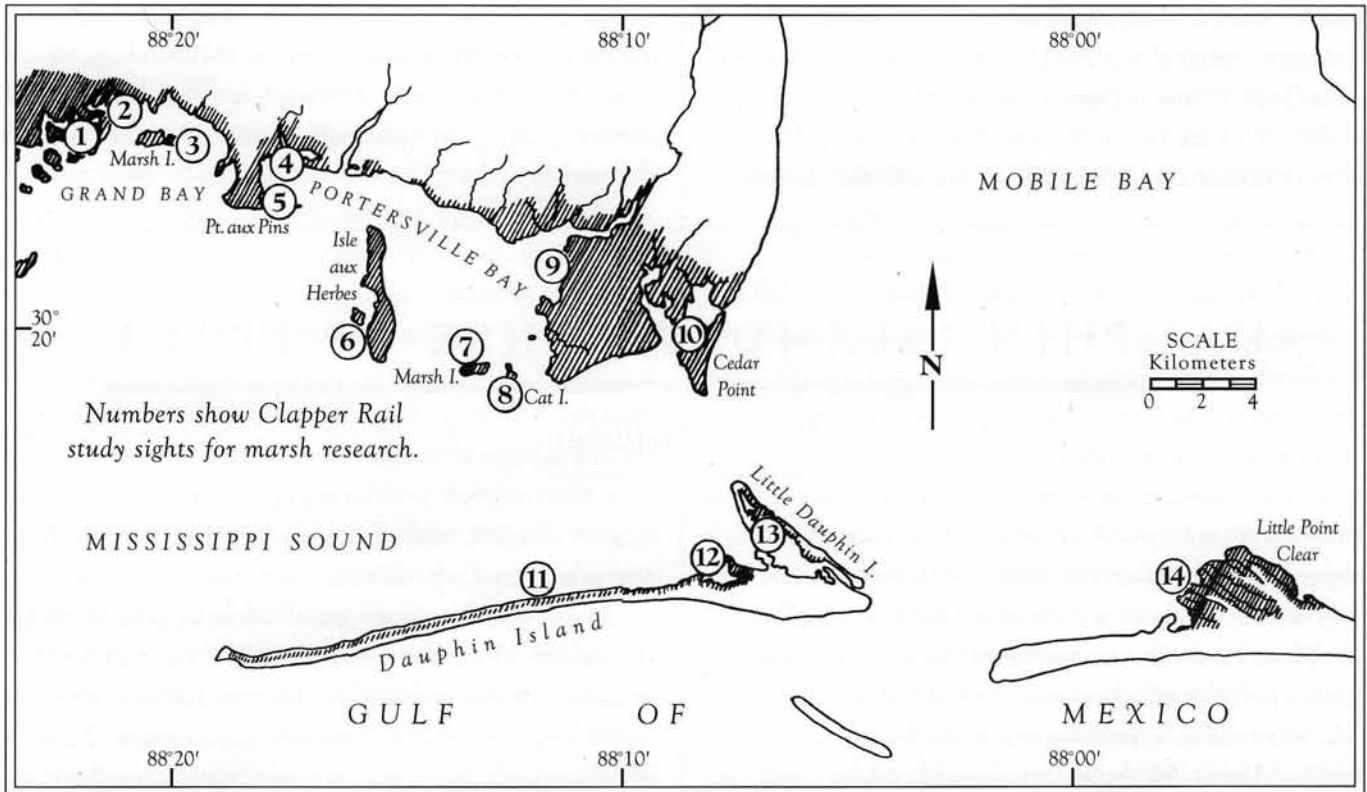
—Julian Lee Rayford, *WHISTLIN' WOMAN AND CROWIN' HEN* (Rankin Press, Mobile, Alabama 1956).

DAUPHIN ISLAND IS THE HUB OF THE MISSISSIPPI Sound Rim. Spokes radiate from the Island to Grand Bay, Point aux Pins, Bayou la Batre, Coden, Heron Bay, Cedar Point, Portersville Bay, Little Point Clear, the Lake (which is the waters between the Island and the mainland), and the Gulf of Mexico (which is called the Outside). Historically, de Soto in 1540, and later Iberville and Bienville in 1699 realized this “sense of place” as a center to off-load their wares from tall ships. At that time Petit Bois was connected to Dauphin Island extending the length westward almost seven miles longer than what it is today. The Island flew five different flags from 1699 to 1864: France, England, Spain, United States, and the Confederacy. The people that settled Dauphin Island were of French, Greek,

Spanish, English, and American Indian extraction. Their descendants can be found here.

People who live on the Island depend upon the bridge as a lifeline to the mainland. By 1947, most of the 285 residents of the Island lived in a community that extended from the shell mounds to almost the airport marsh. Before a bridge was built, access was by a mail boat that made a daily trip from Cedar Point to about where the bridge touches down on the Island. Accommodations for “outsiders” were almost nonexistent. Scientists from the University of Alabama and their students would come to the Island on day visits to study. Local residents would provide free room and board for those who would make extended expeditions. There are still a few of us old biologists today that are beholden to their gracious hosts at a time when young graduate students were strapped for money. They generously shared their famous gumbo and a warm, dry place to sleep. The families of Bosarge, Bryant, Collier, George, Ladnier, Lamey, Mallon, Oakes, Patronas, Schotts, Tillman, and Zirlott befriended many student researchers in those earlier years. Casual visitors never learn the real Dauphin Island until they get to know the Islanders.

The first bridge was completed in 1955. Hurricane Frederic (“the Storm”) destroyed it in 1979. The only means of getting to the Island for the next five years was by a ferry that left Bayley’s Marina near the mouth of East Fowl River. Visitor access was strictly controlled. Permanent residents and medical vehicles were given first priority, followed by construction vehicles. Tourists (everyone else) were the last to board the



ferry. The State of Alabama assigned law officers at the boarding ramps to settle any disputes as to who got on. The existing bridge was completed in 1984. Even today Islanders will make note of something happening either “before the bridge” or “after the bridge.”

Historically, the Island has been variously described as being covered by “thick stands of pines and cedars.” The horizon of the forest was more evident then as one sailed northward from the Gulf. Perhaps this is the first land-fall migrating birds saw after their long trip? The following is a thumbnail sketch of various habitat types that I remember in the early and mid-1950s. Keep in mind that travel was by foot.

Salt Marshes, Mudflats, Tidal Pools

Salt marshes were almost continuous from Little Dauphin Island to almost the western tip on the Mississippi Sound side. The west end was characterized by large tidal pools, some of which were in excess of five acres. It was common to see River Otters in these pools at night. Expansive mudflats provided habitat for clouds of wading and shorebirds. Silt-

ation made most of the tidal pools difficult to approach. It would have been nice to have had a scope, but its weight prevented carrying one in. Little Dauphin Island was not separated from Dauphin Island by a cut as it is now. Approximately 50% of that salt marsh habitat on Dauphin Island has been lost (see map). The marsh either has been altered to the point that it is not functional or has been destroyed all together. The road to the west end was almost nonexistent. Heavy rains would wash sections out completely. There was a natural cut at the public beach that divided the island in two whenever heavy rains occurred.

Maritime Forests

Along the shore line severe storms continually pruned the upper one-third of the older trees. Towards the interior of the Island the canopy was almost completely closed by vines and Spanish moss. This roof excluded most bright sunlight. The forest floor in some places was carpeted with a thick layer of pine needles. The shafts of light and this almost perfect acoustical rug gave the woodland the inviting presence of a

church sanctuary. The pine tree forest was much thicker than it is now. The so-called "Goat Trees" were apparently used by feral animals. Due to poor surface drainage the area was under one to two feet of water much of the time. The Hog Pens were visited by hardy birders who made it to the Island to set up their nets. The Hog Pens were part of a larger barnyard close to The Club that was located on the western edge of the campground. After the vehicles came ashore one could expect to get stuck almost anywhere. The Shell Mounds were almost completely grown over and usually loaded with birds throughout the year. In the forest, I was struck by the diversity of amphibians and reptiles. Eastern Cottontail Rabbits and Grey Squirrels were abundantly obvious.

Beach, Sand Dunes

The beach at the east end of the Island (Pelican Point) extended eastward out into the Gulf at least 200 feet. Sand dunes, at what is now The Club, were 30-60 feet high. Linear swamps had formed on the inland side of some of the larger dunes. There was a low line of primary and secondary dunes on the west end at the Gulf side. Sea Oats were prevalent.

Ponded Water

There was a large lake (about twenty acres) on what is now the Golf Course. Its size varied according to the amount of rain.

Ducks aplenty could be found there during the fall and winter. The lake at the Sanctuary has changed relatively little with the exception of thick growths of Wax Myrtle and Yaupon Holly. Access was difficult. Drainage ditches were almost always flooded and difficult to cross on foot. Alligators were common.

Offshore Islands

Virtually all of the offshore islands have changed very little in terms of the extent of Salt Marsh Cordgrass cover. The Isle of Herbes still remains as the single, largest, unaltered tract of salt marsh on the Alabama coast. Cat Island was the productive rookery that it still is today. Sand and Pelican Islands were larger than what they are now. The shallow Portersville Bay waters, as today, were dangerous even for shallow draft boats because of low tides and shifting channels. Riverine waters and tidal guts continue to furnish exciting birding.

What makes Dauphin Island a *sanctum sanctorum*—and such a special place for us? If the truth be known, we hold this Island in esteem for different reasons. By and large, most of our members are interested in birding and have their own special places to visit when here. Some of our favorite spots have survived only by the hardest in spite of alterations to the environment. Some habitats, we may find, have improved. Others have disappeared altogether. We can't go back to years gone by, but we can attempt to save what habitat is available for generations yet unborn.

— DAUPHIN ISLAND: THE AOS CONNECTION —

By John F. Porter



IT WAS NOT LONG AFTER THE FOUNDING OF AOS that the Society began its long-standing affection for Dauphin Island. First evidence that I can find of an AOS meeting on the Island is for 1957. Some intrepid birders visited the Island before the building of the first bridge, a critical element in the development of the Island in the mid-1950s. Dan Holliman and Tom Imhof are

notable among these. Banding data begins with the inaugural year of the first bridge, 1955. The first Dauphin Island Christmas Bird Count was in 1957. Imhof's *BIRDS OF ALABAMA* references sightings on Dauphin Island in 1956, the year after the first bridge was opened. There are many DI sightings thereafter referenced to Imhof and M. Wilson Gaillard.

M. Wilson Gaillard was a well-known Mobile dentist, conservationist, and birder. At the AOS meeting on Dauphin Island in 1957, he was first taken by the idea there should be a bird sanctuary on the Island to provide food and cover for the large numbers of migrants passing through each spring and fall. Perhaps the changes in the location of the golf course inspired him. Original plans had been for the course to encircle the recently remodeled former barracks, now the smart and elegant Fort Gaines Club, and include the lake, known for obvious reasons as Alligator Lake. One of the consultants, a specialist in building courses, suggested a much better location for the envisioned championship golf course would be a Gulf-front course, situated next to the private Isle Dauphine Country Club. Although the fairways already had been cleared for the original location, the plans were changed and the course was moved to its present location. There was one severe problem with this new location; being next to the Gulf, the property was largely sterile dunes that shifted and moved with the wind, no place to try to grow the grass needed for the fairways and greens. Fortunately there was a convenient remedy at hand. Alligator Lake was excavated down to the subsurface hard pan, some four feet. The rich black "muck" was hauled to the new fairway sites and mixed with the sand, making a firm rich base for the course. This also then created a much larger, deeper lake, fed by an artesian well. Such were the circumstances prompting Wilson Gaillard's dream for a Bird Sanctuary. The Dauphin Island Park and Beach Board promptly embraced the idea and the project was underway. With the help of the Mobile County Commission, the Mobile County Wildlife and Conservation Association, the state chapters of the National Audubon Society, the Department of Conservation, AOS, and many garden clubs, the Dauphin Island Audubon Bird Sanctuary became a reality. It was formally opened in March of 1962 and adopted into the National Audubon Society's system of wildlife refuges in 1967.

The Shell Mounds Park became one of the favorite spots for AOS birders. It was, after all, the most favored spot for the birds—especially during a fallout. Everyone wished to watch "the Yucatan Express." Word of the terrific, if sometimes unpredictable, birding opportunities on the Island spread slowly. The Society met frequently on the Island, especially in the spring . . . hoping for that elusive fallout. Meetings were a time for renewing old acquaintances, making new friends and

enjoying the local seafood . . . and chasing some "lifers." AOS meetings earned the reputation of being friendly, fun events.

All of this was rudely interrupted by Hurricane Frederic.

September 12, 1979

Hurricane Frederic made landfall on the Alabama coast. Winds gusted to 145 mph on Dauphin Island with a storm surge of 12 feet. Winds gusted to hurricane force at Meridian, MS even though the city is 140 miles inland. Five people died and damage was \$2.3 billion, most on record to that time.

Trees down all over the Island . . . houses demolished, gone, mostly on the west end . . . and so was the Holiday Inn . . . and . . . The Bridge! It was gone! It would be five years before the new bridge was finished; not until fall of 1984 was the Island accessible for visitors again.

According to Jackie's [Porter] records, the first AOS meeting we attended was on Dauphin Island in April of 1986. The meeting was in the old Property Owners Association Building (now the Town Council Chambers of the Town Hall). I will remember the warm welcome we received and the renewal of several long-neglected acquaintanceships. It was not a large crowd by current standards, some 30-40 birders, but we were comfortably accommodated in that relatively small space.

The Dauphin Island Sea Lab early on made rooms available to AOS members in Challenger Hall. Rooms were modest but reasonable accommodations; bring your own linens. Challenger became the gathering point for morning field trips. The coffee and pastries have also become part of the AOS tradition.

The word began to spread, however, and the crowds got bigger. The American Birding Association held their spring 1992 convention in Mobile, with Greg Jackson organizing the field trips, aided by a host of experienced AOS birders. This spread the word far and wide . . . Swallow-tailed Kites, Swainson's Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow . . . lots of visitors got long-sought-after lifers. Pete Dunne's account of birding on Dauphin Island in *FEATHER QUEST* appeared in the same year, complete with a picture of Pete communing with the Bee Tree. Greg Jackson's account of "Birding On Dauphin Island" that appeared in *Birding* further spread the word.

By the early 1990s the number of venturesome birders had reached proportions to stretch the capabilities of Island facilities. In order to assure future availability, the AOS Board decided to formalize the meeting dates of the spring and fall meetings; to meet on Dauphin Island the third Friday of every April and the second Friday of every October. This provided planning guidelines for the Sea Lab and the Dauphin Island Chamber of Commerce (formerly the DI Business Association) for rooms and meeting facilities. This has worked well preventing conflicts with the other major events on the Island, especially the Dauphin Island Regatta, reputedly the largest single day sailing event in the country, which is now held on the fourth weekend of April every year.

There have been two more hurricanes to hit Dauphin Island since Frederic, with lesser impact on the birds and birding. Danny, with winds estimated at 85 mph, struck the island early in the morning of July 19, 1997. Not a very strong storm as hurricanes go, but Danny then stalled over Mobile Bay for 15 hours, with heavy rain the entire time. Some estimates put the total rainfall on the Island at 47 inches in 24 hours! In spite of the damage, mostly from flooding, the Island was ready to host the fall AOS meeting. The real damage was the catastrophic impact on the nesting/fledging birds. Only in 2001 did the Brown-headed Nuthatches reappear, Great-crested Flycatchers again nest (but in limited numbers), and the Gray Kingbird, previously a frequent nester on the Island, has not been seen since.

Georges was not so considerate, striking the Island on September 28, 1998. Though the main point of impact was near Biloxi, we sustained severe damage to the west end of the Island. This was a storm characterized more by its storm surge than its wind or flooding. Again, in spite of severe damage to the causeway, the Island was once again ready to host the Fall AOS meeting only days after Georges' departure.

Spring of 1999 brought the long awaited, always hoped for, "fallout." The Shell Mounds area was literally covered in birds. Many longtime AOS members proclaimed it a 40-year event! The species count for the weekend was an amazing 225!

Unbelievably, spring of 2000 brought a repeat performance. As our friend, the Ol' Coot (Jeff Wilson), put it:

The boughs may have been dripping with warblers last year but the trees were soaked Saturday with the reds, greens, blues, blacks and whites of thousands of Tanagers, Grosbeaks, Orioles and Vireos. At no time, at anyplace on the island could one stand and not see a Scarlet Tanager either perched or flying. Wherever there was a mulberry tree it would be covered by hundreds of resting and feeding birds. The colorful Scarlet Tanager was probably the most numerous species closely followed by Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Red-eyed Vireo. None of the birders that have birded the area for years had ever remembered seeing the likes of these numbers. Even in the fields at the airport, sat row after row of colorful migrants which slowly moved toward the trees for cover and food.

The species count for the meeting was again 225!

Such good birding cannot go on forever, fortunately for the birds. Only when weather turns treacherous for the birds do we have a fallout, with many birds stressed beyond survival. The spring of 2001 turned out to be one of the dullest on record as far as the birders were concerned, but probably joyful to our migrating avian friends. The weather was gorgeous, often with winds from the south or southeast, and the birds continued on their merry way northwards, farther inland to food and shelter.

But AOS birders' hopes spring eternal. . . Maybe next year!



SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

By Bill Summerour



INCE THE AOS WAS FOUNDED IN 1952, THE membership has made a number of noteworthy contributions to the study of ornithology. Several fine books have been produced, as well as numerous articles containing observations of scientific value.

Three books are of special note. In 1961, Oliver Austin, a professional ornithologist and president of AOS in 1955 and 1956, published *BIRDS OF THE WORLD*, a survey of the 27 orders and 155 families of birds, and beautifully illustrated by Arthur Singer. This work remains one of the most aesthetically pleasing, informative, and easily readable scientific and popular treatments of the bird families of the world. A smaller, condensed version also was printed. Austin was curator of birds at the Florida State Museum (now the Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville). He did extensive field work not only in North America, but also in the Antarctic, Korea, New Zealand, the South Pacific, and Central America. He probably had banded more birds than anyone else in the world by 1961. Austin published innumerable papers and articles, and wrote two definitive books, *THE BIRDS OF KOREA* and *THE BIRDS OF JAPAN*. He also wrote *SONG BIRDS OF THE WORLD* and edited *LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS, BUNTINGS, TOWHEES, FINCHES, SPARROWS, AND ALLIES*.

In 1962, Tom Imhof published *ALABAMA BIRDS*, the result of seven years of dedication to the project. Imhof was president of AOS in 1960 and had a lifetime of achievements in ornithology and conservation. His book was the culmination of two decades of the most active period of field work on Alabama birds. Many of the records cited in this major work were gathered by members of the Society. In 1962, Imhof's species accounts totaled 319 species. (Arthur Howell's *BIRDS OF ALABAMA*, published in 1924 and 1928, totaled 274 species. On the 50th Anniversary of AOS, the total currently stands at 414.) A second edition of *ALABAMA BIRDS* was published in 1976 and remains today the principal reference for the avifauna of Alabama.

Henry Stevenson was an active field ornithologist in Alabama in the 1930s and 1940s before moving to Florida in 1946 to continue his career in biology. Many of his observations in Alabama during this time period are now of increasing historic significance and make for particularly interesting reading. The Bachman's Warbler nest he and Harry Wheeler, a field companion of Stevenson, discovered on May 1, 1937 in Moody Swamp in Tuscaloosa County was the last known to science. His detailed account of this exciting discovery was published in the *Wilson Bulletin* in March 1938, along with another account of a singing male Bachman's Warbler he observed near Irondale (Jefferson County) on April 9-13, 1936. Many of Stevenson's other Alabama records can be found in the 1962 and 1974 editions of Imhof's *ALABAMA BIRDS*.

Perhaps the achievement for which Henry Stevenson will be remembered by most is his recently published *BIRDS OF FLORIDA*, a thoroughly documented book on the avifauna of Florida. Unfortunately, he passed away before the book was completed. The task of seeing the work to completion and publication was done by Bruce Anderson, former president of the Florida Ornithological Society, who Stevenson had enlisted a couple of years earlier to help him assemble his data. The book was published in 1994, almost three years after Stevenson's death on November 4, 1991. At his death, Stevenson also had the distinction of being the last person to have seen both the Bachman's Warbler and Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

The first issue of *Alabama Birdlife*, the official journal of the Society, was published in 1953. Since this time, the membership has contributed some 506 articles pertaining to some aspect of birdlife in Alabama and the Florida panhandle. Many of these articles contained observations of scientific as well as popular interest.

Some members have published independently or in ornithological literature elsewhere. Dan Holliman published the results of a three-year, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service-sponsored research project on Clapper Rails and Purple Gallinules in

Alabama wetlands. Bob Duncan, a longtime active member of AOS, published a book on migration, based on years of observations along the Gulf Coast. Bob and Lucy Duncan published a book on the birds of Northwest Florida, *THE BIRDS OF ESCAMBIA, SANTA ROSA, AND OKALOOSA COUNTIES, FL* (2000), which many birders use in coastal Alabama as well. Thomas Haggerty of the University of North Alabama co-authored the species account for the Carolina Wren for the American Ornithologist's Union's *LIFE HISTORIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY* series. Likewise, Bob Sargent co-authored the species account for the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Numerous other studies also have been conducted by other members and the results published in *Alabama Birdlife*.

A number of AOS members have been active banders over the years, collecting data on migration, summer and winter ranges, physiology, and diseases. Some of the more active banders in the past 50 years have been Fred Bassett of Montgomery; Julian Dusi and Geoff Hill of Auburn University; Tom Imhof and James "Buzz" Peavy of Birmingham; Margaret Miller of Mobile; Jim and Margaret Robinson of Brownsboro; Tom Rogers of the University of Alabama; and Bob and Martha Sargent of Trussville. Several species of hummingbirds, empid flycatchers, and a Northern Saw-whet Owl were recorded for the first time in Alabama by the work done by these dedicated banders.

During the early years of the Society, the only acceptable method of scientifically verifying a record was to collect the specimen and preserve the skin, or to take a good quality, identifiable photo. Today, with the availability of excellent field guides (illustrated with the aid of specimens), superior optics, digital cameras, videos, and an increasingly informed public, collecting for the most part no longer is needed, except for some scientific work. AOS members who collected specimens and contributed to building reference and study collections have been noted in the section on "Those Earlier Years."

Within the state, Auburn University, the University of Alabama, and some of the smaller universities house specimens for research and instructional use. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in Montgomery has a collection for educational purposes. There also are small collections scattered about elsewhere such as the Birmingham Zoo, Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, and Birmingham-Southern College.



About a dozen museums outside the state contain specimens collected in Alabama, among them the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University; Florida Museum of Natural History, Gainesville; Tall Timbers Research Station, Tallahassee; Fuertes Memorial Collection, Cornell University; Florida State University; Louisiana State University; and the University of Chicago.

Finally, many AOS members have volunteered their time and skills in helping gather data for the Breeding Bird Survey, a national survey begun in 1966 by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The survey is designed to collect scientifically based data (sample routes) for detecting long-term population trends and land use practices. In Alabama, the program has been coordinated by two lifetime members of AOS, Tom Imhof and Bob Reid.

P A R T T W O
 L E G E N D S

BLANCHE EVANS DEAN

June 12, 1892 – May 31, 1974

By Alice Christenson



AS A BEGINNING BIRDER AND RELATIVE NEWCOMER to Birmingham during the mid-1980s, I eagerly tagged along on any birding trips available. Often I'd hear one name spoken, "Blanche," in an almost reverent tone. Someone would say, "Is that really a Yellow-throated Vireo singing? Blanche would fuss at me if she knew I didn't remember." Or, as we stopped to look at wildflowers on what I thought was just a birding trip, another would say, "Oh, here's a White Fringeless Orchid, one of Blanche's favorites." I silently longed to meet one held in such esteem, and hoped to see her on each succeeding trip. What a surprise it was to learn that Blanche Dean, whose very name created a presence, had died in 1974, nearly ten years earlier.

Some months later, I heard members in the Birmingham Audubon Society vigorously campaigning for her membership in the Alabama Women's Hall of Fame, into which she was installed in 1985. Again, I was intrigued by the number and the devotion of her followers. Who was this woman? When my friend Larry Davenport, Professor of Biology at Samford University, expressed a similar curiosity, we began putting together the pieces of her life. Conversations with friends, visits with relatives, trips to her homeplace near Goodwater, Alabama, and searches through her books and what papers we could find resulted in a portrait of a unique woman indeed.

That portrait, "Blanche Dean, Naturalist," appeared in the Summer 1997 issue of *Alabama Heritage*. Included here are some of the highlights and, because there is always "something more" to say about Blanche Dean, added recollections taken from our notes.

Underscoring our admiration for her was learning that, rather than being an ornithologist or botanist holding advanced degrees, she had been a high school biology teacher for most of her working life. Considering herself a teacher, not a scholar, turned out to be the secret of her great influence on the lives of individuals and on Alabama's environmental community.

Her idea of teaching meant being in the field. Though birders now take their field trips for granted, during her pioneering years in the 1940s and 1950s, walks out of doors were largely on an individual basis. Blanche changed that.

Her awareness that being in the field was vital to loving and learning of wild things had begun as a child, the youngest of twelve children, going about the family farm with her parents in Clay County, Alabama. Later, as a young teacher, walking to school along the dirt roads with her students, Blanche was awakened to bird sounds when she heard a first-grade pupil saying, "There goes a jo-ree, Miss Blanche. Don't you hear him singing, 'Have some tea-ee'?"

That wide-awake little boy opened her eyes to the joys of learning about the outdoors, not through the pages of a book, but in the woods and fields themselves. "We fall in love with Nature the first time we really see it," was to be her guide for life. She often said that this awakening to the sounds of nature began a lifetime of teaching thousands of Alabamians to love birds and to preserve the beauty of their native state.

Continuing her teaching career at Woodlawn High School in Birmingham, Blanche was determined that her biology students would learn in the field rather than from textbooks. She took them on their first excursions to a cem-

etery adjoining the school, quickly silencing such comments as, "It's spooky here," or "I can't hear a thing." Soon, boys who had once enjoyed BB gun target practice on Blue Jays could imitate the birds' call and recognize their young. At a time when school was textbook drudgery for many, her class, according to a former pupil, was "an exciting voyage of discovery, constantly primed for the next miracle."

A close circle of friends formed the nucleus of weekend nature walks. She began accompanying F. Bozeman Daniel, a colorful Birmingham attorney, and later included fellow teachers and even students. She made high adventure of examining insects, birds' nests, flowers, or leaves. Dan Holliman, Professor Emeritus of Biology at Birmingham-Southern College, who was a young graduate student at the time, credits her with giving him the desire and the discipline to be a field biologist. "Never refusing a source of information, creating a sense of place in the field, and making my own observations were the principles Blanche instilled in me."

"Teaching. She was always teaching," say her admirers. That meant they learned the common and scientific names of birds, trees, and flowers, as well as something interesting about the specimen: "During courtship, a love-sick flicker is as silly looking as some love-sick people." This and similar tidbits became known as "Blanchisms," still making lively commentary on field trips.

Recognizing the songs of birds also was a must. Having had the world of birdsong opened to her by her young friend years earlier, she further developed his idea of using phrases to help remember song patterns. Her students learned her Hooded Warbler's, "Come to the woods to see me," or the Red-eyed Vireo's repeated, "See me, hear me; see me, hear me." Some were her own patterns; others she learned from Cornell University Ornithologist Arthur A. Allen at one of the many summer courses she took.

Field trips could include several carloads or occasionally a caravan. The outings took place rain or shine and departed promptly. Leaving at six a.m. meant cars drove out of the parking lot precisely at six a.m. And, in keeping with her belief in good stewardship of our natural world, if anyone should be careless enough to drop a wrapper or a lunch bag out a car window, Blanche would stop the procession and direct the guilty party to retrieve it. Going along meant keeping up with

Blanche as she literally bounded from place to place, insistent that everyone see or hear (and remember) the species, perhaps of flycatcher or perhaps of fern, that she knew would be present.

In 1951, Blanche's zeal and determination to instill in Alabamians her own love for and concern for their state's natural riches led her to begin her Nature Camps. Disturbed that biology teachers themselves didn't know how to teach except by textbook, she began these camps "for adult leaders of Scouts, schools, church camps, conservation groups, and anyone interested in any of the fields of nature . . . to broaden their understanding of the problems of wildlife and help identify the things of nature" (quoted from an early brochure). She cajoled college professors and other experts into volunteering for classes in ornithology and botany, along with lectures on insects, geology, astronomy, and any subject related to Alabama's wildlife.

These camps took place for thirteen years anywhere from De Soto State Park to Foley, Alabama. Today, they are directly responsible for the Mountain Workshop in Mentone, Alabama, organized in 1978 by one of the Nature Camp's early instructors, Dan Holliman, who recognized the immeasurable value of such an experience. The camp is sponsored by Birmingham Audubon Society and attracts young and old from all over the state.

In 1952, having joined the American Ornithologists Union herself, Blanche decided Alabama would have its own chapter. Morton Perry, the first president of AOS, recalls, "What I remember so well is that Blanche was determined to stick with it until she got it going." And stick with it she did, serving as the chapter's first secretary. At last there would be an organized way for birders all over the state to gather and to communicate. Statewide birding trips to the Gulf Coast began—birding trips that now attract hundreds during fall and spring migration.

A group less familiar to us than AOS, but one birders are indebted to Blanche for having formed and guided, was the Alabama Conservation Council. The Council grew out of summer workshops she had attended at the University of Alabama. (Besides "always teaching," she was always learning.) Composed of laymen from 40 different industrial, civic and religious groups, members studied what was needed to save the birds and to preserve Alabama's natural beauty.

The Council considered such issues as these: How long would the Bobwhite withstand forest fires and insecticides? How long would Alabama's state bird, the Northern Flicker, living chiefly on ants, hold out when many of the hills were being poisoned? How could builders be encouraged to consider the environment in the extensive construction of post-World War II? Teachers were asking for help, wanting nature camps for their students near their cities. Alabama needed a refuge along the coast to protect the breeding grounds of shorebirds. Though the Council had gradually dissolved by 1960, the group's farsightedness laid the groundwork for many local and state policies in education and conservation.

In 1957, Blanche, in her words, "had to retire and go to work." She directed 81 Alabama Junior Audubon Clubs in the 4th and 5th grades. "Teach a child to love and care for nature when he is young," said she, "and you won't have to worry about juvenile delinquents." Also, because while teaching she had realized that no reference books of Alabama flora or fauna existed for young people or for amateur naturalists, she set out to write her own. That same year she wrote and published *LET'S LEARN THE BIRDS OF ALABAMA*. This little spiral-bound volume was the first of her four nature guides, first possibly because she had found in another book "some western sparrow pictured as Alabama's state bird!"

The book (priced at \$1.25) is illustrated with drawings by Blanche Dean's niece, Forrest Bonner, and contains not only bird descriptions but also any information imaginable related to birding: articles on banding, sanctuaries, projects for young people, photography, migration, Junior Audubon Clubs, the Cattle Egret as Alabama's "newest immigrant," and even directions for building birdhouses. The main ingredient, however, is the voice of Blanche Dean permeating its pages. "Even the Indians knew to hang out gourds for the Purple Martins;" "The 'chip-over-a-chip' of the White-eyed Vireo sounds like a young Chuck-will's-widow learning to sing;" and "Don't give the birds too much suet in the summer; they're supposed to be helping control the insects then" make the reader think the author herself is leading a bird walk.

Three field guides followed. Blanche wrote a guide for Alabama's trees and shrubs, one for its ferns, and one for the wildflowers of Alabama, again because of her vision that Alabamians know their native flora and fauna; and so that, as

she would joke with friends, "When I'm dead you won't have me to ask. I'll leave these books for you." Being a non-professional, she had a certain freedom and could risk criticism of a description or questioning of a statistic in order to get the information in print. Her reputation as a scholar held no concern for her. Passing on love and understanding of things in the wild was her passion.

Either by direct effort or direct influence, Blanche Dean was vital in organizing not only the Alabama Ornithological Society, but also the Birmingham Audubon Society, Alabama Nature Conservancy (now The Alabama Environmental Council), and Alabama Wildflower Society. Her energy, drive and spirit became part of the life blood of each.

The drive, or backbone of steel, that Blanche was known to have come in part from her staunch Presbyterian upbringing. And that same backbone could put her at odds with others within a group. When AOS sought a name for its publication, she wanted "The Flicker." She thought "Alabama Birdlife" was "too stuffy." About bird counts she said, "These are becoming too competitive; we're supposed to be counting birds, not vying with each other for numbers of species." And cocktails had no place at gatherings, so that when a Wassail Bowl appeared at the Birmingham Audubon Christmas Banquet, her spine stiffened with the words, "We're going to the dogs!"

Those who knew Blanche Dean marveled at her tireless enthusiasm, not just for her cause, but for her friends and students as well. Underlying the intense desire that they learn, love and protect Alabama's wild things was her love of and belief in the people themselves. Surely Blanche would be pleased to hear the words said by so many of them, "I learned because Blanche was ever patient and expected me to learn. But more than that, she made me believe I could."

Blanche returned to Goodwater, Alabama for the last years of her life. A sister there needed care, and it was time to be near family. Always eager for an outing, however, she coaxed friends into joining her in roaming about Clay County. She never lost her sparkle or her delight in seeing the beauty of the ordinary.

At age 81, Blanche was still regularly taking groups on field trips around Goodwater. Bemoaning the fact that few were interested enough in nature to go with her on the trips, Blanche

said, "I told some ladies last year that the Trout Lillies were blooming and one said 'What do I want to see them for, I saw them last year.' I started to tell her she ate breakfast last year too."

Though most of us lack cherished memories of Blanche Dean, what better way for us to imagine her than engaged in that kind of delight. In telephoning a friend after a heavy snow the winter before she died, Blanche was almost bubbling over: "I wish you were here to see this row of Cardinals perched on

my clothes line. They look just like a row of bright red mittens!" That was Blanche.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS—*Friends and family of Blanche Dean who shared their memories are Mary Burks, Mina Carmichael, Ella Evans, Catherine Hodges, Dan Holliman, Helen Kittinger, Robert R. Reid, Jr., Weezie Smith, Idalene Snead, Laura Westbrook, Ruth Whiten, and Harriett Wright.*

P. FAIRLEY CHANDLER

January 7, 1914 – July 19, 1982

By Margaret Chandler Woodrow



FAIRLY WAS BORN IN ODENVILLE, ALABAMA TO Ruth Fairly and James Robert Chandler, M.D. By profession, my brother was a fashion photographer, but he became pretty much of an expert in the botany and ornithology of South Alabama, a knowledge developed through deep interest and firsthand study. He was deeply interested in ecology and took an active interest in state and local environmental agencies.

Fairly grew up in Bessemer, Alabama where he received his early schooling, later attending the University of Alabama and Birmingham-Southern College, where he received a BS degree in 1938. His close friend, Henry Stevenson, graduated from Birmingham-Southern College in 1935. Frail health prevented Fairly from following the medical profession that he had planned, and when his interest turned to photography, he went to The Art Center in Los Angeles, California, the most noted school of its kind, to learn his craft. After finishing his studies there, he returned home and did freelance photography, both commercial and portrait, in the Birmingham area for a time. The work that he did for the Tuberculosis Association was exceptional. Many families in the area treasure the pictures that he made of their weddings or of their young children. During World War II he did stress photography for Acipco Steel. When this work was finished, he went to New

York to begin his career as a freelance fashion photographer. He did outstanding work for *Harper's Bazaar*, *Harper's Junior*, *Vogue*, and other prestigious fashion magazines. This very promising career was brought to a halt by illness and an operation that left him more or less an invalid for the rest of his life.

He was told that he must live outdoors as much as possible. So in 1952, when our father retired after 50 years of medical practice, Fairly moved with our parents to Magnolia Springs, Alabama where he lived for the rest of his life.

Like most young boys, he went hunting and fishing with his father, who taught him to love and respect all things found in nature. Our father taught Fairly how to call a bird close enough to identify it, but no matter how hard he tried, Fairly was never able to get a Red-bellied Woodpecker to catch a piece of bread thrown into the air before it hit the ground the way our father could.

When Fairly was around seven years old, he spent the summer at Weeks Bay recovering from a debilitating illness. While there, his first real interest and pleasure in the things of nature began. He loved the bay and everything about it. He wanted to know more about everything. He even wrote an aunt to send him those nature books that she had promised him. "I need them," he told her. He collected shells and

began a collection of moths that was extensive and quite good. It was many years later, after he was compelled to retire and while trying to put his life back together, that he once more turned to those volumes and to nature around him.

After moving to Magnolia Springs, his days were spent exploring the surrounding area. Fairly loved the Magnolia River, and most days found him on it. He enjoyed the natural beauty of its surroundings and when he became stronger, he took his camera along to take pictures of the flora and fauna that interested him most. In time, he became active in local and state environmental agencies. He was most interested in the protection and preservation of the wetlands and took an active part in this. He helped map the Fort Morgan area for this usage, and greatly assisted in the project to set aside the Perdue Tract on the Fort Morgan Peninsula as part of the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. He became a member of the Ornithological Society and held office in the Audubon Society, and gave programs and did photographic work for both the Mobile Bay and Birmingham societies.

He took up birding seriously and, as with most things that he liked, he became somewhat of an expert in this field. Fairly's many contributions to ornithology are attested to by the numerous records reported under his name. As the knowledge of his expertise became known, people came from all over the country to go birding with him. They came from Michigan, Texas, Florida, and all states in between. He was closely associated with groups of birders from Fairhope, Pensacola, and Mobile. He headed the yearly Christmas and New Year's bird counts at Fort Morgan and Gulf Shores, and participated in the count on Dauphin Island. He kept yearly records of these counts. At one time he netted and tagged birds. He enjoyed exploring the Bartram Trail in this area with friends. He gathered some seed of the Evening Primrose (the Bartram Primrose, *Oenothera grandiflora*) from the trail, and these flowers still bloom where he planted them.

Fairly not only recorded the birds of south Alabama with his camera, but also photographed and identified the wildflowers, shrubs, and trees of this area. Some of these pictures were included in *WILDFLOWERS OF ALABAMA* by Blanche Dean, Amy Mason, and Joab L. Thomas. A number of his bird pictures appear in the second edition of Thomas A. Imhof's book *ALABAMA BIRDS*. He left his magnificent slides to Birmingham-

Southern College, but Westminster Village (a retirement complex that he was much interested in) was permitted to make enlarged pictures from some of the slides. These now hang in its main reception hall. They are rotated from time to time and hang on a wall that is designated as the "Fairly Chandler Gallery of Birds."

Fairly was a perfectionist when it came to taking pictures of the birds. The infinite time and patience spent on each picture was unbelievable. Catching birds in their natural habitat was essential to him. The amount of patience, time, and effort he spent taking pictures of a family of Prothonotary Warblers, nesting in the post bearing the Chandler name, is an example. For days on end, he parked his car near the post, sat in it and waited until the adults finally became accustomed to the car and him. Only then was he able to get a wonderful picture of the adults feeding their young in the hole. It became his signature picture. He loved all birds, but somehow he was partial to the water birds. He enjoyed sharing his slides and knowledge with others and was always in demand by garden clubs, as well as other clubs and organizations. When he was able, the summers found him teaching nature studies at summer camps—Hargis in Birmingham, and at camps in Mentone.

His church, the First Presbyterian Church of Foley, was at the very center of his life. He was very active in it and held various offices from time to time. He was a deacon, an elder, and taught Sunday School to the young people for years. More than one mother said that Fairly had set her son on the right path after an unfortunate beginning. He was active in the remodeling of its Sanctuary, completed before his death.

He was also on the Planning & Building Board of Westminster Village of Spanish Fort, Alabama. He took a keen and very active part in getting this project underway. Although he did not live to see it completed, today it is a thriving community.

Although Fairly had a serious side (and he was one whose "t's" always had to be crossed and his "i's" had to be dotted), he enjoyed people and parties and having a good time as much as anyone else did. He had a wonderful sense of humor that never failed him. He always saw the funny side of things, and it served him well even through his last illness. He was loved by so many people, young and old, male and female alike. He

returned this love and had so many friends that he called "special." He was called the "Good Neighbor of Magnolia Springs." Indeed, he was never too busy to help anyone in need. He was active in community affairs and was the president of the community association at one time. He was instrumental in having Magnolia Springs designated as a Bird Sanctuary. Following his death, a tree was planted in his memory on the grounds of the Community House. His death came at the Hospice of Villa Mercy, Daphne, Alabama.

A NATURALIST'S GAZETTEER

By Dan Holliman

CAREFULLY STUDYING HIS SLIDES is like being in the field again with Fairly. From 1958 to 1982, he chronicled the seasons by revisiting the same tree or stand of flowers. He was there to meet early migrants and bid farewell to those trans-Gulf travelers almost to the day each year. He left 24 years' worth of

footprints in the sandy soils of Baldwin County. His first slide, a close-up of a White Snakeroot plant, was made in October 1958. His last was of a Barred Owl in the summer of 1982. During those 24 years, he made 1,487 slides of birds, 342 slides of plants, and 97 slides of many other subjects. In all likelihood, he discarded thousands more that didn't meet his high standards.

Wanting to give something back to his alma mater, he donated his entire slide collection to Birmingham-Southern College. You may view 59 of his best slides by going to <http://www.bsc.edu/visitors/southernenvironmentalcenter/ecoscape/birds>.

His sister, Margaret Chandler Woodrow, said: "For Fairly, nature was not something to learn *about*, but something to learn *from*, and that one could not love nature in any profitable sense until one has achieved an empathy, a sense of oneness out of participation with it. To Fairly, this feeling seemed to bring a better understanding of mankind, strengthening his own religious belief."

JOHN FINDLAY III

November 11, 1913 – January 30, 1995

By Harriett Wright (Findlay)

JOHN FINDLAY III WAS THE FIRST MALE BORN TO THE Findlay clan after a long siege of girls. In celebration, a street in Wakefield, Massachusetts, where John was born, was named "Findlay" Street. After 75 years and 4000 Bluebirds fledged, John Findlay III had a second road named in his honor. In Oak Mountain State Park, the largest state park in Alabama, Valley Drive that runs the length of the park was renamed "John Findlay III Drive" in recognition of his tireless dedication and successful work in helping to bring back the Eastern Bluebirds to the area.

John was initiated into birds in the very cradle of American ornithology—Massachusetts. As a twelve-year-old Boy Scout, John won an award offered by a local ornithologist for

finding and identifying the most nesting species of birds. Except for a few lapses, bird watching became uppermost in his outdoor activities.

Inspired by the writings and journal of Henry David Thoreau, John was prompted to begin a daily journal at the age of eighteen years. Through the years he faithfully adhered to this daily writing, chronicling not only the events of his day, but also the world news of the day. John developed his reporting skills and was a tireless writer from 18 through 81. His journals were a prized possession.

During his fourteen years in Michigan, John was an active member of the Detroit and Michigan Audubon Societies. After he migrated to Illinois in 1952, he became a member of

the Peoria Academy of Science and the Illinois Audubon Society. As a bread-winning salesman with a wife and three children, John gave unstintingly of his time to introduce youths to the challenge and joys of nature. He was a merit badge counselor in Boy Scouts and spent hours afoot and afloat helping youths earn their awards in bird study, nature, and canoeing. He sincerely believed that if our young people became interested in nature they would have a lifelong hobby that had few limitations as to time or place.

It was in Illinois that John began his first Bluebird trail with seven boxes. When he came to Alabama in 1976, it was not long before he again established a Bluebird trail. This time, he began with seven boxes in Oak Mountain State Park. In the succeeding years these grew to 100 boxes throughout the park. Overall the trail became 180 boxes, which he monitored from March through August. John made these boxes—perhaps over a thousand in his lifetime.

His photography hobby resulted in his educational program, "Help Bring Back the Bluebirds," which has been presented to civic groups, Scout groups, garden clubs, church, and

senior groups over the state, and in Mississippi and Massachusetts also. John was the author of the widely distributed brochure on Bluebirds and furnished photographs of them to newspapers and magazines. He was an active volunteer with the Alabama Nongame Wildlife Program and served three years as a director for the North American Bluebird Society.

In 1985, John was the recipient of the W. Mosely Environmental Award, presented at the 39th Annual Birmingham Audubon Society Christmas Banquet. In recognition of his accomplishments, Mayor Arrington gave John a citation proclaiming December 6, 1985, as "John Findlay III Day" in Birmingham. At the 48th Annual BAS Christmas Banquet on December 5, 1994, John was given the Award of Merit in recognition for the long years of commitment and hard work he had given to the cause of the Eastern Bluebird. John never failed to give thanks to the volunteers who had helped with his trail.

John's New England heritage, his Bostonian accent, remained with him throughout his 81 years. He enjoyed being a help to others. His philosophy of life can be summed up, "I love the out-of-doors and I love people."

THOMAS ANTHONY IMHOF

April 1, 1920 – July 1, 1995

By Sharon Hudgins



ONE OF THE MOST FAMILIAR NAMES AMONG Alabama birders actually was from Brooklyn, New York. As a youngster, Tom Imhof was taken under the wing of a white-haired gentleman named Mr. McLees, who shared bird walks with him. Tom called St. Patrick's Day his birding anniversary because he and his school buddies took advantage of that day out of school to go "look at gulls." In high school, Tom and his friends would don white, knee-high boots and go bird-watching in nearby swamps, most likely where JFK Airport now sits. Early ornithological "greats" from the famous Bronx Bird Club were among his acquaintances.

After receiving his B.S. in biology from St. John's University, Tom attempted to enlist in the Army. The recruiter told him he didn't weigh enough, to go eat a big bunch of bananas and come back. Tom complied and was signed up at a grand total of 111 pounds (years later, he mustered out still weighing 111 pounds). During World War II, Tom was assigned to the Army's Chemical Corps and sent for fourteen months to the Panama Canal area to do entomology work with mosquitoes and flies. Naturally, Tom took advantage of his tour to do as much birding as he could work in. After returning to the states and completing Officer Candidate School, he was assigned to Camp Seibert in Attalla—a very fortunate assignment for

birding in Alabama, because on his first trip to Birmingham he met Janie, his bride for the next 51 years.

Upon his discharge in 1945, Tom and Janie went to New York, but Tom declared it was "too cold," so they packed up and arrived back in Alabama in January 1946. Tom went to work as an analytical chemist at Tennessee Coal & Iron (now USX), and also began his checklist for the plant property. By 1995 that checklist was well over 100 birds.

They set up housekeeping in Edgewater and Tom talked Janie into helping on a banding project. He had received his banding license in 1939 and wanted to band some wintering White-throated Sparrows. Tom built the traps and then he and Janie proceeded to clear a spot for them. They pulled up lots of vines to get everything just like he wanted it so the birds wouldn't get out under the edges. The vines turned out to be poison ivy, and Janie said they both got a good case of it. It may have deterred Janie, but Tom went on to band over 25,000 birds of numerous species during his lifetime.

Tom collected the first regional records of Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), Vermilion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*), Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*), Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*) and Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolni*). This was during his writing of the first edition of his book, when attempts were made to document a species' occurrence. These skins presently are housed in the Alabama Museum of Natural History in Tuscaloosa.

Tom's expertise as a field ornithologist was widely recognized—he was an Elected Fellow of the American Ornithologists Union, evidence of the regard of the professional ornithologists; was a member of the North American Bird Banding Association, the Wilson Ornithological Society and other professional organizations; and, for almost 50 years, compiler of the Birmingham Audubon Christmas Bird Count (one of the longest running counts in the country). He, along with Wilson Gaillard and Fr. J. L. Dorn, organized Christmas and migration bird counts on Dauphin Island and, with Refuge Manager Tom Atkeson, the Christmas Count at Wheeler Refuge. In 1965, Tom inaugurated and, until his death, compiled the Birmingham Spring and Fall Migration Counts. Twenty-three years later, he took part in Montgomery's second Christmas Bird Count to help make sure it became firmly established. Tom was a Past President and Board Member of

AOS; one of the four founders of the Birmingham Audubon Society, a Past President and a longtime Board Member; and a member of the initial Board of Directors of The Alabama Conservancy (now the Alabama Environmental Council). He taught ornithology at the Audubon Mountain Workshop in Mentone. He chaired ornithological surveys for the Bankhead Forest Wilderness and the proposed wild and scenic river status for the Cahaba River.

Of all these accomplishments, the one for which he is best known is our state bird book, ALABAMA BIRDS, published in 1962, with a second edition in 1976 and supplementary booklet in 1984. Many members of AOS and the Birmingham Audubon Society provided records, photos, and valuable assistance to Tom as he meticulously worked to make ALABAMA BIRDS one of the standards by which other state books are measured.

In 1984, the University of Alabama awarded Tom an honorary degree of Doctor of Science:

On the occasion of the Doctor of Science degree awarded upon Thomas Anthony Imhof, we salute this noted ornithologist, chemist, and author. A native of Brooklyn, New York, he earned his Bachelor of Science degree at St. John's University and has received national recognition for his studies of bird life. Acknowledged as one of the outstanding Field Ornithologists in North America and the foremost expert on birds in Alabama, he has banded more than 18,000 birds of 166 species for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He is the founder of the Alabama Conservancy and the founder and past president of the Alabama Ornithological Society and the Birmingham Audubon Society. Widely published in the field of Ornithology, he is the author of ALABAMA BIRDS, now in its second edition and acclaimed as being among the ten best state bird books in the country. Professionally, he served for 37 years as Analytical Chemist for U.S. Steel in Fairfield Works, testing iron and steel, coal, coke and coal chemicals. A veteran of both World War II and the Korean Conflict, he spent six years on active duty before retiring with the rank of Lt. Colonel from the active reserve corps. During his military service he was an instructor in Nuclear Physics and Effects of Atomic Weap-

ons and assisted with the atomic tests in Nevada. Acknowledged as Alabama's State Ornithologist, he holds memberships in the Wilson Ornithological Society, the Eastern Inland Bird-banding Association, and the American Birding Association. These salutations are presented on this 12th day of May 1984 by the Academic Community of The University of Alabama as represented by the undersigned.

Most AOS members have a story to share when asked about their experiences with Tom. We met in 1990—at a time when his health had slowed him down from his “enthusiastic” pace of earlier years. Living in the same area as Tom, I was told to call him because he could use someone else in his party for a Birmingham Audubon migration count. I phoned him and pretty much invited myself. I showed up on time (almost) and found him standing in his front yard. Sometimes ignorance is bliss—had I known all the credentials and his tendency for punctuality and preciseness, I probably would not have gone. I also hadn't been told he didn't particularly care for “new” birders on a count and I had never ever done a bird count. But I could not have asked for a more wonderful teacher; he was patient and thoughtful and helpful. I wish I could have absorbed everything he tried to teach me. If birding was slow, we looked at plants or butterflies or frogs or he talked about habitat preservation. He showed me the places he had birded for almost 50 years. He'd talk about what “used to be” here or there. Many of his favorite spots had been lost to “progress”—a development here, a clearcut there.

I became his “driver,” a position that through the years had been assumed by many others out of a need for self-preservation (allegedly they drove to be able to bird with and learn from him—but it was really to get him out from behind the wheel). Tom's driving could be hazardous to your health. When birding, he had a one-track mind. He was known for driving a tad too fast while looking skyward or for slamming on the brakes no matter whether on a country backroad or the interstate in downtown Birmingham during rush hour. We once had a “serious discussion” when I refused to stop on I-59 near Birmingham-Southern College to look at a hawk. And Tom had birded the same routes so many times that he knew exactly—and I mean exactly—where he wanted you to stop.

More than once, I was told to back up a foot or pull forward two feet, or stop right beside a certain tree.

Helen Kittinger recalled a particular driving experience. Tom had decided that you could get over 100 birds on a “big day” in every month of the year. So June 1st saw them doing a Monroeville to Dauphin Island to Fort Morgan route. Helen said for almost 24 hours she did all of the driving—except when Tom got hungry and she had to climb over the seat into the back of his small car to fix him sandwiches and hand them over the front so he could eat and they wouldn't lose any birding time. Helen said that was quite a trip, but they did see quite a few birds, including some cute baby rails and baby Black-necked Stilts.

There was likely to be something memorable when you were out with Tom. On one occasion we were doing a fall count in Edgewater. Tom wanted to go down a certain overgrown road that bordered backwater on Bayview Lake. The only thing standing between us and Tom's intended destination was a Timber Rattler, stretched out across the road—all the way across the road. This snake was absolutely beautiful. It had fourteen rattles and a button and its tail looked like black velvet. It was longer than Tom was tall! And it was not moving. We tossed rocks at it. We tossed empty cans at it. Finally, Bill Gilliland took a long stick and goosed it under its chin, and that got its attention—in the blink of an eye it coiled and stared at us. Then it just casually uncoiled and slid into the grass. When only six inches off the path, it was so perfectly camouflaged you couldn't even see it. Tom proclaimed, “Let's go” and off he went, leaving the rest of us thinking about the fact that the snake had not gone into the grass in the direction it had originally been headed and we were going to have to come back this way. To top it off, Tom got to the end of the road and started up a bank covered in Kudzu almost up to his chest. Undaunted, Tom reached the top, saw Blue-winged Teal and a few shorebirds and all was well.

Another migration count found us at Midfield High School late in the afternoon. We were winding up the day casually checking out the school grounds. Midfield High is at the end of a very long road with some woods and overgrown, grassy fields on either side and bordered by Valley Creek, which hosts many Yellow-crowned Night Herons. We were

losing the light and were just making a quick check of the powerlines behind the school. I pointed to a bird that had just dropped in, and Tom yelled, "STOP!" He began describing the bird, saying look at the rufous, get the books, get the books, then jumped out of the car and headed in the direction of this bird that now was moving from bush to bush. "Say's Phoebe—get the camera, get a picture." I managed a couple of shots with a long lens (which turned out to be terrible) and that's when the police arrived. Tom was now well down the powerline in pursuit of the bird, and I was left with a camera and a policeman who didn't understand what we were doing. My explanation that I'm president of the Midfield Band Boosters and have permission from the Superintendent of the Board of Education to be on the property and I even have keys to the school and we're not doing anything, etc., etc. wasn't going over well. Tom finally returned, the bird was gone and the policeman was very happy for us to leave.

Yet another count found Tom and me sitting in my car just off of Arkadelphia Road late in the afternoon waiting for the huge flocks of blackbirds to fly over Birmingham-Southern College headed across I-59 toward a north Birmingham roost. We were in an empty lot behind a service station eating our sandwiches and occasionally looking around with our binoculars. All of a sudden a red pick-up truck jumped the curb and wheeled in behind my car. Then an old Cadillac screeched to a halt in front of my car, doors flew open and bullet-proof vested men jumped out with weapons drawn. Tom and I looked at each other with our mouths open. Men appeared at each window, demanded our drivers' licenses, our names and what we're doing there. All I could say was, "Watching blackbirds." I tried to tell them we were doing a bird count, showed them our binocs and checklists and Tom tried to explain he'd written the book on Alabama birds and would show them his picture on his book. When he managed to get it out of his bag, of course, the dust cover was not on it. I offered to leave, but the man in charge said, "I don't think so." By this time, all I could think of was the newspaper headlines the next day and what my Mother was going to think about the circumstances of my untimely end. Turns out, these men were FBI and we had stumbled into a drug bust at the service station behind which we had chosen to park and they thought

our binoculars were on the lookout for something other than blackbirds.

Janie Imhof said when they were first married, she was jealous of Tom's birds, but later resigned herself to the fact that his birds came first and always would, so she just learned to live with it. (Even at his funeral a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher perched on the powerline outside the Church and an entire family of Shrikes that had nested in front of their house had crossed the interstate and were in Ensley Park in front of the Church.) Six years later, Janie was having problems with a maintenance crew damaging the shrubs and trees she had planted at Tom's grave. So, when she ran across his old banding poles in the basement, her first thought was, "Ah-ha!" Her next was, "He'd be so mad." But she gathered them up, took them to an ornamental iron company, had them cut into sections, and placed them around the plants at his grave. Tom is surrounded by part of his banding equipment. Maybe Janie has the last laugh. It's like she said, "Tom was always birding."

TOM'S BIRD

By Julian Dusi, Dan Holliman, and Jim Keeler

FOR THOSE OF US WHO HAD THE HONOR of knowing and loving Tom Imhof, we remember him as an "almost" unflappable individual. The operative word here is "almost." He had the ability to maintain his gentleman-like composure in any situation. This event occurred on a Sunday afternoon near the lawn of Holiday House of Dauphin Island just before the compilation at the end of a spring meeting.

Bob Skinner, then a taxidermist for the State of Alabama, had skillfully mounted a rather large specimen that looked like a cross between Bullock's and Baltimore Oriole. Under Jim Keeler's supervision, Bob waded out into the almost impenetrable Wax Myrtle and Yaupon thicket next to the Holiday House. He wired this "tropical looking" specimen to a high limb of a Wax Myrtle shrub about 50 yards from the site where the compilation was being held. Ruth Horsely was recruited to take an intense interest in the bird. Tom was called over to help her with this unusual identification.

Tom was quick to realize this had to be a first for the state, whatever it was. He decided to collect the bird. Collecting at

that time was an acceptable method of documentation. Tom kept a single shot .410 gauge shotgun stored lengthwise under the front and back seats of his Volkswagen Beetle. You may recall that these cars had limited space and it was somewhat of a trick to find room to store something as long as a shotgun.

Not wanting to lose sight of the bird, Tom asked a bystander to fetch the shotgun from his car. The young lad had trouble in figuring out how to extract the shotgun from such cramped quarters, so he shouted for Tom to come and help. Tom was faced with a dilemma. If he lost sight of the bird while he was trying to retrieve the shotgun, the bird may fly away. Reluctantly, Tom ran to the car, got the gun and returned. He was absolutely amazed that the bird had not moved one inch!

Tom decided to crawl on his belly into the thicket for a better shot. He got within 25 yards, took careful aim and fired. The bird did not move. He shot again. This time a pellet cut through a wire that attached the bird to the limb. The bird swung down loosely swaying in the breeze. Realizing that the joke was on him, he gracefully composed himself. He never said a word. He smoothed out his ruffled feathers, called the meeting to order and began the compilation.

BURROWING OWLS AND BLUE LIGHTS

By Dan Holliman

TO SAY THAT BIRDING WITH TOM IMHOF was like having a thrill a minute is a gross understatement! I've known Tom to come to a dead stop on I-65 to take a second or third look at a roadside hawk. And, he was not beyond trespassing to follow a LUB (little unidentified bird). His enthusiasm in the field was contagious. Yet this same man would fold his nets at the very peak of a massive spring fallout to attend an early morning Mass.

He had the knack of squeezing out as much daylight as possible. In this case, he tried to squeeze out too much night.

This particular night found the two of us searching for Burrowing Owls on Dauphin Island. We were speeding across the bridge to Cedar Point at 2:30 a.m. when a blue light filled the inside of his Volkswagen Beetle. The officer approached Tom's side of the car and sternly asked, "Why are you speeding on the bridge?" Tom, in his most reserved manner said, "Officer, we are looking for owls for the National Audubon Society." This seemed to be enough of an explanation. He let us resume our search without giving Tom a ticket!

WALTER F. COXE

May 29, 1898 – August 12, 1987

By Jerome "Buddy" Cooper



RECOGNIZING WALTER F. COXE'S APPROPRIATE place in history is a memorable undertaking. Herein are a few notes by one who was fortunate enough to have known him warmly.

My friendship with Walter somehow arose as I left the Navy shortly after WWII. His early years had been spent in North Carolina, and his family had moved to Georgia when he was of school age. His family were farmers and as a teenager Walter became infatuated with the world about—and with baseball. He played semi-pro baseball—with the help of the

owners of Bibb Cotton Mills. Eventually, he matriculated at Georgia Tech. He became a loyal, lifetime alumnus of that school. His college degree was in journalism. After graduation, he worked as an active journalist. As he matured, Walter became one of the most widely known and broadly informed Alabama naturalist/environmentalists in our time.

I am not certain of the seminal steps Walter took to reach the pinnacle of his talents. He and I met for the first time during a storm-marked bird walk shortly after the end of WWII. Walter showed up as our Audubon group assembled

at first light at Five Points West. Out of the blowing storm there walked the slight, friendly bird watcher, smiling and remarking jauntily, "Good morning, I'm Walter Coxe." Almost immediately, he pointed out a Redstart and told us all about that beautifully marked itinerant fellow. It was probably at this gathering that Walter first enunciated his doctrine of never paying attention to the Weather Bureau. "Those folks," he vowed, "just want to keep folks from going where they wish to go." Thus began a long and cherished kinship.

Walter was never overbearing in the display of his unbelievable knowledge of bird life, plants, trees and denizens of the woods. In his later years as the birds could be heard but not seen with his failing eyesight and hearing, he could be heard asking, "Harriett, what was it? Did it have wing bars?"

An idea of the breadth of Walter's encyclopedic knowledge of things natural can be realized by a partial catalogue of events: He led us on a day-long hike in the Bankhead Forest. We were not successful in finding a cave which Walter remembered from years before. He could not find the cave, but he could in detail describe the archaic and woodland artifacts which he clearly remembered. "You don't carry away or disturb such things," he would explain, "except in memory."

Walking was Walter's antidote for almost all concerns and illnesses. One Sunday, early, he called to set up a "walk" on Oak Mountain. As we strolled along hardly speaking and inhaling the sheer beauty and view along the trail (I can't recall the trail's color markings) Walter suddenly spoke up with, "Do you know what I'm thinking?" I said I did not—and he added, "I really believe you could cure measles by walking, if you walked enough."

He walked—or canoed—everywhere in Alabama. He enjoyed pointing out rare plants, rare trees, and rare birds. He led us to the original spring which begins the Cahaba River. He led us to the tiny brook west of Lake Purdy where the minute caddis fly fashions its little tunnel trap. On the path to that sylvan spot, he stopped to show us signs of a Mississippi Period Indian town.

On Fall days as we hiked along the Cahaba, Walter's attention was called to what a hiker called a strange "bug" on the branch of a jewelweed. He gently explained that "the bug" was actually a tiny ruby-throated hummer. He went on to explain the hummer's appetite for jewelweed. That plant

blossoms along our streams in the Fall and the hummers on the way south tend to follow the streams in order to feed on the jewelweed.

Walter was not a member of any religious faith. On occasion, he would remark that the Bankhead Forest—and all therein—was his church. Remote waterfalls in the Bankhead were his favorite stopping places for lunch on the trail. On Audubon group weekend campouts, Walter would convene a "Sunday School." The gatherings were entirely ecumenical. Mostly, they consisted of brief statements by any children in attendance. I recall one notable Sunday School when my then young grandson, Jeremy asked Walter's permission to say his Shema, an ancient prayer of the Old Testament. Walter gladly agreed. Jeremy began and, after a few phrases, said he had forgotten the rest. "Good," Walter said, and someone made a snapshot of the occasion. Later, when he was campaigning for the establishment of the Sipsey Wilderness, Walter would say that Jeremiah (as he called Jeremy) was his favorite preacher, since Jeremy knew when to stop!

One of Walter's wonderful attributes was his refusal to display anger or heat in argument. Once somewhere I saw what I thought was a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher on the golf course near my home. I thought it best to check with Walter. He was certain it was a Scissor-tailed because a friend of his had reported seeing the bird (rare for this area). As he oftentimes did, Walter set out to retrieve the bird, which had been killed apparently by crashing into a window. At Walter's suggestion, we gathered up the bird and made tracks to Birmingham-Southern to get Professor Dan Holliman's profound knowledge. "It's a Yellow-billed Cuckoo," Dan softly decreed. I simply stayed quiet. Dan showed us the dispositive difference between the beak of the Scissor-tailed and the Yellow-billed. The latter won by a nose! Walter quietly harbored the belief that it *was* a Scissor-tailed. On the way back from Birmingham-Southern, I thought it simply must have been a rare occasion when "Jove nodded," but he rarely did.

They who knew Walter loved him. We are grateful that he lived and walked (lively) among us. In his memory we hike on.

Walter was laid to rest in the cemetery along the Cahaba. His loss has never been recovered from. Along the quiet Cahaba, where giant trees stand and flowers grow, and increasingly rare birds sing, nature is going about its work as the

Creator laid the plans. Walter's beautiful spirit walks on in company of birders along ethereal paths he loved so well. He remains our guide and icon as his spirit begs us to protect our beautiful, "fragile spaceship."

THE RED BANDANNA

By Dan Holliman

SHORTLY AFTER I RETURNED TO BIRMINGHAM IN 1962 with a brand new Ph.D. degree stuck in my pocket, and still wet behind the ears, I was told that there was a man I just had to meet! The name of Walter Coxe, to many people, was surrounded by such stories that he never slept in a bed—only on the floor—and that he never ate chicken. I finally met Walter at a Birmingham Audubon meeting and immediately knew here was a person that could make things happen. Being new to the territory, I told him I was looking for a place to take my Field Zoology class on field trips. He quickly suggested Oak Mountain State Park. He said that he would send me directions on where to meet him. Two days later, I received in the mail a rolled up 7½ minute topographic map of the area where we would rendezvous. Written in the margin of the map was, "My camp is 100 yards due south of the "X," and I'll have breakfast ready at 7 a.m. for you and your 12 students." As it

turned out, his camp was on a hog back running off of Double Oak Mountain at the end of a woods road. I was nervous about finding him for I would have to take several service roads that were not well marked. It looked like a 30-minute walk with a compass from where I had planned to park the vehicles. This was in late fall and just getting daylight. We were in the woods and close to where his camp was supposed to be. Then I spied what appeared to be a red cloth tied around the top of a seedling loblolly pine, and then another at a fork in the road. About that time, I began to pick up the smell of ham mingled with wood smoke. I had not told my students about this planned meeting with Walter, nor about the breakfast he would provide. I pretended to be lost and that we just happened to stumble into his camp. Later I learned that he was famous for cooking hams in a pit buried in the ground, and for making out-of-this-world scalded milk coffee over a charcoal fire. Needless to say, we were served a breakfast fit for a king . . . scrambled eggs, biscuits and all!

I still remember the *Navajo Prayer for Thanksgiving* he gave before our meal: "In beauty may I walk. All day long may I walk. Through the returning seasons may I walk . . . among beautiful joyful birds may I walk . . ." (Part); and a short passage he quoted from the Bible: "This is the day which the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24) It was a beautiful Sunday morning—one I won't forget.

M. WILSON GAILLARD

1898 – 1986

By Robert R. Reid, Jr.



WILSON GAILLARD, BY PROFESSION A DENTIST, spent a lifetime in conservation for all types of wildlife and particularly for birds. He was a founding member of the Mobile Bay Audubon Society, the Mobile County Wildlife Association, and the Mobile Bird Club. He was also an officer and director of AOS for a number of years, and for several years was editor

of the Society's scientific journal, *Alabama Birdlife*. Similarly, he served as an officer, director, and editor of the newsletter of the Alabama Wildlife Federation and, in 1967, received the Governor's Conservationist of the Year Award. For many years, he was compiler of either the Mobile or Dauphin Island Christmas Bird Counts and also participated in the breeding bird surveys of the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Wilson

practiced dentistry in Mobile for over 58 years and served as a president of the Alabama Dental Association.

Wilson firmly believed in the necessity to conserve habitat for all our wild creatures. He developed two sanctuaries that have received wide recognition—one our well-known Dauphin Island Audubon Bird Sanctuary and, the other, at nearby famous Bellingrath Gardens. Not always having money to work with, he was adept at bartering and at times said it seemed that the whole project [the Dauphin Island Sanctuary] had to be done by “horsetrading” since there was practically no money on which to operate. He summed it up, “What has been done in six years almost convinced us that the gold standard is unnecessary.” An example is how the wet mud in the Sanctuary was used to create greens on the new Dauphin Island Golf Course and, as result of the dredging, a lake was created in the Sanctuary. That lake is now named Gaillard Lake. He did all this by convincing the developers that they could secure good dirt for their golf course at a great savings by using the mud or muck from the Sanctuary. After enough soil for the new golf course had been removed, holes were sunk in the lake. Then, as he relates, “Pure fresh water gushed upward, giving us a beautiful 10-acre lake and the golfers 18 green fairways. There was no money involved in the transaction, which made everyone happy, including the birds. . . . [But], before the excavated muck could be placed on the golf course, it had to be spread out to dry . . . [and] some was inadvertently left at the drying places, turning them into fertile food patches”

It was a common sight seeing Wilson walking through the sanctuary, clippers in hand working to maintain the trails. Other sanctuary improvements were also secured without funds, such as erection of birdhouses through a county-wide contest among 4-H boys. “Each birdhouse had a metal nameplate of the builder, and all houses were to be placed in the sanctuary. There were so many houses entered in the contest it posed quite a manpower problem, which was solved by letting the top 20 boys spend a happy day on Dauphin Island nailing up future homes for feathered families.” However, “Alas, there comes a time when one must go back on the gold standard. This spelled real trouble until the National Audubon Society, recognizing the wildlife opportunity as well as our financial plight, signed the lease for this unusual bird sanctuary . . . Perhaps the birds which sing in your yard were able to make

the return trip because of the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuary.”

The sanctuary at Bellingrath Gardens also was created through non-monetary arrangements. Wilson talked the developers into digging out stagnant potholes, which were used by myriads of mosquitos who preferred tourist blood, and “changing it into a tumbling brook with waterfalls and clear pools.” A second section of the sanctuary involved creation of a protected wilderness habitat for waterfowl that also attracted many nongame birds.

His prescription for what an individual might do is set forth in his book on conservation, *MOVING THE EARTH—FOR A SONG*. It is a widely-acclaimed work on the need for conservation practices to protect birdlife, and what an individual can do to foster conservation. As an example, he prescribes:

Where wildlife has 100 acres of land and man must appropriate 50 acres for human use, the other 50 acres must be made to double their sustaining capability and must have a fair share of nature’s water supply. At present, this is not an impossible land improvement schedule, but it does require action from far more individuals than in years past. (at p. 58).

Wilson always wanted to be involved in conservation of birds and wildlife. His first big opportunity came at the Chandeleur Islands off the shore of Louisiana. President Theodore Roosevelt had made them the second national wildlife refuge in 1904, after Pelican Island in Florida in 1903. The National Audubon Society had taken the job of protecting the nesting birdlife, and Wilson notes it was remarkable in that it was done by only one boat and two wardens pitted against hundreds of rough men trying to continue their century-old habits of wildlife destruction. A Captain Sprinkle and his assistant aboard their ship, *The Royal Tern*, “not only survived but became a legend along the Gulf Coast by reason of their fearless law enforcement yet keen understanding of the human element they were forced to deal with.”

Wilson said he had dreamed of visiting the islands, so when a hurricane in 1916 beached a schooner on one of them, a retired sea captain named Beauregard Roberts, who it just happened was a near neighbor, contracted to salvage the wrecked vessel.

Although only a teenager [of 18], I managed to persuade the good captain to give me a job in his salvage attempt. Had my parents known the nature of the work, my first visit to [Cape Breton Island in the Chandeleurs] would certainly have been delayed. On the original inspection trip, it was decided that someone had to remain aboard the beached schooner, because [under admiralty law] a deserted ship can be claimed by those who have possession. Since there were no other applicants for that particular part of the salvage operation, I became the captain and entire crew of a schooner, listing at a 45-degree angle on a completely uninhabited island about 35 miles from my nearest human neighbors on the mainland.

I must confess to a feeling of loneliness as Captain Roberts left to assemble the tug and dredge boat needed to dig the ship off the beach and get it out to deep water. . . . I spent the most thrilling 10 days of my life and remained four more weeks after the real captain returned with his salvage equipment. I shall never forget the lump in my throat when, at last, the old schooner righted herself and started back to port in tow of a powerful little tug. Captain Beauregard Roberts gave the customary blasts for departure, while I waved a sad farewell to the startled birds in their peaceful reservation. (at pp. 55-57)

Later came the sanctuaries mentioned above. Then, Wilson managed to obtain a personal lease of Cat Island for \$1 a year as a rookery for wading birds. (Cat Island is in Mississippi Sound between Dauphin and the mainland.) He even arranged to collect spilled rice from the Mobile State Docks to take to his island sanctuaries to feed the waterfowl and other birds.

Finally, it appeared that the U. S. Corps of Engineers was going to dig an industrial ship channel from Theodore to Mobile Bay, and needed someplace to put the spoil and would need it in future years for maintenance of the channel. Thus, Wilson saw a great opportunity to talk the Corps into depositing the spoil out in Mobile Bay where it could be a breeding place for sea birds. Many of the then endangered Brown Pelicans and the Royal Terns now seen on our Gulf Coast are the result of this island that in 1983 was named

Gaillard Island. (By 2001, breeding Brown Pelicans on Gaillard Island numbered in the thousands.) He was also instrumental in having marsh grass planted off part of the island to serve as a resource not only for birds but also for sea life that is the base of the marine food chain. It is hoped that this island will continue to be managed for wildlife—both of the air and water—as a natural resource for our Gulf Coast as he wished it to be.

Wilson was a student of Alabama's avifauna throughout his life, as is attested by the numerous bird records reported under his name, and he was always interested in ornithological research and wildlife preservation in all of its forms. For his work, he received tributes from many eminent officials, and a major oil company commented, in one of its public messages, "Next time you hear a bird sing, it could be through the courtesy of Dr. Gaillard and his friends!"

We are indebted to Wilson Gaillard for his many accomplishments and his contributions in making our natural world a better place in which to live. Summing up his philosophy (from the coverleaf of his book),

Life would be unbearably bleak without the beauty of Nature. Can you imagine the world without flowers or shrubs, a spring morning without budding trees or singing birds? These are the simple joys of Nature which we accept so casually, but which future generations will be denied unless we are willing to move the earth—for a song!

He felt that all of this was part of a Divine Plan and closes his book by reference to the songs of David in *Psalms*:

"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom Thou hast made them all; the earth is full of Thy creatures." God did create the wonders of Nature, including our heritage of wildlife, and He specifically instructed you and me to use and enjoy them during our lifetime, but did He not also command that we use our heritage wisely? All of our out-of-doors, including wildlife, is loaned to us and someday, some way, we will have to render an accounting for it. This is the true meaning of conservation.

P A R T T H R E E

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

 A SUMMARY OF THE NONGAME PROGRAM
 IN THE GAME & FISH DIVISION IN ALABAMA

By James E. Keeler

DURING AND AFTER THE END OF WORLD WAR II, activities in the Game & Fish Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation consisted mainly of the enforcement of hunting and fishing regulations throughout the state. Prior to World War II, in the late 1930s, a few wildlife biologists were hired to conduct a wildlife inventory throughout the state. A lot of data was collected concerning game species at that time. Along came the war, and all of the biologists left to serve in the armed forces.

With the cessation of the war, it took a few years to begin assembling a staff of wildlife biologists to begin work on the game species in the state. Upon my arrival in 1948, only four biologists had preceded me. During the early 1940s a late freeze was present in a lot of the southeastern states and it drastically affected the Mourning Dove population. The Southeastern Association of Game & Fish Commissioners decided to formulate a Mourning Dove Technical Committee and eleven states hired Mourning Dove Biologists to conduct research in each state. Meetings were held in Atlanta about twice a year to formulate and coordinate the kinds of research needed. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service also was an active participant. I was hired as the dove biologist for Alabama. Research consisted of trapping and banding, nesting studies and banding of nestlings, hunter-kill data, hunting season regulations, etc. Over 80,000 Mourning Doves were banded in Alabama. I would estimate that close to 500,000 doves were banded in the Southeast. Some of the northern and western states also began banding doves.

While working with Mourning Doves, I also began work on a Quail Feeder Study on two 4,000-acre tracts in Barbour County. This consisted of a lot of trapping of quail in the study

area. With this intensive trapping of quail, a lot of other birds were trapped. Since I had the Master Banding Permit, I began banding all of the other species that were trapped. I also began using mist nets so I could band warblers, vireos, and other non-seedeaters. To my knowledge, this was the only work conducted on nongame species by the Game & Fish Division since the war.

My next project consisted of a four-year study of blackbirds. For some unexplained reason, blackbird populations exploded to an all-time high in the late 1950s and early 1960s all over the eastern half of the United States. Crop depredation throughout the northern states was of real concern to farmers. During mid-fall and throughout the winter, blackbirds migrated to the deep South. Here in Alabama their population became so high during the winter months that they became serious competitors with all other seed-eating birds, including Mourning Doves. I spent a lot of time visiting the huge roost sites located throughout Alabama. Two roost sites located in the city of Montgomery contained a rough estimate of five million birds. Other large roosts were located from Foley to the Tennessee Valley. Most roosts contained Common Grackles, Red-winged Blackbirds, Starlings, and Brown-headed Cowbirds. Robins also were found roosting on the perimeters of some large roosts in south Alabama. Brewer's Blackbirds and Rusty Blackbirds used the larger roosts in west-central Alabama. Food habit surveys were conducted on all blackbird species. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife personnel trapped and banded thousands of blackbirds at one of the Montgomery roost sites. Then, for some unexplained reason, the blackbird population dropped back to normal as it was before the tremendous population explosion.

My tenure with the Game & Fish Division lasted for 32 and 1/2 years. My work duties varied considerably more than most of the biologists in that Division since most of the problems that pertained to nongame animals were referred to me for action. I was soon being called the "naturalist" for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources as it is now called. Some of my duties consisted of identification of birds, reptiles, insects, and other items brought in by various people or described by telephone. Hundreds of speeches, especially on birds and sometimes on snakes, were given to civic groups, garden clubs, schools, and other organizations. All of this was in addition to my regular research on game birds.

I met with Blanche Dean and others in an attempt to plan and formulate activities needed in her attempt to establish the Alabama Ornithological Society. I commend her for her work and dedication in bringing this to reality.

My bird banding activities continued throughout my career. During the mid-1950s a large rookery of White Ibis was reported at Southfield Lake in north Baldwin County. I visited the rookery and estimated over 3000 nesting pairs of Ibis. I ordered 2000 bands from the Bird Banding office of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Upon receipt of the bands, I formed a banding expedition consisting of wildlife biologists and law-enforcement personnel. Julian Dusi of Auburn University and Oliver Austin, who was stationed at the Arctic, Desert & Tropic Research Center located at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, also helped band. We banded over 1200 nestling White Ibis in two trips to the area.

In later years, Conservation personnel banded Little Blue Heron nestlings in west-central Alabama, and Little Blue Herons and a few White Ibis in Covington County in south Alabama.

During the late 1950s, after a lot of discussions and meetings, it was decided to lay the groundwork for publishing a book on the birds of Alabama. It should be noted that all money spent by the Game & Fish Division emanated from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and revenues received from fines and forfeitures from violations of hunting and fishing laws. With this in mind, it was decided to attempt to get a bill passed through the legislature to allow all expenses for the production and publication of the bird book to be paid out of the General Fund. After considerable discussions with

legislators and attending committee meetings, the bill was passed and work could begin on producing the book.

Tom Imhof was eventually selected to become the author of the book to be entitled ALABAMA BIRDS. Imhof did a remarkable job in compiling all of the bird data he had collected, plus information collected from members of the Birmingham Audubon Society, the Alabama Ornithological Society, and other individuals. I was assigned the duties involved as Technical Editor for the book. I worked closely with Imhof, the artists, printers, and publishers of the book and worked over one full year on this project.

During the years, more and more nongame projects were conducted. Winter hawk counts were conducted on established 100-mile-long routes in central Alabama during early January to establish wintering population trends. Random road counts were conducted and birds and other wild animals that were killed by vehicular traffic were recorded.

Game & Fish Division personnel received permission to establish a Game & Fish Museum for scientific and educational purposes. Robert Skinner was hired as a full-time taxidermist whose duties consisted of making scientific specimens from the various birds, mammals, reptiles, and other life forms collected throughout Alabama. A surprising amount of data was collected and disseminated during its approximately 18 years of existence. All specimens are now housed at Auburn University.

The Game & Fish Division hired its first full-time, nongame biologist in the early 1980s. A bill was introduced in the Alabama Legislature which would allow taxpayers to allocate a portion of their taxes to the non-game program. The bill eventually was passed and the first nongame biologist's salary was paid from this fund. This income tax checkoff system did fairly well for the first two years. Other organizations saw this as a system to receive revenues for their own use. This seriously reduced the amount of income received from this income tax checkoff system for the Game & Fish Division's Nongame Program.

Three nongame biologists are now employed by the Game & Fish Division. The Lands Division of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources also has wildlife biologists in the Heritage and the Forever Wild Programs.

I am proud to have been a part of the profession of the Game & Fish Division in my 32 and 1/2 years of working there.

HERON RESEARCH EXPERIENCES

By *Julian L. Dusi*



HERON RESEARCH WAS FAR FROM MY MIND WHEN I started teaching and research at Auburn University (then The Alabama Polytechnic Institute) in 1949. During the spring of 1952, a comparative anatomy student, Thomas H. Yancey (now a physician at Fairhope) asked if I would like to see a Little Blue Heron (LBH) colony near Tuskegee. I said I would, and when I saw the colony of 200+ adults and their nestlings, research possibilities seemed so great that I was hooked.

As soon as I could get a supply of leg bands from the Fish & Wildlife Service Bird Banding Office, I started banding nestlings to find out their migratory habits and to note whether they returned to their birth colony as adults to nest. After several years of banding, I found that the Little Blue Herons dispersed in all directions after they left the Tuskegee colony site and then migrated south to Trinidad, Columbia, and other southern countries. The mortality reports on band returns were interesting. All recovered from the U.S. reported "caught by a dog" or "found dead." Reports from Central and South America just said, "shot." As we worked and banded and radio-tagged in other colonies, we accumulated all sorts of information on breeding behavior and movements.

My wife, Rosemary, and I worked in swamp and upland colonies from 1952 into the 1990s, wading in swamps, working from a ladder in a boat or from an extension ladder in upland colonies. Usually while working in a colony we wore a hat and long-sleeved shirt because we were bombarded by fecal and regurgitation pellets, and we wondered whether this held any health hazard. Rosemary asked our family doctor whether this posed any health risk. He assured her that it would not. "But," she persisted, "What if you looked up and it hit you in the mouth?" He just turned green.

We had been studying herons for a number of years before it occurred to me that heron colonies could easily be spotted from a low-flying airplane and even though I hadn't flown for a number of years since World War II, I needed to investigate what I would have to do to pilot a plane again. I went to see the

manager of the Auburn Airport. He said, "If you can get a flight physical from old Doc Thomas today, a Federal Aviation Administration representative will be here tomorrow and he will recertify your license. Then we will arrange a checkout with one of our instructors and you'll be flying again." So, I got my flight physical and the FAA man re-certified my Commercial Flight Certificate. A few days later, a young instructor took me up for a check flight. It all came back to me and I did fairly well on the check. He started to certify our check ride in my log book and exclaimed, "You have been flying for longer than I have been alive. You're a little rusty but should have no problems." Since that day in the 1960s until the late 1990s, I have been flying over most of the heron colony sites in south Alabama, western Georgia, and the Florida panhandle, photographing and counting the colonies as they developed.

Another interesting situation arose while banding nestlings in a swamp near Dothan. Most of the nests were 10 to 15 feet up in swamp tupelo trees. To get to the nests we used a small flat-bottomed boat and a 20-foot extension ladder. We would position the boat against the tree, then set up my ladder against the tree and carefully climb to the top, quickly tying the ladder to the tree so it would not slip. Then I would reach up into a nest, take out the young and put them in a bucket. I would then descend and band the nestlings, then return them to their nest. It worked out fine until I reached up into a nest for the nestlings and instead grabbed a five-foot gray rat snake that had just eaten the nestlings. I collected five rat snakes that day and took them away from that swamp. I think that rat snakes are one reason why herons abandon a nest site.

Most of the colony sites we found were in the coastal plain. One outstanding colony from north Alabama was on the Swan Creek Wildlife Management Area of Wheeler Wildlife Refuge near Decatur. Thomas Z. Atkeson was the manager then, in the early 1960s. He and his crew found the colony, which was mostly Black-crowned Night-Herons, Little Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and then Cattle Egrets (CE). He would send a message that the young were banding size and

we would arrange a weekend banding trip. On June 3, 1963, we arrived at refuge headquarters in the afternoon. After meeting Tom and his crew, Tom said to me, "A Yankee lady called me this morning about a rare bird, but I couldn't understand her. So I said, a Yankee professor from Auburn will be here this afternoon and I'll have him call you." So I called. It was Barbara Flindt, who later became an AOS member. She said she had a Bachman's Warbler nesting in her front yard and would I check to confirm it. We went to her home and in the top of a sweetgum tree was a nest with a pretty first-year Orchard Oriole male singing away. We banded a mixture of herons at Wheeler until the colony was deserted in 1966.

During our studies, we frequently came across a pattern of Cattle Egrets pirating Little Blue Heron nests. The Little Blue Herons would establish a colony of nests, lay eggs, and even hatch young. Then the Cattle Egrets would come into the area and take over the LBH nests and lay their own eggs in them. If young LBH were in the nests, the Cattle Egrets would peck them and force them out of the nests into the water or onto the ground underneath. On several occasions, I found nests with both CE and LBH eggs in them and found one mixed nest where the egrets had hatched both sets of eggs and fledged the young of both species.

One interesting example of this piracy was at a colony near the Ft. Deposit exit from I-65. On May 22, 1995, Fred Bassett called to say he counted 27 LBH nests and only four

Cattle Egrets in the colony. Rosemary and I went there the next day. Only ten LBH nests were still in LBH possession, with Cattle Egrets standing close by. In all, there were now 40 CE on nests with at least 40 more CE present. No wonder LBH numbers are decreasing.

Once a swamp colony site was abandoned, the herons did not use the site again. We often rechecked the site of the 1952 LBH colony south of Tuskegee. Since we often did our colony-checking flights from the Tuskegee Airport, we routinely flew over the colony site and automatically checked it for herons. Imagine my surprise on May 20, 1992 when I flew over the site and saw a white band around the edge of the pond; an estimated 3000 Cattle Egrets were nesting there. What had happened? A timber company now owned the upper pond. They had clear cut the site and drained the upper pond, then planted pine trees. When the trees were about ten feet high, they decided that they were not growing well in the pond area and so they refilled the pond. That left about eight rows of trees in the water around the edges of about a two-acre pond. Cattle Egrets had nested in these trees. The colony used the site until 1995, when the trees in the water died, decayed, and fell into the water so no nesting substrate remained.

Heron research has been tedious at times, but each spring we looked forward to the return of the herons. Rosemary and I have enjoyed spending much of our lives doing it and have no regrets for having made the choice.

H U M M I N G B I R D S

By Robert and Martha Sargent



OUR VENTURE INTO THE WORLD OF HUMMINGBIRDS was almost a chance occurrence. In 1983 when Martha and I got married, neither of us had more than a casual interest in birds or bird watching. Martha did have a couple of bird feeders that she enjoyed. While we were courting, she got me hooked on watching her yard birds and birds at the feeders. It was this very casual bird watching that grew into an obsession. Like many that enjoy the birds, it came in stages. As is the usual scenario, we

wanted to be able to identify the birds that we saw in our yard.

First came the purchase of a field guide; it was an old Audubon guide as I recall. Soon we had purchased several guides, none of which completely satisfied our quest to learn. The binoculars we originally purchased were the kind that were available for \$50 or so at Kmart. Humble beginnings of course, but that would soon change. We soon realized that we could learn a lot more from folks who could identify the birds than from studying field guides. We joined The Birmingham



Audubon Society and were soon going on field trips with a whole new set of friends. Among these fine folk were Tom Imhof, Ann Miller, Helen Kittinger, Harriett Wright Findlay, Paul Franklin and a host of others. These were people who could identify all those little brownish birds that we had lumped together as sparrows. This led to the purchase of new and better binoculars and a cheap spotting scope.

The next step down this one-way road occurred when we joined the Alabama Ornithological Society. We were stunned to find ourselves rubbing elbows with some more really great birders as we became regulars at all the annual meetings of AOS. We found ourselves in the company of more world-class birders such as Greg Jackson, Bob and Elberta Reid, Jeff Wilson, and a host of others willing to share their birding skills. On our first trip to Dauphin Island we were privileged to go on a field trip with the dean of Alabama birders, Tom Imhof. As luck would have it, there was a major fallout of spring migrants over on Fort Morgan! From that day forward, there was never a thought of turning back. As I recall, Martha and I saw over 80 new species that weekend. The spring colors were dazzling! Warblers, tanagers, vireos, orioles, thrushes, buntings, grosbeaks, and *hummingbirds* were everywhere.

There were birds on the ground, on cars, and on the roofs of buildings. Every tree, bush, and shrub was literally dripping with beautifully colored birds! We had witnessed a rainbow of color that was almost overwhelming. Tom Imhof had set in motion a series of events that changed our lives forever.

Martha gave up an executive career in the clothing business and learned my business, the electrical trade. We joined forces as co-owners and operators of a tiny electrical fabrication business that I had started. The fact that our business was located at our home allowed us lots of time to watch and study birds. We set aside a part of each day to enjoy the birds and vowed to learn all we could about the lives of these marvelous creatures. We had two or three feeding stations for songbirds and a single hummingbird feeder. Our yard was alive with birds of all kinds, including a lot of hummers at Martha's beautiful flower garden. Occasionally one of the hummers would find our hummingbird feeder and give us a chance to observe it in detail. When we started to search for information regarding hummingbirds, we soon found that there was little in the way of useful books and field guides available.

We discovered that by hanging out more hummer feeders we could attract a lot more of these tiny little demons to our yard. Like a runaway train, this hummer feeding soon got out of hand. During the late summer of 1987 we were maintaining over 25 hummingbird feeders. With swarms of hummingbirds and lots of unanswered questions, Martha asked Tom Imhof to come visit and observe our large hummingbird population. Under the guise of feeding him a home-cooked meal, Martha Gail invited him and his family to supper. While there, he estimated that we had at least 50 hummers at our feeders at one time. He was stunned. During the course of the afternoon, he related that he was suffering from an allergy to bird dandruff. He asked if we would be interested in learning to band birds. Before Tom could change his mind, we had volunteered and a new adventure was born.

With Tom's assistance and recommendations from him, Harriett Wright Findlay, and other friends, we applied for our federal Bird Banding Permit. Since we had this burning desire to learn more about hummingbirds, we asked that our permit allow us to capture and band them. We secured permission from the Bird Banding Laboratory on the promise that Nancy Newfield of Metairie, Louisiana would train us in that very

specialized field. She consented to do so and the BBL issued us our Master Bird Banding Permit that also contained the special permission to capture and band hummingbirds. At the time we received our permit, there were only about 30 other people in the world authorized to band hummingbirds. It was, to say the least, a challenging experience. Only one major hurdle stood in the way of our planned hummingbird research—the BBL had no hummingbird bands to issue to us.

Our initial banding was purely a learning experience! Tom Imhof was to be our banding instructor, but his health problems persisted and we found ourselves going it alone. We decided that to train ourselves we would start with the common species that we found in our yard. Although it was a bit clumsy at first, the art of erecting nets and handling birds came easily. With backup telephone support from Tom, we banded for a couple of years in our yard. We captured both local breeding species as well as those regular migrants that came to central Alabama for the winter.

Tom suggested that we try our banding research at his old banding site at Fort Morgan, Alabama. This location had an established series of banding lanes that had been used for decades. He suggested that we try to concentrate our efforts at Fort Morgan during the middle of April and October. This time frame would allow us to document both inbound migrant birds from the tropics and departing birds as they prepared to lift off for Central and South America. It was a great plan.

Our initial efforts consisted of only a half dozen nets, poorly placed in most instances. Our “banding station” was a folding card table and our banding manual from the Bird Banding Laboratory. With little training under our belt and even less experience with migrant birds, we were less than impressive as we attempted to expand our banding efforts. We found that we could catch birds, but did not immediately know all of the species in hand. With the help of a stack of field guides and the banding manual, we muddled through that first four-day spring session. We vowed to be better banders before the next session in October.

By the following October we were much better prepared with better equipment and more written materials to aid the in-hand identification process. The banding session was extended to cover one full week. We were successful in banding a wide variety of species and our numbers of banded birds

increased dramatically. As I recall, during that first fall session we netted almost a hundred birds. Among those were some species that neither Martha nor I had ever seen before. It was an exciting new world, filled with beauty beyond belief and something new every day. There was no turning back. We decided to split the banding session into two locations. That next spring we did some banding in the Shell Mound area as well as the Sanctuary on Dauphin Island.

We found our banding presence on Dauphin Island was plagued by people problems and the horror of stray cats killing birds in the nets. Our net lanes were in close proximity to walking trails and residential areas. It became apparent that the area was a bit too crowded to safely handle the birds. Again, Tom came to our rescue. He suggested that we consider moving back across Mobile Bay and set up our permanent site in the Stable Area at Fort Morgan. With his recommendation in hand, we contacted the officials of the Alabama Historical Commission and were able to get permission to band at that location. Our Fort Morgan Bird Banding Station was officially opened that next April.

It was a wonderful location, with many established banding lanes and almost no problems with foot traffic or feral cats. We struggled at first to learn the flight and foraging patterns of the migrants that traveled through this tiny Maritime forest. The long trails of the Stable area were overgrown and contained a road that was used by local fishermen to reach the sea wall that faced Mobile Bay. We spent much time judiciously trimming the vines and overhanging limbs that extend into the banding lanes. With the cooperation of the Fort personnel, we were able to work with the fishermen and shared their access road. During that first Fort Morgan session we decided that our banding site should be a dual-purpose operation. The first priority was to safely band and document as many birds as possible; the second priority was to make it a very open and public operation.

We invited the public to attend our sessions. This included erecting handwritten signs on the roadside inviting people to visit. The purchase of a small tent to replace our old lightweight “dining fly” shelter soon followed. Martha added plywood to make a floor for our open-sided tent. We found ourselves spending our retirement savings and we were still a dozen years away from retirement. During this same period, we expanded our hummingbird banding and research outside Alabama. We

requested and obtained permission to capture and band hummingbirds in Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee. We watched our savings shrink as our bird banding operation grew. The next few years were filled with mixed emotions as the public became an important part of our research, and the "poor house" bore down on us like a runaway train.

We began doing talks and seminars over a five-state area. These slide presentations/seminars were the main method of locating rare wintering hummingbird species. Martha proposed that we consider applying for a non-profit status from the Internal Revenue Service. She suggested that this would allow supporters of our work to make tax-deductible donations to assist in funding our work. *A businesswoman for a life partner is a good thing.* We immediately started to build a mailing list that would be used to launch the project. Through a system that Martha devised, we purchased and then gave door prizes at all our seminars. We asked those that attended our programs to fill out a registration card that was to be used in the door prize drawings. Over the next four years these registration cards were collected and were to be the launching platform for our new non-profit organization. The Hummer/Bird Study Group, Inc. was granted non-profit status in 1993/1994.

Duane and Donna Berger, our son-in law and daughter, had converted many hundreds of registration cards into a mailing list. Still using personal money to initiate the offering, we mailed out our first brochures soliciting membership. The initial response was very rewarding. In less than a year we had over 300 dues-paying members. During this same period we had been joined by several volunteers that we trained in the art

of bird banding. These volunteers allowed Martha and me more time to share the banding experience with the hundreds of guests that visited our Fort Morgan station. Our friends in the birding community became willing partners as they spread the word about our banding site and our non-profit organization.

The Bird Banding Laboratory considers our Fort Morgan Bird Banding Station to be a model for future banding stations nationwide. It currently has some 5000 adult guests annually and each year will host over 600 students as part of their classroom assignments. As Partners in Education with local school systems, we are privileged to share not only the wonders of the birds, but also the message of conserving their rapidly disappearing habitat. This work with children and the public may in fact be the most important work that we do.

Since that very first day, our non-profit organization has given us the opportunity to expand our avian research projects. With the help of the public and our members, we are now authorized to capture and band birds in some 20-plus states. Our research has resulted in the discovery and documentation of over 50 first state record birds in the eastern U.S. We have been privileged to train over 25 new banders, including several who are now Master Banders. Our trainees have included professional ornithologists who are currently working in Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Puerto Rico, Trinidad/Tobago, and Venezuela.

The Hummer/Bird Study Group, Inc. has over 1700 members in over 40 states and five countries. Martha and I continue to be blessed with good birds and, most of all, good friends.

A HISTORY OF AOS AND CONSERVATION

By Robert R. Reid, Jr.



HE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY WAS founded in May, 1952, by Blanche Evans Dean, Alabama's most prolific writer of natural history books, including *TREES AND SHRUBS IN THE HEART OF DIXIE* and *WILDFLOWERS OF ALABAMA*. She also was a leading conservationist in establishing nature camps and

was in the forefront of seeking to call the attention of government officials to matters affecting the environment. It was only natural, then, that AOS would be a conservation organization, particularly for the conservation of birds and other wildlife. We have, therefore, over the past half-century attempted to make those views known on public issues. They, of course,

include protection of sensitive species of birds and other wildlife, protection of their major habitats such as wetlands, beaches, and forests, and related issues of environmental quality. It would unduly lengthen this article to attempt to catalogue all the issues on which AOS has expressed its views, but some reference to the major ones or high points will show where we have been and where we hope the conservation movement will grow in the future. Some of those key issues were:

(1) *Issues Affecting the Gulf Coast* – As everyone knows or ought to know, Dauphin Island is a barrier island that is a key migration point for neotropical migrants. It is also, with other marshlands along Alabama's short Gulf Coast, a key habitat for water birds, shorebirds, fish, shellfish, and all aquatic organisms that form the base of the coastal food chain and support our seafood and tourist industries. One of the earliest and most significant efforts was stopping the proposals for dredging and filling of the Point Isabel Marsh (now commonly called the Airport Marsh) and Little Dauphin Island. Those proposals would have destroyed 380 acres of salt marsh, the most productive marine ecosystem in the Gulf, and caused filling of 615 acres of open water. Today, this would probably seem unthinkable, but it was a stark reality then. The proposals were defeated by a coalition of seafood and conservation interests, including AOS, that was led by Nancy Garrett and Alicia Linzey of the Mobile Bay Audubon Society. Today, Little Dauphin Island is part of the Bon Secour Wildlife Refuge, but vigilance is still necessary to protect the productive Point Isabel Marsh.

AOS, of course, supported creation of the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. A like proposal for dredge and fill operations at Little Point Clear in Baldwin County was defeated through a similar coalition led by Myrt Jones of Mobile Bay Audubon. Little Point Clear, which harbors a diverse collection of birds, plants, and other wildlife, is now part of that refuge. There always seem to be threats of development of pristine coastal areas. Fort Morgan, on the other side of Mobile Bay from Dauphin Island, is no exception, but another coalition led by Greg Jackson, John Porter, and others fought off attempts several years ago to place commercial developments on parts of Fort Morgan. We understand that battle is not yet entirely over, since some similar efforts recently have been considered but not yet formally proposed.

We should not leave Dauphin Island without reference to the so-called "West End," the 8 miles of sand spit extending toward Mississippi. AOS and others first advocated that the West End should be made a part of the Gulf Islands National Seashore, and that would be most appropriate. It has then urged that it be acquired by government entities, particularly the Alabama Forever Wild Land Trust, with the westernmost 6-7 miles as a wildlife sanctuary and the remaining 1-2 miles as a public beach with bathhouses only. Those would be the most appropriate uses for this narrow strip of land that has been overwashed by several hurricanes and tropical storms.

We also should mention that AOS has written in support of beach nourishment on the southeast and south portions of the island from sand dredged out of the Mobile Ship Channel. The obvious need for this comes from the fact that the ship channel is intercepting the littoral drift of sand from east to west that would otherwise naturally nourish those areas. Studies by the Friends of the Dauphin Island Audubon Sanctuary, with the able help of Paul Kerlinger, have shown that wildlife including bird-related tourism is worth around \$7 million per year for Dauphin Island and its natural assets attract over 10,000 persons. High-rises, however, are hazards for migratory birds and, therefore, we have urged holding the height of high-rises on Dauphin Island to around tree height or a little more, i.e., five stories. We have recommended the same on the Fort Morgan Peninsula but, obviously, without much success so far. It is clear, however, from the evidence we have, that up to 150 and maybe more birds can be killed by striking a single high-rise complex in a single peak migration night.

One of the most important issues for habitat protection on the coast was the setting aside of an almost-600-acre maritime forest and wetland tract of property owned by the City of Orange Beach adjacent to Gulf State Park. This was the subject of excellent news coverage by Bill Finch of the *Mobile Register*, and its leading and longtime advocate was Joy Morrill, an expert biologist living in Orange Beach. Because of the incredibly diverse and unique acreage of this tract, the overall "highest and best use" was obviously as a wildlife and nature preserve, and AOS set forth several alternatives for preserving it as a natural asset for Orange Beach and the entire coast. Although some other uses had been suggested, they were

neither wetland-dependent nor maritime forest-dependent, and the conservation position prevailed.

Coastal areas have more than their share of endangered species, as might be expected. AOS has continually urged protection of the endangered Alabama and Perdido Key Beach Mice. In 2000, we commented on designation by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service of critical habitat for the threatened and endangered Piping Plover, urging inclusion of additional areas of critical habitat and designation of the Gulf Coast wintering population as endangered and not merely threatened. Since the Snowy Plover has fewer breeding pairs than the Piping (a little over 300 versus 2800, although the Piping's Great Lakes population is practically extinct), we proposed listing of the Snowy Plover under the Endangered Species Act. There are common threats to both species and a definite need to facilitate consultation among the several agencies and others who are involved in actions affecting the beaches and dune systems along the Gulf Coast. There is a great loss of beach habitat on the Gulf Coast for these shorebirds, and the Piping Plover has also lost much habitat on the Atlantic Coast (where the Snowy is not found).

Dredge and fill operations in marshlands are almost always detrimental to productive habitat. Another case was the proposal by the Corps to fill in Pinto Pass near the Battleship Alabama at Mobile. That proposal was successfully fought off by the Mobile Bay Audubon Society, particularly through the work of Myrt Jones. AOS joined in that effort, and there now is a wildlife observation platform and tower at Pinto Pass that overlooks this most productive aquatic area. Deposition of spoil on beaches is often not harmful, but there are instances to the contrary. One is the large spoil mound that had been recently built up on the east point of Perdido Pass, which is part of Gulf State Park. The loose sand blew over into Perdido Key Beach Mouse habitat, and the great sand pile that was built up obliterated both the tidal pools that formerly served as habitat for shorebirds and the beach frontage that was inhabited by the Snowy Plover. AOS and others have urged that that location be withdrawn as a spoil disposal area, particularly since the beach developments just west badly need beach nourishment.

(2) *Forever Wild* – As an overriding consideration, AOS joined with other public interests in backing the consortium

strongly promoting adoption of the Forever Wild Constitutional Amendment, which was approved by almost 85% of the electorate in 1986. It provides for a fund created from interest (and only from interest) from the oil and gas revenues received by the State of Alabama to be used for the acquisition of significant natural areas. Acquisitions are approved by a board, which is unique in having four fixed slots to be filled by biologists. This, of course, works toward the cost-effectiveness of expenditure of these public monies. The reader will be well aware of how significant acquisitions have been made for additions to state parks, wildlife management areas and, most notably, acquisition of acreage in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. AOS, among others, also sought the successful approval of listing the Tensaw River as an Outstanding Natural Resource Water (or Outstanding Alabama Water) in the state.

Even before Forever Wild, these organizations were active in trying to protect the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. We opposed the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, but lost—and so did the environment and the taxpayers to the tune of \$2 billion. However, we were successful in having the Tenn-Tom Wildlife Mitigation Plan adopted and funded, and a large portion of the acreage acquired was in the Delta. Previously, we sought, as mitigation for destruction of wetlands along Lightwood Knot Creek in Covington County, the mitigation acreage required by the Corps under leadership of Magi Shapiro, an expert wildlife biologist. That mitigation included a 5000-acre addition to the Bon Secour NWR and setting aside 50,000 acres in the Delta. As a result, the state now has under public control over 100,000 acres of the 185,000-acre Delta, which, because of its diversity, some have referred to as the Amazon Rain Forest of Alabama.

(3) *Tennessee Valley* – One of the biggest threats to the environment in the Tennessee Valley has been to fight off encroachments on Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. These were particularly numerous in the 1970s and 1980s, but the conservation interests won most, except that we were unable to convince the highway planners to locate Interstate 65 away from the migratory goose habitat at Garth Slough. Subsequent developments have indicated that the environmental position would have been preferable by routing I-65 closer to Huntsville. Although these threats seem to be decreasing, AOS had to join with others to defeat the cutting of a barge canal across

the eastern end of that refuge for a proposed industrial park. Conservationists urged that the integrity of the refuge be preserved and that an alternate location, which was available, be used for that or any other development.

AOS led the effort to defeat siting a chemical facility on TVA lands leased to the State Department of Conservation for the Mallard-Fox Creek Wildlife Management Area. We were successful in that endeavor when the Carter administration required an environmental impact statement. However, the lands had been under only a 60-day license, and TVA withdrew around 25% of the WMA for an industrial park. Several industries have located there, but no heavy chemical plants. One particular disadvantage of chemical plants is the spillage that can occur when barges are loaded or unloaded with toxic chemicals that will adversely impact the downstream aquatic areas.

Now, TVA is considering replacing the 60-day licenses with 30-year leases, which will give the Conservation Department infinitely better ability to invest in management of these areas. Those areas include the Mud Creek and Crow Creek Wildlife Management Areas in Jackson County (which is where the hacking of many of the Bald Eagles now in Alabama took place) and Seven-Mile Island in Lauderdale County. The leases, which will cover approximately 25,000 acres, will have multiple benefits—game and fish enhancement, public recreation, and protection of the Tennessee River watershed, where any amount of protection against in-stream siltation, sediment runoff, and other pollutants would be helpful to TVA, the Conservation Department, and any riparian owners downstream along the river. AOS, among others, has commented in favor of this long-term arrangement, and we have been advised by the Conservation Department that it appreciates “all the work and support AOS has provided for [the Department] over the years.”

(4) *North and Central Alabama* — The major conservation achievement in that part of the state was the setting aside in 1975 of around 12,500 acres in the Bankhead National Forest as the original Sipsey Wilderness; this was part of the original Eastern Wilderness Act for which major credit is due Mary and Bob Burks and Charles Prigmore, Mary being leader of that Wilderness Coalition. AOS had been asked to undertake the ornithological survey for the wilderness and did so under the direction of Tom Imhof. Teams were

assigned areas to cover during all four seasons. We had some very interesting and most enjoyable times, including fall and spring campouts featuring Walter Coxe’s “mouth-watering roast beef emu” that permitted us to arrive early to census the bird life. There were also winter surveys in which some were conducted in a six-inch snowfall that placed a hush on the forest and others when we had to have help from the citizens of Rabbittown to pull out our car when it slid off a soft shoulder into a ditch. The conservation community (including AOS) also supported the successful effort under leadership of John Randolph to add another 25,500 acres as the Sipsey Addition in 1988.

AOS and others supported the Roadless Areas Initiative for the National Forests throughout the country. This initiative was adopted, but has recently been put under attack. The initiative includes a prohibition on logging, mining, and other extractive pursuits. It should be noted that it is not cost-effective to log those roadless areas since, if it were, they would have been logged long before. Thus, a by-product of that conservation effort is saving funds lost through timber sales that do not bring a net revenue to the federal treasury. We must have written five times in support of this initiative and understand that the government has received more comments and more favorable ones on this one proposal than ever on any other.

In addition, AOS has joined others in supporting protection of the Cahaba River that is significant in being the longest free-flowing river in Alabama and having one of the largest populations of endangered species in the country. AOS had also done an ornithological survey for the Cahaba and joined others in advocating Outstanding Natural Resource Water (or Outstanding Alabama Water) status for Coosa County’s Hatchet Creek, one of the few homes of the imperiled Southern Walleye, Tumatoma Snail, and Fine-lined Pocketbook Mussel in the state.

We also have supported preservation of the forested part of Fort McClellan in Calhoun County as the Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge as part of the closure of that military base. The area contains much habitat for that now rare Longleaf Pine and the decreasing eastern deciduous hardwoods. Use as a wildlife refuge would also be an economic benefit to the region and an educational and

scientific resource available to secondary schools and institutions of higher learning. We have been hoping to have set aside around 12,000 acres; however, it looks as if the acreage will now be only between 8,000-10,000 acres, which would be a "plus" but not as cost-effective a use of the forested part of the Fort.

Wetlands are not as numerous in mountain regions. For that reason, they are individually more important because there are few in their area. Thus, AOS has tried to stand with others to preserve those wetlands. Illustrative is the swamp near the Shelby County Airport that was requested to be drained and filled for a proposed additional runway. This would have required filling of almost 80 acres of a mature Tupelo Gum swamp, and the permit was denied. There are often problems with additional airport runways. AOS has stood with others recently to oppose the expansion of the Birmingham Airport through an additional runway that would require filling of East Lake, a habitat for migratory waterfowl near the center of the Birmingham metropolitan area and an historic park for the Birmingham metro area. The proposal has been currently withdrawn, but it is not dead since an additional parallel runway, which could eliminate East Lake, is still under consideration for future planning.

(5) *Other Endangered Species* – The first that comes to mind would be the long-standing efforts by conservation interests, within and without the government, to preserve habitat for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. AOS with others has consistently advocated maintenance, on public and private lands, of timber stands with 50-80 sq. ft. of basal area per acre. This provides both the park-like stands needed for the woodpecker *and* better quality merchantable timber *plus* more resistance to insect infestations like those from the Southern Pine Beetle. There also need to be preserved a sufficiently large number of trees in a rotation age of at least 80 years to provide present and future nesting sites.

Many endangered species exist below the surface of the waters. AOS joined others in supporting the recent listing as endangered the Vermilion Darter, which inhabits only four pools in Turkey Creek in Jefferson County. It is a lovely little fish, but is sorely endangered from sedimentation and nonpoint source water pollution. We also supported listing of the Alabama Sturgeon, which is probably the most endan-

gered fish in North America. It too is damaged by sedimentation and nonpoint source water pollution, which is harmful to all gill-breathing organisms and especially those who lay their eggs on exposed substrate. The sturgeon has been listed, but it may be too late. The only thing that might save it is construction of fish passage structures around the Claiborne Lock and Dam in the southern part of the Alabama River. That has been a project sought by the Mobile Basin Recovery Coalition as part of its recovery plan for endangered and threatened species in the Mobile Basin. AOS with many others has supported the coalition and its recovery plan, finally approved in 2000 for numerous aquatic species including 39 mussels, snails, turtles, fish, and plants.

We had written opposing delisting of the endangered Peregrine Falcon since that proposal was based on having recovery populations that are only 50% of the previous population of the species. By doing so, the country would be accepting a 50% reduction that would seem unacceptable. Similar considerations were applicable to delisting of the Bald Eagle. It is experiencing a successful recovery, but still there are not any breeding populations on the Gulf Coast and only one known successful nesting in the western part of the Tennessee Valley. AOS has also commented to the Fish & Wildlife Service urging strengthened habitat conservation plans under the Endangered Species Act and the need to designate additional critical habitat for listed species, such as that for the Piping Plover referred to above.

The problems of downstream flooding and sedimentation focus on the practice of stream channelization, which means straightening the natural course of a stream in order to run off water faster, making it much like a drainage ditch. The resultant flooding and sedimentation is injurious to all forms of life, as well as being productive of bank erosion that is sometimes extensive. These adverse effects were first brought to our attention by Tom Atkeson, the long-time manager of Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge and a previous AOS vice-president. Tom gave us great leadership in the conservation and ornithological fields. Now, fortunately, most stream channelization projects have been abandoned and the practice is now rarely employed by government agencies.

Some of the same adverse effects, however, can still be caused by dredging or by dredging and filling (see above). We

have, however, as requested in notices, commented on the in-stream dredging practices of the U. S. Corps of Engineers in the principal rivers in Alabama; the Alabama, the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint system, and the Black Warrior-Tombigbee. We have sought alternatives to over-dredging and to depositing spoil "within banks" since those practices create additional sediment and put it in places where greater downstream sedimentation can occur. In a related matter, we have commented against the introduction in Lake Seminole of Grass Carp (the Asiatic White Amur), which, because of its voracious appetite, destroys the aquatic vegetation needed for a healthy fish population and as food for many waterfowl.

(6) *Overall Environmental Quality*—Relating to the above effects on aquatic resources, AOS, with many others, has written to endorse strongly and recommend the need for setting Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for Alabama's watercourses. Thus, we wrote favoring the proposed phosphorus TMDL for Weiss Lake. The Alabama Department of Environment Management and EPA are far behind in establishing TMDLs and sorely need one for nitrogen in Weiss Lake and TMDLs for all the other lakes in the Coosa, Upper Tallapoosa, Warrior, and Tombigbee River Basins. This is a subject matter of an extensive news article by Mike Bolton in *The Birmingham News* as long ago as July, 1997—and TMDLs have been required since the Clean Water Act Amendments of 1982. EPA is now setting TMDLs for fecal coliform in other Alabama watercourses, but we have a long way to go.

Protection of environmental quality naturally leads to curtailing the use of pesticides and herbicides. Therefore, AOS joined many others to urge banning the use of DDT and later its derivative Mirex, both of which are carcinogenic and reduce the eggshell thickness that prevents hatching of birds' eggs. More recently, we commented to urge EPA to cancel all general uses of the organophosphate pesticide Diazinon and make it "restricted-use" only for any remaining uses. Diazinon is very similar to Dursban, which EPA recently banned for most household uses. Both are biocides and are highly toxic to birds, fish, amphibians, crustaceans, honeybees, and aquatic insects. That should be enough, but Diazinon is also a fetotoxin, an immunotoxin, and a cholinesterase inhibitor that interferes with nerve impulses in the brain. With all that, it would seem that it should hardly be used anywhere. In

submitting our comments, we were guided strongly by analyses of the Rachel Carson Council, which investigates the effect of pesticides on humans and wildlife.

Birds, of course, are involved with hazards placed in their flying space. The most notorious ones are electric-lighted beacons and guy-wires on communications towers. The former once killed 10,000 Lapland Longspurs and other songbirds in one night in west Kansas. As to the guy-wires, they can be avoided as has been done in certain leading jurisdictions in the country. Industry has adapted to the requirements for co-location (more than one communications business using the same tower), reductions in height, and use of appendages that are placed on buildings, billboards, and even water towers. There are even camouflaged towers, some of which look like pine trees with the communications part being the branches at the top! Handling high-rise buildings in migration pathways is not as easy, but certain hazardous sites, such as McCormack Towers in Chicago, have done it by a "lights out" policy during migration seasons. Condominiums may be more difficult, but we have advocated lights out when possible and, when not, dropping of close-mesh nets over the higher stories. Of course, if the buildings weren't high-rises, that is another solution.

We also need to protect the air that the birds and all other creatures breathe. Hence, conservation interests have advocated stronger regulations (and not reducing present controls) on air pollution, much of which in Alabama comes particularly from the gases emitted by older power plants.

AOS has continued to urge stronger regulations in Alabama governing CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations, such as hog farms). We have urged strengthening of the ADEM regulations to require setbacks from water sources like they have for residences and other inhabited buildings, requiring groundwater monitoring, and controlling hydrogen sulfide gas that produces an extremely noxious odor, causes respiratory health problems, reduces property values, and adds to air pollution generally.

AOS has commented on the proposal of the Corps of Engineers to amend its nationwide permit for discharging into nontidal wetlands. This has been a continuing issue, but finally NWP 26, which permitted filling of ten acres of headwater wetlands, was rescinded. Because of the multiple

benefits of wetlands, such as protection against flooding, assimilation of wastes, recharging groundwater, and preservation of wildlife habitat, it seems that any expansion of the permission to destroy wetlands would be contrary to the public interest. We have also commented on the water allocation proposals for the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa Basin. As many in Alabama know, interests in Georgia wish to create additional reservoirs that would limit the amount of water flowing downstream, and that would be detrimental to our aquatic wildlife, hydroelectric power capacity, and other public needs. We hope that, by the time this report is printed, a satisfactory solution that will protect all Alabama interests will have been reached.

(7) *Actions Outside Alabama* – AOS is, of course, interested in environmental quality in Northwest Florida since it is part of the AOS area. It is said, “No man is an island,” and Alabama is not an island either. So AOS has taken positions, when possible, on certain issues arising outside the state.

We opposed both the proposal for the Columbia Dam on the Duck River in Middle Tennessee and its revival. The benefit/cost ratio for the dam would have been only 0.4 to 1.0, which is an extremely negative and unfavorable one! Thus, in addition to adverse effects on the river ecosystem, there would be a loss of monetary resources to the taxpayers. TVA has advised that the dam is no longer being considered and now proposes creation of a “protected river corridor,” which would provide compatible uses for recreation, agriculture, and wildlife habitat, and also return some property to private ownership.

While dams have the beneficial attributes of holding flood waters back, they often, as above, have many undesirable consequences. The four dams on the Lower Snake River in Washington State are very injurious to salmon habitat and cause great maintenance expenses that has resulted in their removal being approved by the Corps of Engineers. AOS and others have, accordingly, advocated their removal.

We commented on the habitat conservation plan for the Headwaters Forest in Northern California. That forest is located in the redwood region, and most was owned by Maxxam Corp. of Houston, which wanted to clearcut the tall trees to pay off the indebtedness created by its leveraged buyout of Pacific Lumber. We advocated greater setback from streams

to protect the California Coho Salmon fishery and other resources, and prohibition of timbering on steep slopes. This was necessary also to protect and provide nesting habitat for the Spotted Owl, a listed species, and the Marbled Murrelet, an imperiled seabird. In addition, AOS had been invited by the U. S. Forest Service to comment on its draft Environmental Impact Statement for management of the Gypsy Moth, which has not yet infested the Southeast, but we need to remain vigilant. We did so by opposing use of broad-spectrum insecticides, but advocating available target-specific fungicides and viruses, plus other biological controls and, if necessary, mass trapping.

(8) *Citizen Science* – From the beginning of the Breeding Bird Survey in Alabama in 1966, AOS has made it an official project. Alabama is now staffing 87 survey routes annually. That is six per degree-block of latitude and longitude, which is more than any state west of New England and the Mid-Atlantic. AOS members have participated in that survey, migration monitoring projects, point-counts in the National Forests, the Audubon Christmas Bird Counts, and other surveys. In the 1970s, under the direction of Tom Imhof, we conducted some quantitative county bird surveys in counties that had not previously been well surveyed. These were done each season for two years, and covered Colbert-Franklin Counties in 1972-1974 and Marshall-Etowah in 1974-1976.

At some of our earlier meetings, under the leadership of Julian Dusi, now Ornithologist Emeritus at Auburn University, we held paper sessions at which members reported on their observations. Examples of the subjects were a reverse spring migration by Fairly Chandler of Magnolia Springs, competition between Little Blue Herons and Cattle Egrets by Julian Dusi, fall migration in Birmingham by Michael Bierly, Barn Owl Food Habits by Eugene Sledge of Montevallo, returns of wintering migrants by Jim and Margaret Robinson of Brownsboro, Grackles catching Shad by Jim Keeler of Montgomery, and eclipse waterfowl summering at East Lake in Birmingham by yours truly [Bob Reid].

As the reader will note, efforts to preserve a quality environment cover a broad spectrum, but likewise the assaults on environmental quality and habitat needed for wildlife seem to cover an even broader spectrum. Thus, all conservationists need to remain alert to protect and preserve our environment

and to oppose the multitude of attacks, some of which might not even be rationally imagined. Our primary interest may be birds, but we are concerned with all aspects of environmental quality and the preservation of habitat. As our national leader, Roger Tory Peterson, had observed, "Birds are a barometer of the health of the environment." Then, we might always be mindful of the admonition of Tom Imhof, our local leader, who stated in the preface to the second edition of *ALABAMA BIRDS* (1976):

Regardless of degree, I think [love] can be summed up as a concern for welfare of another. . . . As we all learn to know, love and appreciate these wild, winged creatures, we will also develop the desire to preserve them and their habitats for all generations to come.

In addition, it is worthwhile to remember the admonition of

the U.S. Supreme Court in *Berman v. Parker*, 348 U.S. 26, 99 L.Ed. 27 (1954):

The concept of the public welfare is broad and inclusive . . . the values it represents are spiritual as well as physical, aesthetic as well as monetary. It is within the power of the legislature to determine that the community should be beautiful as well as healthy, spacious as well as clean, well-balanced as well as carefully patrolled.

And, in the words of President Theodore Roosevelt passed down to us, which are engraved inside the entrance foyer at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City:

That nation behaves well if it treats its natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation, increased and not impaired in value.

— THE DAUPHIN ISLAND BIRD SANCTUARIES — AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

By John F. Porter



THE FRIENDS OF THE DAUPHIN ISLAND AUDUBON Sanctuary, Inc. (FODIAS) grew out of the financial difficulties of the National Audubon Society (NAS) in the early 1990s. After long and dedicated effort by Wilson Gaillard and the Mobile Bird Club, the Sanctuary formally opened in March of 1962. The Sanctuary prospered well with the Dauphin Island Park & Beach Board supported by the Mobile Bird Club. By 1967, Gaillard, by then a member of the Board, grew concerned about the future security of the Sanctuary, particularly protection from the rampant development of the Island. In that year, NAS negotiated a lease with the Park & Beach Board whereby the Society would take over the management and protection of the Sanctuary and adopt it as a member of the NAS nationwide system of wildlife sanctuaries. Gaillard, along with his friend Joe Fredhoff, served as Wardens of the Sanctuary. The

Mobile Bird Club covered most of the expenses. The inclusion of the Dauphin Island Audubon Bird Sanctuary in the nationwide system was noteworthy as it was the only refuge not owned by NAS. The lease was for ten years and the fee was nominal.

The lease was renewed in 1977 with the proviso that it would be automatically extended for an additional ten years if there were no action taken to the contrary. This turned out to be the case so that the lease was rolled over in 1987 for an additional ten years. During this time, the Mobile Bird Club gradually faded away and the Mobile Bay Audubon Society came into being. As is often the case, the original support for the Sanctuary lost some of its enthusiasm. According to NAS correspondence, they had always expected a strong local support and indeed tried to get the local group to assume full responsibility for the Sanctuary. In 1986 NAS, SE Region,

committed some \$5000 in the annual budget for operations and lease fee. This included including services by a part time warden (Don Bland), maintenance, and the lease fee.

In July 1992, at the summer meeting of the Alabama Audubon Council, Larry Thompson, SE Regional VP, NAS delivered the word that, due to budgetary constraints, NAS would not be able to provide any support for the remaining four and a half years of the lease period. The Council realized that there was an immediate need for meeting the lease payment in January 1993, and the long-term need for a more permanent solution to the funding and operation of the Sanctuary. The situation was summarized as follows (extracted from minutes of the meeting):

The total annual expense was estimated to be:

Lease of 164 A from DI Park & Beach Board: \$500.00
 Maintenance by DI P&BB: \$1,000.00
 Insurance: \$160.00
 Salary to Warden, Don Bland: \$3,600.00
 Total: \$5,260.00

After considerable discussion the following points were agreed upon:

a. There was a need for a quick fix, to stabilize the Sanctuary in the short term. Alabama Audubon Council agreed to provide interim financial support for the continued operation of the Sanctuary.

b. For the long term, a new, single-purpose organization was needed to assure permanent support for preservation, management, and development of the sanctuary.

Elberta Reid, President of the Alabama Audubon Council, asked the following to join her in serving on an ad hoc committee to meet these needs: Venetia Friend, Minnie Nonkes, Laura Bailey, Jackie Chastain, John Porter, and Jim Meade (when he returns from Maine).

The committee met at the Sea Lab in September with George Crozier and John Dindo. John Porter was chosen to chair the meeting. George reviewed past suggestions including an earlier proposal for a management plan for Coastal Alabama Bird Sanctuary, to include the Sanctuary, Point aux Pins,

Cat Island, with management support for Bon Secour NWR and Weeks Bay Estuarine Reserve, and including the possibility of the West End of Dauphin Island as a Forever Wild acquisition. He also introduced the East End Management Plan for the Island developed by the Economic Development Institute at Auburn University. The Sea Lab was very interested in joining in our efforts to protect the Sanctuary and agreed to assume the mowing and other maintenance chores for the balance of the year, replace the entry sign, and begin some interpretive signs.

The committee further concluded that for the long range protection of the Sanctuary a new entity: "The Friends of the Dauphin Island Audubon Sanctuary" or similarly styled organization should be created. The purpose of this non-profit, tax-exempt corporation would be to (1) Raise the funds necessary to assure continuation of the lease payments and other necessary costs for the operation and development of the Sanctuary, and (2) Provide the necessary policy guidance for the operation of the Sanctuary. It was suggested that Bob Reid be asked to draft the articles of incorporation.

The Alabama Audubon Council meeting at Lake Eufaula on December 5, 1992 formally adopted the establishment of the Friends of the Dauphin Island Audubon Sanctuary as a private non-profit corporation. Bob Reid prepared the articles of incorporation which were approved by the Alabama Secretary of State and recorded in the Mobile County Probate Judge's Office on March 5, 1993. Initial officers were John Porter, President; Bill Summerour, Vice President, Conservation; Bob Sargent, Assistant Vice President for Conservation; Sharon Hudgins, Secretary; and Charles Kennedy, Treasurer; with Charlie Bailey, Counsel and Registered Agent. Initial Board members were Laurie Bailey, Ann Delchamps, Mary Floyd, Dan Holliman, Sharon Hudgins, Jim Meade, Minnie Nonkes, John Porter, and Elberta Reid.

The remaining years of the lease were productive and support of the Friends was strong and membership grew. A grant from the Houston Audubon Society paid in part for the second year's lease fee and the publication of our first brochure. The Sanctuary joined with the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and became a site partner, also subscribing as a non-governmental organization member of Partners in Flight. The relationship with the Sea Lab worked well and they improved

the signage, securing a grant from the Legacy Foundation for interpretive signs identifying the flora along the trails. In 1996, thanks to the hard work of Dan Holliman and Bill Summerour, a five-year plan was developed and adopted for the management of the Sanctuary. In 1996 a boardwalk for handicapped access was built from the parking lot to the lake with a grant from Coastal Programs. As a joint venture with the Park & Beach Board, negotiations for a renewal of the lease between the Park & Beach Board and NAS were initiated, with the understanding that the Friends would continue to assume all the responsibilities of operation and management of the Sanctuary under a new lease.

Included in the Management Plan was a schedule for controlled burns of the westernmost portion of the Sanctuary. Efforts to initiate this part of the plan were met with strong resistance, mostly from those who did not understand the benefits of fire management, or from neighbors along Audubon Street who were fearful for their properties. The Alabama Forestry Commission had evaluated the possibility of a burn and concluded that the fuel load was too high and the risk too great for them to do a burn. Then, ironically, in February of 1997 a wildfire broke out in the very area that had been proposed for controlled burning. This wildfire consumed some 20-25 acres before the DI Fire-Rescue Department, with help from Fowl River and Alabama Port and the Forestry Commission, brought it under control. Interestingly, most of the opposition to controlled burns disappeared after the wildfire.

Just before the 1997 fall AOS meeting, survey lanes in the eastern end of the Sanctuary appeared. Queries of the Park & Beach Board produced the response that they were evaluating options for expanding the Campground, and that the surveyed portion, some 18 acres on the east end, including the Banding Area were under consideration. Needless to say, this led to an outpouring of opposition at the AOS meeting. Objections to the proposal came from the entire Southeast as well as from across the nation, a host of letters written to the Park & Beach Board, the Mobile County Commission, and a few even to the Governor. There followed several months of discussions, sometimes heated, and negotiations between the FODIAS Board and the Park & Beach Board. During this period the leadership of the Park & Beach Board changed,

George Waldron succeeding Betty Gebesen as chairman. The result of negotiations was that the Park & Beach Board agreed to seek another means of expanding the campground, committed to the continuation of the entire 164 acres as a bird sanctuary, and resumed responsibility for the management and operation of the Sanctuary. The Board further expressed their intent to make it one of the better Sanctuaries in the country. They also expressed the desire for the Friends to continue its supporting role.

Early on in this new relationship, Mr. Waldron appointed a joint Sanctuary Advisory Committee that meets regularly, generally guiding the operations of the Sanctuary. Since that date, the symbiosis has produced a far better Sanctuary than could have been achieved by either of the organizations alone. Together we initiated an exotic species control program, an effort to control the two predominant invasive species in the Sanctuary, Cogongrass and Popcorn trees.

Cogongrass is a middle-eastern import, spreading mostly by rhizomes, choking out native species as it spreads. Aside from this undesirable feature it is highly flammable, even when green, providing for increased burning rates when wildfires erupt. Growth patterns on the Island and elsewhere suggest that it was probably brought to the Island by the machines the county used for clearing out the ditches. The Cogongrass project included a controlled burn of the area west of Gaillard Lake by the Alabama Forestry Commission in February of 1999. The area burned was the same as had been burned in the wildfire using the same fire breaks created in the wildfire fight. The small triangle between the two trails from the Parking lot to the Banding Area also was burned at that time. The burn was followed by an application of Roundup over the entire area in June of 1999 by a professional forester, followed up with a second spraying in October to catch the spots that were missed. As late as summer of 2001, only small patches of Cogongrass were coming back. It will probably be necessary to repeat the burn/spraying schedule on a five-year basis.

The Popcorn tree eradication process has not been so successful. The first effort was in January of 1996, when the area in front of the Swamp Overlook, about an acre and a half, was cleared by hand. A group of volunteers from the Friends,

Park & Beach Board, and the Town had at it with chain saws, weed whackers, and axes. The Town furnished a chipper for all the cuttings. We did a great job on all the Popcorns that could be identified in January. The stumps were treated with 2-4-D in February and March. All would seem to be progressing well until spring arrived and the millions of Popcorn seeds on the ground began sprouting . . . thicker than ever! Fire management has been tried in some places as a control but the Forestry Commission vetoed that idea, thought the peat was too thick, too dry and would likely continue burning for a long time. The next fall we tried Roundup injection with using a cartridge type injector, with no success. All that did was to brown the leaves on the outer extremities! We now have another type herbicide to try, but the situation only continues to worsen, accelerating the succession of the swamp into bottomland. In the spring of 2000, we noted that there was an area of the lowest part of the swamp that died down, very uniformly following the contours of the ground. The only reasonable explanation that we could come up with was that the overwash from Hurricane Georges finally made its way into this bottomland and the salinity killed the vegetation, much as had happened after Frederic. Perhaps we might try flooding it again, without the benefit of a hurricane.

With the great success of the new arrangement with the Park & Beach Board, the Friends began concentration on other elements of the 1996 Management Plan, notably the acquisition of additional threatened wetlands and other critical habitat. The plan specifically mentioned the Goat Trees and the Tupelo Gum Swamp, that area between Iberville and Hernando south of Bienville Blvd, with many wet lots, mostly gum swamp (before the drought, hopefully to be once again). In the spring of 1999, the Board established a separate Land Acquisition Account with the \$4000 already received from generous donors. Greg Harber hurriedly drafted a pre-proposal to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation just before Thanksgiving 1999. It was selected for application of a much more detailed formal proposal by the end of the Year! In it, the Friends asked for a total of \$300,000: \$200,000 from local match or Challenge as NFWF puts it, and \$100,000 match from NFWF. Our targets for this grant proposal were the four

lots of the Goat Trees, four lots adjacent to the west side of the Shell Mounds Park, two of which had recently been put on the market, and the lot next to the Sanctuary entrance for parking lot expansion and an exit road.

As of November 2001, the Friends have acquired the four lots next to the Shell Mounds, the lot next to the Sanctuary entrance where the new exit road has been completed and the parking lot expanded. We also acquired two prime residential lots as part of a package deal for two of the Shell Mound lots. These will be used for bartering purposes or sold as future opportunities open up. The four lots comprising the Goat Tree area have been the most problematical. But on February 15, 2002, we purchased "The Goat Tree" lot from the gentleman who had owned it for almost 50 years! The Friends have received an extension of the original grant allowing time for further work on the three remaining Goat Tree lots.

Fall 2000 saw the addition to the habitat protection campaign of the Tupelo Gum Swamp. Greg Harber came through again with a new proposal to NFWF for Phase II of the Friends Habitat Protection Campaign. However, this time The Nature Conservancy, Wings of the Americas program, joined with the Friends. As a result, in this second phase, we have a \$275,000 campaign chest for the 20 lots comprising the Tupelo Gum Swamp, \$200,000 from locally generated challenge funds and \$75,000 from NFWF matching funds with the full support of Wings. Charles Duncan, now with TNC, Wings, well known to many in AOS, has been particularly dedicated to our effort. As of this writing, we have acquired the initial three lots for the Tupelo Gum Swamp, starting at the southernmost portion. In return for our purchase of their prime residential, dry lot on the southeast corner of the area, Ralph and Cathy Havard donated their adjacent wet lot. We have since purchased the lot adjacent to their wet lot on the north. These lots are between Hunley and Itasca.

With the strong and active support of The Nature Conservancy, the Friends are launching an extended habitat protection campaign, aimed at all the wetlands on the Island and ultimately including the West End. With this expanded role the Friends' activities are becoming more and more the activities of the "The Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries."

THROUGH THE EYE OF A CAMERA

By Helen Kittinger



WHEN DAN HOLLIMAN ASKED ME TO WRITE something about the history of AOS and my involvement as President, as well as my interest in photography, I had no idea where to begin. So, I will start at the beginning.

Since I was raised on a poultry farm in Virginia, it was natural that I grew up being interested in birds. When I was very young, my aunt would sit beside me in a wide windowsill, from where I could watch birds eating bread crumbs under a big cedar tree just outside the window. When I was twelve years old, my cousin, who was my Sunday School teacher, also encouraged me by giving me a *Bird Guide* by Coarser A. Reed (which I still have).

After moving to Birmingham in 1956 with my family, a particular bird got me involved in the Birmingham Audubon Society and AOS. On March 22, 1962, several Evening Grosbeaks showed up on our feeder in Vestavia Forest. I had never seen them before, but I knew they were unusual in Alabama. I phoned Rusty Goetz, whom I had met in the Shades Valley Camera Club, because I knew he was a member of the Audubon Society. He and his wife, Millie, came to our home to see the Evening Grosbeaks.

Millie told me about Blanche Dean's Nature Camp and suggested that I take my boys. That summer we went to Cheaha State Park to Nature Camp. It was there that I met Dan Holliman. Dan introduced me and the other attendees to the word "ecology." We were so inspired by the experience that we joined Birmingham Audubon that September. We started attending programs, field trips, and wildlife films. A few years later, I learned about AOS and joined.

My first field trip to Dauphin Island was a wonderful Spring "fallout." It was so incredible! The ground looked like someone had spilled an Easter basket of colored eggs, with Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo Buntings, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Even warblers were on the ground at the Shell Mound. These, mixed with the beautiful blue Spiderwort, Red Salvia, and orange Lantana was truly a picture I will never forget.

I progressed through the offices of AOS. When Bob Reid was President, he asked me to be Secretary. You don't say "no" to Bob, so I was his Secretary. The year I was elected Vice President, I missed the Board meeting because there was a Lawrence's Warbler at the banding area in the Sanctuary—that was where I was. Later, I served as President of AOS in 1968-69. That was a real challenge—especially trying to arrange meetings on Dauphin Island while living in Birmingham. (I didn't have John and Jackie Porter to help.)

I remember one trip that was a real disaster. We had planned to meet at Le Moyne's restaurant for an informal dinner on Friday night, as we had been doing for several years. When we arrived, the restaurant was closed, so we moved on to another restaurant. I had arranged for Oliver Austin, Jr., author of *BIRDS OF THE WORLD*, to be our guest speaker on Saturday night. He and his wife had planned to meet us at the restaurant Friday. They arrived to find no one there. They were not happy and didn't let me forget it. At that time, we met at the Civic Center on Dauphin Island and had a delicious seafood dinner prepared by the civic groups on the island (all you could eat for \$3.00—including tax and tip!)

One of my goals during my reign as President was to start the AOS Slide Collection. The collection contained two sets—the Scientific Set and the Educational Set. The Scientific Set was to verify each species seen in Alabama, making it unnecessary to collect specimens, as had been the case previously.

I remember one incident in particular. Jack Carusos and I discovered a Red Phalarope on Rutherford Lake on October 20, 1968, which was the second record for Alabama, and the first since 1924. Tom Imhof wanted to collect that bird. We wouldn't tell him where it was until he promised to leave his gun at home. Lots of birders got to see and photograph the phalarope. My own photograph of the Red Phalarope was published in *Alabama Birdlife* and is also part of the Slide Collection. At the end of the first year, the Scientific Set contained 140 slides, each taken in Alabama, substantiating the presence of 136 species. Some nests, eggs, and young

also were included in this set to verify breeding in the state.

The Educational Set of slides was loaned to responsible persons to help teach children or give programs to promote interest in birds. During the first year, this set contained 122 slides. In addition, we sold hundreds of duplicate slides to schools and colleges. I was custodian of the collection for many years. Committee members had many enjoyable sessions for the purpose of selecting the best slide of each species. Noted contributors included Fairly Chandler, Perry Covington, Lucy Duncan, Helen Kittinger, and Harriett and

John Findlay. Bob Reid was the first chairman of the Committee.

Serving as President of AOS was a memorable experience for me. For over 30 years, I have looked forward to the Spring, Fall, and Winter meetings. I have made a lot of good friends and met many influential people through the organization. I've watched the membership of AOS increase and the organization prosper through 35 of its first 50 years. I hope the next 50 years of AOS will be as influential in other people's lives as it has been in mine.

THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA CONNECTION

By Robert A. and Lucy Duncan



ONE LOOK AT THE MAP TELLS YOU THAT FLORIDA'S western panhandle is *really* Alabama. In fact, the coastal plain geography, the flora, the fauna, and the people are more closely related to southern Alabama than to the Disneyland of central Florida or the tropical communities of southern Florida. This proximity has led NW Floridians into their Alabama "backyard" for both research and birding excursions. Many are AOS members who have compiled Alabama Christmas Bird Counts, served on the Alabama Bird Records Committee (ABRC), led field trips, coordinated joint AOS-FOS meetings, set up the AOS web site, contributed to *Alabama Birdlife*, and served on the Board of Directors.

Henry M. Stevenson was one of the ornithologists whose fieldwork through Alabama and Florida yielded significant findings. In April 1936 Henry and H. E. Wheeler found a singing male Bachman's Warbler in Birmingham. In May 1937 they found three young in a nest in Moody Swamp near Tuscaloosa, providing one of only two breeding records for Alabama of this now extinct species. Stevenson also conducted significant research with Boat-tailed and Common Grackles in coastal Alabama and north Florida, establishing that these two species cannot readily coexist (Imhof 1976).

Henry used to stay with us on his research trips to our neck o' the woods here in NW Florida. He usually arrived late

in the afternoon, and sometimes after saying "Oh no, I couldn't possibly," would sit down to dinner with us. (I think our food always got the best praying-over when he was here.) One Friday when we expected him to arrive about dusk, Bob and I nailed a piece of driftwood shaped like a small nighthawk atop a fence post so that it would be silhouetted in front of Pensacola Bay. Well, Henry was here about two minutes and not even through with the pleasantries of greetings when he whipped up his binoculars, got very quiet, and stared for what seemed like deadly still moments. His shoulders were tensed and he said, "It looks too small." But just as quickly the shoulders relaxed, and we knew the jig was up. His smile said we were forgiven, and we all had a good chuckle. He was, without a doubt, one of the finest of Southern gentlemen and field ornithologists. Bob and I learned a lot from him. One thing Henry told us when we were beginning birders was that a "birder's reputation starts at zero and goes backwards from there." In that statement is couched both warning and good advice.

Curtis Kingsbery of Pensacola began birding with the F. M. Weston Bird Club in the late 1960s, and was the field trip chairman when the club became the Francis M. Weston Audubon Society. He trained many area birders and introduced them to coastal Alabama, Eufaula NWR, and the Conecuh Forest, later run by the Forsters (see below) and Phil

Tetlow, who also ran many field trips at AOS meetings. Curtis taught birdwatching classes after his retirement, and a memorial to him was placed in Wayside Park at the north end of the Pensacola Bay Bridge overlooking a favorite birding site. For many years Curtis contributed to Alabama's knowledge of birds. Had it not been for his patient training of new birders, the picture of coastal Alabama's and NW Florida's birds would be incomplete.

When Fairly Chandler became ill, Bob Duncan took over compiling the Gulf Shores CBC. He conducted the count until a young whippersnapper named Greg Jackson, then of Mobile, took it over in 1983. During the early years of the Gulf Shores CBC, most of the inland territories were fairly undeveloped, with expanses of fields and woods, sod farms, and the abandoned airport. Inland, Bob and Lucy Duncan discovered the presence of a small number of uncommon wintering sparrows, including LeConte's, Grasshopper, Nelson's Sharp-tailed, and Henslow's, and developed a technique for locating these rarities for the CBC. However, when they introduced Bill Bremser of Gulf Breeze, FL to the "Sparrow Stomp," he turned it into a high art—tromp farther, stomp higher, and indefatigably encircle each sparrow allowing birders excellent views. Bill took over the sparrow territory, and through the most recent (101st) CBC charged through fields and open pine forests with an exhilarated and exhausted entourage searching for these secretive birds. Typically, Bill's group surrounded a clump of shrubbery or grass, with birders on their knees, peering into the usually wet vegetation eyeball-to-eyeball with a Henslow's, Grasshopper, or LeConte's Sparrow, or a Sedge Wren. Bill usually left a trail of exhausted birders in his wake, muttering "never again, never again." But the next year they're lined up for his [in]famous Sparrow Stomp in rural Baldwin County. With the rampant development of farm and forest into residential and commercial areas, it remains to be seen how long these species will persist in Baldwin County.

Owen Fang moved to the west Pensacola area just north of Perdido Key in 1980. He established the Perdido CBC which overlaps both Alabama and Florida, and is squeezed between the Gulf Shores and the Pensacola CBC circles. An excellent field birder, Owen was afield most days of the week. It was he who found both the Curlew Sandpiper and a Black Rail on Alabama Point. But Owen was probably better known

as the driver of the little blue Yugo. He was renowned for his rainy day drive into the arched entrance of Ft. Morgan, and tearing across the Ft. Morgan grassy fields in the Yugo in hot pursuit of birds seen from afar. One day at Ft. Morgan the Yugo became hopelessly mired in the rain-soaked, muddy grass strip next to the runway where he stopped to view shorebirds. Two other birders, Gene Fleming and Paul Blevins of Pensacola, went to his rescue. Owen stayed at the wheel, while Gene and Paul pushed and shoved on the rear bumper. At last the Yugo gained traction and Owen gunned the engine lurching out of the morass and spraying mud and grass all over the dumbstruck twosome. Owen Fang lived on the Florida side of Perdido Bay, but kept his finger on the pulse of coastal Alabama's birds until his death at 83.

Ann T. Forster, began compiling the Perdido Bay CBC in 1986. Though this count overlaps both Alabama and Florida, most participants continue to be Floridians. Ann typically fields over thirty birders by kayak, canoe, fishing boat, car, bicycle, and on foot covering hard-to-access areas and yielding 120-135 species. The compilation at the Forsters' house on Davenport Bayou near the mouth of Pensacola Bay has become a tradition anticipated for great birding and Dan Forster's homemade chili and fixins.

After serving as a Regional Director for AOS, Ed Case of Gulf Breeze was charged by AOS President Charles Kennedy in 1997 with heading a new Online Services Committee. Ed set up the first web site, launching AOS onto the World Wide Web alongside other state ornithological societies. Suzanne Owens provided significant expertise with the early web sites also. In addition, Ed has served on the AOS Board of Directors and contributed to *Alabama Birdlife*. A retired U.S. Coast Guard officer, Ed has served on the Board of the NW Florida Wildlife Sanctuary that received a number of birds rescued from the waters offshore from the Alabama-Florida state line.

Ed Case was often called to the Wildlife Sanctuary to identify pelagic species such as the Band-rumped Storm-Petrels twice brought to the facility by Barry Sweat, a fisherman from Orange Beach, Alabama. These birds had landed on Mr. Sweat's fishing boat, so thinking they were ill, he put them in a bucket and delivered them to the Sanctuary. Most of them recuperated well and were to be released, so Ed carried them to Ann and Dan Forster's home near the entrance to Pensacola

Bay, showing up with the bucket of birds in the midst of a family reunion.

One time a Band-rumped Storm-Petrel brought in by the same fisherman was released by Ann Forster. It was weak and flopped into the shallow water when it was liberated. After a second try at flight, it died. Ann noted an aluminum leg band on the bird, and preserved the specimen. She turned it over to Lucy and Bob Duncan who banded birds in Gulf Breeze in the 1970s and 1980s. Tracing the origin of the bird from information on the foreign band, they found that it had been tagged as an adult in the Azores by a Portuguese ornithologist. This finding created quite a stir, as it remains the only Band-rumped Storm-Petrel banded on the eastern side of the Atlantic Ocean to be recovered in the entire western hemisphere. But the excitement actually escalates! The researchers have preliminary data suggesting that the species known as Band-rumped Storm-Petrel may actually be two separate species! And *this* one was found in Alabama waters...no, Florida waters... no, Alabama, Florida, Alabama! Sounds almost like one of our SEC football games.... The full story of this amazing discovery is in the *Journal of Field Ornithology* (72(1): 62-65 by Woolfenden, Monteiro, and Duncan).

Bob and Lucy Duncan have birded the Alabama coast since 1968. In 1988 Bob published *THE BIRDS OF ESCAMBIA, SANTA ROSA, AND OKALOOSA COUNTIES, FLORIDA*, the Panhandle counties nearest Alabama. The concise summaries and bar graphs including the early and late dates of arrivals and departures of the birds quickly became a birder's tool used in lower Alabama as well. In 2000 Bob and Lucy published a revised, updated edition of *THE BIRDS OF ESCAMBIA, SANTA ROSA, AND OKALOOSA COUNTIES, FLORIDA*, which includes expanded data and the official checklists from both Alabama and Florida. Bob's other avocation, the study of coastal weather, dates back to 1948 when he began keeping detailed daily weather records. Soon a pattern began to emerge, and he combined the two interests into *BIRD MIGRATION, WEATHER, AND FALLOUT, INCLUDING THE MIGRANT TRAPS OF ALABAMA AND NORTHWEST FLORIDA* (1994). This book has helped scores of birders predict when migrants will be at the coastal "traps" like Ft. Morgan, Dauphin Island, and Ft. Pickens. Now, coupled with the Nexrad radar readily viewed on the Internet, birders have a highly accurate tool to forecast fallouts.

NW Florida birders continue to make significant contributions to AOS. Until his recent untimely death, Phil Tetlow was another indefatigable Pensacola birder who had been on the ABRC, led field trips, and participated in Christmas counts. Don Ware routinely treks from Ft. Walton to coastal Alabama and back in one day for the Gulf Shores CBC and is a Regional Director of AOS. Bill Bremser has served several terms on the ABRC and leads the Sparrow Stomp field trips. Both Duncans have worked for several terms on the ABRC, including terms as its secretary, have served on the AOS Board of Directors, and led AOS field trips. Since 1979 Bob has published thirteen articles in *Alabama Birdlife*, and highlighted Ft. Morgan in the national publication, *Birding*.

AOS and FOS have held joint meetings in Northwest Florida on two occasions. In May 1983 the first joint venture was held in Gulf Breeze, Florida. Lucy and Bob Duncan of Gulf Breeze were setting up the arrangements and speaker for the banquet. In December before the meeting, they still had not found a keynote speaker, when a phone call set the scene for one of AOS's most notable guests. A young man called to report a Tennessee Warbler at Ft. Pickens, Gulf Island National Seashore, in *December!* Incredulous, Lucy grilled him mercilessly, "Did it have yellow or whitish undertail coverts?" He described the bird with such precision that she felt certain his identification was correct. When Bob came home that day, Lucy told him about the record, and the young man named Ted Parker who had reported it. At once it was realized that he was the LSU researcher who had discovered eight new species of birds in Peru and had earned the respect of every ornithologist in the world for his vast knowledge of birds and bird sounds. The next day, Ted readily accepted their invitation to tell our societies in May about his adventures and discoveries in the remote reaches of Peru.

Another AOS-FOS joint meeting was held in Navarre, FL, where the Porters of Dauphin Island have had a home for many years. Several times they had requested a meeting at the gulf front Holiday Inn there. The meeting was planned and organized by Peggy Baker of Pensacola Beach. This meeting's "birding outlook" in January 2000 was dismal . . . no ducks, no special flycatchers, and few wintering birds to excite those on the field trips. But January can be capricious, and two days

before the meeting a strong cold front arrived pushing down the wintering ducks, and bringing Northern Gannets diving into the inshore surf in front of the motel. It was a winter of owls for NW Florida, with a Short-eared Owl discovered near the motel during the meeting, and field trips to see Burrowing Owls on Eglin AFB. It was also the winter of a Snowy Owl which spent several weeks on Bald Point near Apalachicola, Florida, about 200 miles east of Pensacola. Most Alabama AOS members attending the Navarre meeting had never been

to Santa Rosa Island south of Pensacola, and had never seen the beaches preserved in their natural state as part of Gulf Islands National Seashore.

Birds do not recognize political boundaries and neither do birders. The history of cooperation and the relationship of birders across the state line run deep. The commitment of both Alabama and NW Florida birders to the preservation of the birds and their unique habitats is founded in respect, knowledge, and hope for their future.

THE REVIVAL YEARS: 1987–1991

By Greg D. Jackson



LOOKING AT AOS TODAY, WITH MEETINGS BURSTING at the seams, activities going in all directions, and excellent publications and services, it's hard to remember it wasn't always so. The early to mid-1980s were difficult times for the Society; multiple factors were contributory, occurring despite the efforts of many capable people. Membership began to slide, meeting attendance was down, fewer functions were performed, and many birders had a general sense of apathy about the organization. Sometimes it was difficult even to fill officer slots, including the Presidency—one President had to serve twice as long as usual as there was no viable and interested replacement. Publications continued to be issued, the newsletter sporadically, and *Alabama Birdlife* more regularly; Bob Reid still assailed the foes of conservation, and interesting meetings were held, but the organization was generally subdued. The patient wasn't quite on a respirator, but needed intensive care.

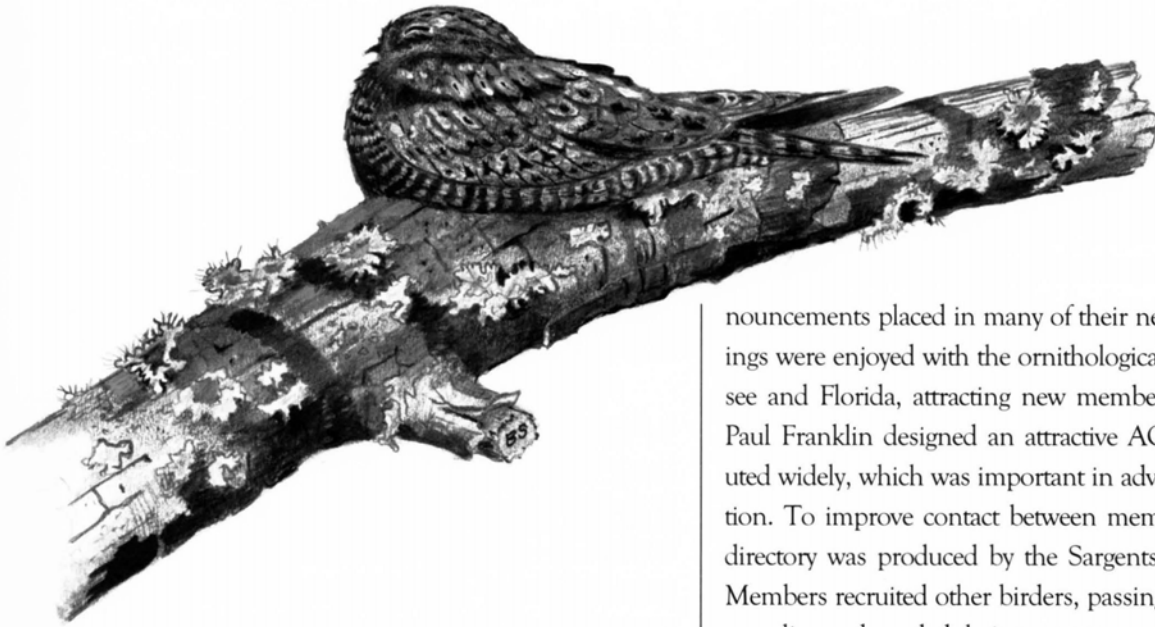
I recall a meeting in Montgomery in the first half of that decade, with the purpose of reviving the organization. Though this was helpful, it did not accomplish the trick. What AOS needed was a kick in the pants to awaken interest and spur members to activity. The five years beginning in 1987 provided that impetus, with a host of people drawn together to rebuild the Society. Knowing the high quality of our members, and the rising general interest in birding, we were sure that with enough work we could pull up the Society by its boot-

straps. Many functions and services we enjoy today, and often take for granted, have their origins in this period.

John Winn ably served as President in 1986 and the first half of 1987. He realized the importance of a dynamic journal representing the interests of the membership. Within imposed financial restraints, *Alabama Birdlife* had done a good job publishing mainly scientific articles; while this was very important, members wanted more features oriented toward field birding. John persuaded Bill Summerour to be the editor, and our flagship was set to ride higher on the waves.

I became President in the summer of 1987, to serve until fall of 1989. Fresh out of residency, I had just moved from Mobile to Birmingham. Simultaneously jumping into the AOS hot seat and my first medical practice perhaps wasn't a carefully reasoned choice, but the words young and wise are not often used together! Bob and Lucy Duncan, Mary Floyd, Ben Garmon, Tom Imhof, Helen Kittinger, Ann Miller, John and Jackie Porter, Bob and Elberta Reid, Bob and Martha Sargent, Bill Summerour, and many other AOS members provided encouragement, substantial assistance, and sound counsel to a fledgling President.

Bill issued his first edition of the remodeled *Alabama Birdlife* just after my term started, and it was received with accolades. Filled with his beautiful paintings and drawings, and beginning to incorporate more photographs, the look of the journal was much improved. Articles more familiar to field



birders began to appear. These included “Sightings” columns, which I revived to portray interesting discoveries of our members in Alabama and northwest Florida; for years these columns had been produced by Tom Imhof, but not since the late 1970s. The look and feel of our present journal owes much to Bill’s work beginning in 1987.

Having a great journal to put in people’s hands was important to justify dues, but we needed much more. Newsletters in the past often had been just single-page announcements of meetings; several more extensive newsletters were issued by Dwight Cooley, but this had not become a consistent feature of AOS. We began production of *The Yellowhammer*, newly renamed, as soon as possible to serve as a communication tool about the Society and the activities we were trying to sponsor. I supplied many of the articles during that time, and Ned Piper put it together and sent it out to the membership on a regular basis. It wasn’t the more sophisticated newsletter we have today, with wide-ranging articles from diverse authors, but it got out the word in a timely fashion about what we were trying to achieve.

We needed to reorganize the structure of the Society to make it more responsive to the membership and to increase efficiency. The By-Laws were revised to this end, and we revived or created several posts and committees to actively work on projects. Emphasis was placed on membership growth and communication. Liaisons were made with other like-minded groups in and out of our area, with AOS an-

nouncements placed in many of their newsletters. Joint meetings were enjoyed with the ornithological societies of Tennessee and Florida, attracting new members from those states. Paul Franklin designed an attractive AOS brochure, distributed widely, which was important in advertising our organization. To improve contact between members, a membership directory was produced by the Sargents and Duane Berger. Members recruited other birders, passing the word that AOS was alive and needed their support.

One communication tool present in many states but lacking here was a taped Rare Bird Alert. In 1988 I put together a proposal for this project, and started it soon thereafter. This enabled birders to get information on unusual birds quickly, and proved very popular. Over the next thirteen years I ran this service with AOS funding; during absences, Bob Sargent, Ann Miller, and Steve McConnell helped distribute information. In later years, just before I got “online,” Steve laboriously transcribed the reports and put them on the Internet. This service is now utilized more by Internet than by phone, and Steve has recently assumed responsibility for the whole system. Another service we created was “SERBA,” the Southeastern Rare Bird Alert. This phone circuit linked several states in our area to quickly pass information on major rarities.

An important scientific function of any state ornithological society is compiling and analyzing bird records. This was performed for decades in Alabama by Tom Imhof, and in the Florida Panhandle by Bob Duncan (who continues today in this role). In 1988, Tom passed the torch of Alabama state compiler to me—talk about big shoes to fill! One thing I tried to do from the start was to promote documentation of unusual birds, and to insist on this from all birders, from beginners to the old pros. I learned a lot in those early years about how to handle (and not handle) this daunting task with such a diverse crowd of folks. Some mistakes were made, some feelings were hurt, but I hope the intent of the work was understood. The

goal was, and remains, a credible database of bird records; this demands convincing documentation of unusual discoveries.

Alabama was one of the few states at that time without a functioning bird records committee. Imhof had convened a few meetings of a small group of birders in 1983 to review the state list, prior to producing his 1984 list supplement, but no further committee action occurred. In 1987 I modified the By-Laws of the respected California committee (in turn based on the British model) to produce a set of procedural rules accommodating our local situation. Organizing a committee of seven experienced birders, we began to tackle a large backlog of unevaluated records. We initially reviewed only the rarest birds; over the years this has changed so that currently the first twenty occurrences of a species are assessed by the committee, with the remainder under my purview as state compiler. The basic structure of the committee has changed only a little in the intervening years, and it continues to add credibility to our bird records.

For many years Helen Kittinger had labored on the AOS Slide Collection, aided by Bob Reid and others. Though the collection was being used, new slides had not been considered for some time. The Slide Committee was revived, with Helen as Chair. Helen, Bob Sargent, Buzz Peavy, and I met several times to improve and add to the collection; requests for new slides were publicized in *The Yellowhammer*, pointing out species particularly desired. This collection has continued to be valuable to the organization, both on scientific grounds and for members to use for talks. Michael Owens later became Chair, and continued in this role until his recent untimely passing.

We initiated AOS-sponsored field activities other than the standard (and increasingly popular) meetings. A decade had passed since regular pelagic trips had been offered, so Ben Garmon and I put together four offshore ventures in 1988 and 1989. While not as successful as our more recent endeavors, or as targeted to specific oceanographic features, at least AOS was getting out to sea again. Based on the example of other states, we also conducted the first AOS June Foray in Clarke County, an early predecessor to the current Summer Bird Counts.

We began visiting Blakeley Island, then the best shorebird spot in Alabama, during this period. Years ago, when ALCOA owned the property, public access was tolerated, but through much of late 1970s and 1980s the area was closed.

John Winn was allowed to survey the property for shorebirds for many years, then John gave this opportunity to me. During the late 1980s, we worked out a birder visitation and permit system with the new owners, the Alabama State Docks; unfortunately this was put on hold when a few birders ignored the rules. After more discussions with the State Docks over the ensuing year, I convinced them to give us another chance. This system has continued to function, with later modifications and work by John Porter.

By the fall of 1989, when Bob Sargent took over the reins, the concerted work of many members had revived the organization. Membership and meeting attendance were up, publications were flourishing, and committees were functioning; the Society had regained a structured and strong base. Bob and Martha used their great "people skills" to take this and make even more of it. More members were enlisted to the cause, further creating interest in the Society.

The Sargents' business skills translated well to AOS. For decades we had functioned "in the black," but usually just barely; this had made even publication of our journal tenuous at times. Bob and Martha changed all that, and AOS was put on truly sound financial footing. For the first time this enabled AOS to begin recruiting the "Big Guns" of the birding world to speak at meetings. *Alabama Birdlife* continued to improve; Bill Summerour was able to raise the bar even higher with financial restrictions eased. These factors helped create even more excitement about AOS, improving membership and financial solvency. All this time committees and services were further nurtured and encouraged, and by 1991 the organization was far more vibrant and secure than would have been imagined only a few years earlier.

Many people devoted great amounts of energy and time to AOS in this period, and the combined effort yielded great benefits; this was truly a labor of love. The present enthusiasm about our organization, and the many services provided, at least partially owe roots to this exciting time. Subsequent administrations, soundly led by John Porter, Gerald Moske, Sharon Hudgins, Charles Kennedy, and Larry Gardella, have further improved and added to the structure of AOS, enabling us to pursue projects unthinkable in earlier years. Because of the efforts of these and many other individuals, the future of our Society seems sound indeed.

PART FOUR

LEAD ON KINDLY LIGHT

— THE PRESIDENTS' STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS —

By Allen Tubbs, 2002, and Larry Gardella, 2001



FOR 50 YEARS, AOS HAS ACTED TO “FOSTER A GREATER knowledge of the birds of Alabama and northwest Florida through observation, education and publication, and to promote conservation of all natural resources.” We recently have taken significant steps to further each aspect of this broad statement of purpose.

The primary way AOS members learn more about birds is to go out and look at them. Much of this observation has been informal, but many members also have participated in such organized efforts as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife’s Breeding Bird Surveys and the National Audubon Society’s Christmas Bird Counts. For the past ten years, AOS also has encouraged members to take part in the North American Migration Count, which gives a picture of migration nationwide on a single day in May. Although this count is conducted after the main wave of migration through Alabama, it has enabled us to learn much about late migrants. Sharon Hudgins has coordinated Alabama’s participation, with John Porter (always ably assisted by Jackie until her death in 2001) serving as compiler and maintainer of the AOS database for this project.

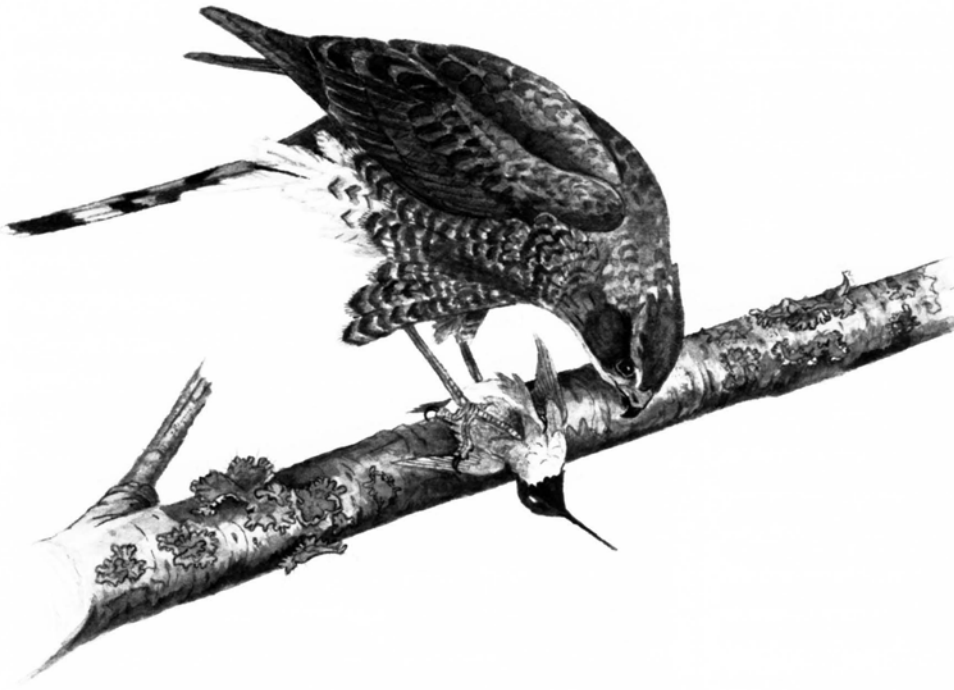
In June 1999, AOS created the Censusing (a/k/a Census) Committee to enhance and coordinate bird data gathering in the state, helping not only committee members and their projects, but the AOS membership in general. Greg Jackson chairs this committee. It aims to improve several longstanding programs in Alabama and northwest Florida that produce quality data on bird populations, to increase participation, develop new plans, and to make the resultant information more available. One of the first new projects of the Committee has been the “Summer Bird Count,” which enables us to determine the presence and relative abundance

of many species in poorly covered areas of the state. First, in 2000, groups of AOS members converged on centrally located Chilton County and explored every accessible portion of the county. The surprises included Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Anhinga, Wood Stork, Mississippi Kite, Bald Eagle, Laughing Gull, Cliff Swallow, Scarlet Tanager, Lark Sparrow, and fledgling Common Ground-Doves. In June 2001, the project was expanded to cover two counties: Monroe in the south and Fayette in the north. Each county was broken up into atlas grids, which in turn were broken up into blocks. Participants found more noteworthy birds, including Pied-billed Grebe, Wood Stork, Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, Caspian Tern, a pair of Bell’s Vireos, Worm-eating Warbler, and Painted Bunting in Monroe County, and Mississippi Kite and Cerulean Warbler in Fayette County.

Over the years, various AOS members had talked about the need to create a breeding bird atlas for Alabama. The obstacles were considerable. At times, they seemed insurmountable. However, the experience gained in Chilton County and the energy of breeding bird atlas veteran Rick West brought AOS to the verge of starting such an atlas. The Census Committee then reviewed the work of other states, formulated plans, worked on bird lists and safe dates. Geoff Hill and Doug Robinson served as scientific sounding boards. Now, this vital study of Alabama’s breeding birds is finally underway.

The Census Committee also has reinvigorated the nest card program. Members and their friends have submitted records of nests for birds ranging from backyard Northern Cardinals to Red Crossbills.

AOS also has taken steps to help its membership find and observe birds. In the late 1980s, Greg Jackson imple-



mented a Rare Bird Alert, which AOS then decided to fund. It began as a telephone message and expanded to include email notification to dozens of people and then listserv notification to hundreds. People on the listserv find out about unusual sightings by checking their email. Others can still call the RBA telephone number.

Over the years, AOS members have served the education portion of its purpose statement in many informal ways. In 1997, AOS created the Education Committee to coordinate various efforts and to come up with new ways of teaching people in Alabama and northwest Florida about birds. Once Tommy Pratt became chairman, the committee really took off. Adults attending various Education Committee events have learned much, but the Committee's major success has been with the school children it has reached.

The mission of education has also been well served by the careful attention the bird records committee has devoted to descriptions of rare birds members have submitted to them. Before writing his 1984 booklet supplementing ALABAMA BIRDS, Tom Imhof convened several meetings of a few birders to review the state list, but Alabama had no functioning records committee until 1987, when Greg Jackson drafted By-Laws, organized a committee and served as its first Secretary. Through the hard work of many individuals, this committee

has since evaluated hundreds of records, contributing greatly to the validity of our database.

Some of the most interesting records come from the sea. In the late 1970s, Charles Duncan, Ralph Havard, and Howard Einspahr organized pioneering pelagic trips. In the late 1980s and then from 1996 to present, Greg Jackson, Larry Gardella, and Ben Garmon put together quite a few pelagic trips. These helped to establish that Band-rumped Storm-Petrel is not as rare in the Gulf as people had believed. The second pelagic trip of 2001 brought Alabama's second record of Red-billed Tropicbird to reward

those intrepid enough to venture out into the "blue water."

AOS members have learned much about birds and birding from the high-quality speakers who have given presentations at our meetings. They have included eminent bird researchers, field ornithologists and artists, as well as people who wear two or all three of those hats. Kenn Kaufman and Pete Dunne have both spoken. The more recent presenters have included Jon Dunn, Bill Evans, Sid Gauthreaux, Jerome Jackson, John O'Neill, Dwight Peake, Jim Rising, Ron Rohrbaugh, Bob Russell, Donald and Lillian Stokes, and Julie Zickefoose.

Charles Kennedy took another step in both education and publicity by organizing BirdFest 1999, which attracted by far the biggest crowd ever for an AOS meeting.

AOS has long published both a scholarly journal, *Alabama Birdlife*, and a newsletter, *The Yellowhammer*. Through the hard work of the editors, both publications have provided critical analysis and interesting stories to thousands of people. The efforts of such creative people as Annabel Markle and Robin McDonald have helped make *The Yellowhammer* as visually impressive as it is informative.

Over the last 30 years, the Alabama Ornithological Society has assembled a series of slides of birds found in Alabama and Northwest Florida. Helen Kittinger and Michael Owens put in years of hard work. The collection now is comprised of

almost 700 slides of over 300 species of birds. All species in the collection have been verified either in Alabama or Northwest Florida. Many of the birds in the collection, due to vagaries of migration, breadth of range, and other factors, also are found in other parts of the United States. These slides are offered for purchase or loan to AOS members and other individuals for scientific and educational purposes.

The two printed publications recently have been supplemented by a webpage and a listserv e-group. By going to <http://www.bham.net/aos> people can find out about upcoming meetings, rare bird reports, the Education Committee's activities, and so much more. By subscribing to AL-Birds, people can engage in discussion about all aspects of birding in Alabama and northwest Florida, as well as learn of rare bird sightings and AOS activities. Many people contribute to these two computerized tools for communication, but Ed Case and webmaster Suzanne Owens were the primary force behind the projects and received a national award for excellence of the website. Chris Price has now assumed the webmaster responsibilities.

In 2001, AOS brought to fruition a publication project that took almost ten years. John Porter chaired the Steering Committee that selected authors from all around the state. Each author contributed detailed descriptions of prime birding places they knew well. Then, with coaxing and guidance from John, who devoted years as the editor of this vast project, the authors revised and re-revised their work until we had 284 pages of crisply written, up-to-date treatises. With some help from Alison Glascock, John pulled this into a coherent whole. Bob Sargent added a piece on hummingbirds (naturally), Greg Jackson provided selected species accounts and invaluable bar graphs, Bill Summerour provided beautiful illustrations, Ann Miller several photographs, and we ended up with *A BIRDER'S GUIDE TO ALABAMA*, published by the University of Alabama Press. In what was to be his last contribution to AOS, Tom Imhof wrote the preface shortly before his death. Being able to provide the birding public with this excellent bird-finding guide was a wonderful achievement. Using it to raise thousands of dollars for AOS, while also providing a discount, was a delightful bonus.

Some AOS members also have published on their own. Lucy and Bob Duncan came out with books on the birds of three counties in northwest Florida and a book on weather's

effect on migration. Greg Jackson and Bob Duncan wrote articles for the ABA journal, *Birding*. Tom Imhof, Greg Jackson, and Dwight Cooley also authored the reports for what is now *North American Birds*.

The final portion of the AOS purpose statement is conservation. For more than twenty years, Bob Reid has chaired the Conservation Committee and submitted countless comments on the activities of governments ranging from small cities to the United States Congress. The comments have promoted conservation of resources critical to birds, primarily land used by migrants.

In January 2000, AOS took a bold new step in land conservation by working with the Friends of the Dauphin Island Audubon Sanctuary to help raise money to purchase land on Dauphin Island. AOS donated \$10,000 and encouraged its membership to give much more. Through these gifts and others, and with the leadership and energy of John Porter, FODIAS was able to purchase land adjacent to the Shell Mounds to help protect this vital first stop for northbound migrants and last stop for those birds going south for the winter.

The cause of conservation was also well served by the establishment of The Gulf Coast Birding Trail. The key movers were John Porter, Robert R. Reid, Jr., Larry Goldman, and Greg Jackson.

The year 2002 finds AOS not only much larger than it was 50 years ago, but also responsive to a much more far-reaching constituency. Love of the birds of Alabama and northwest Florida always has been a major factor leading people to AOS. We have some wonderful places for watching birds. The word has gotten out, and people from across the country and even from outside the country have come to Dauphin Island, Fort Morgan, and other sites and been captivated. This has prompted people from all over to join AOS. In addition to Alabama and Florida, we have members from Arkansas, British Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Nova Scotia, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Some attend our meetings regularly and share with us the splendor of the birds of Alabama and northwest Florida.

There is so much more to learn about our birds, and we are well poised to make the discoveries.

BINOCULARS FOCUSED ON THE HORIZON

By Greg D. Jackson



PREDICTING THE FUTURE OF AOS IS BOTH EASY and difficult. Any organization consists of individuals and their contributions. Looking at the people involved today, and given the history of our group, it is not hard to portend a future of enjoyable cooperation. One of the brightest spots of AOS, both at gatherings and through work and communication, has always been the spirit of fun and the tolerance of the foibles of individuals. A look at some state societies, even in the Southeast, does not always reveal such goodwill. I do not regard this great attribute as short lived.

Trying to forecast the specific activities in which we will be involved, and especially the manner of engagement in these, becomes trickier. This is especially true for the long term, decades down the line. At our centennial, AOS members may chuckle at these feeble attempts at prognostication, but let's give it a spin anyway.

Keeping up with the birds

One of the most important functions of the organization is to create usable information on birds in Alabama and northwest Florida. We have long participated in counts, surveys, and other programs to localize and monitor the avifauna of our region. As bird populations become more threatened by human population growth and resource depletion, our task will increase in significance. Change is both inevitable and expected, even in a system devoid of human interference. Some species will increase as other populations diminish; ranges shrink and expand as climate, habitats, and other factors dictate. A feared effect of environmental destruction is a decrease in diversity. As amateurs, our role in ascertaining the current situation and monitoring changes in the future is rare in the scientific world. Field ornithologists, also known as birders, have an opportunity to make valuable contributions which not only advance our understanding of birds, but will aid their preservation. Members of AOS will be at the forefront.

Makin' 'dem baby birds

Of all the population and distribution studies we can undertake in the future, none are more important than those involving breeding birds. Our area is blessed with tremendous diversity and numbers of nesting birds, but we have lagged behind much of the developed world in cataloguing and monitoring these. Alabama is one of few states or provinces in North America without a completed or strongly supported breeding bird atlas (BBA) program. When properly performed and analyzed, BBAs contribute vast quantities of information about the distribution of nesting species, with some quantitative information also gleaned. We have just committed to a BBA project, which should require five or six years of field effort.

Another breeding bird program for the future is the Summer Bird Count (SBC). This group effort was first conducted in June 2000 in Chilton County, achieving notable results; counts were productive in Fayette and Monroe Counties in June 2001. Teams of birders work different counties each June, recording numbers of birds, looking for evidence of breeding, and searching for target species. This will also contribute to the BBA program; in 2001 party areas were assigned in atlas-type blocks so data can be transferred effortlessly to a BBA.

An old stalwart of breeding bird monitoring, the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), will not be replaced by these new activities. The BBS, comprising 50 roadside point counts a half-mile apart, has generated decades of valuable data and will be a priority well into the future. This is our best method of monitoring populations of many species of breeding birds in North America, especially those occurring regularly; data from BBS routes can also be used in the BBA project. We may supplement the BBS program with isolated point counts in specific habitats and areas, as has been done recently by governmental agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service.

Species nesting in very low numbers may be better found by the BBA and the SBC projects. A Rare Breeding Bird Panel (RBBP) program is being considered for the

future. This may use targeted searches for specific rare breeding species throughout Alabama, and would tie into other tasks. We also are reviving the old Cornell nest card program, as data on nests in Alabama have not been collected widely in several years. This should contribute significantly to our nesting database.

Counting 'em passing by

As Alabama and northwest Florida are blessed with excellent migrant spots, studies of transient birds will be important in the future. Migrant numbers are subject to extreme variation due to weather conditions and other factors; often counts just represent "snapshots" at points in time, with years of data collection needed to get a broad picture of the process. Spring and fall counts are limited to a few areas currently, but may be expanded in the future. An exception is the North American Migration Count, conducted the second Saturday of each May, which has provided useful information on late migration throughout our region.

Banding operations over extended periods, such as those currently conducted by the Hummer/Bird Study Group and the University of Southern Mississippi, are very useful for determining passage of many species. These operations hopefully will continue well into the future. Other limited possibilities for regular migration monitoring include coastal sea watches, hawk watches on the coast and along mountain ridges, and placement of observers on offshore drilling platforms. Radar studies of migrants have been conducted for years; newer Doppler radar systems greatly enhance images, and technology should continue to improve.

An interesting possibility for future years concerns monitoring nocturnal flight calls. Programs are already in the works

in other areas, particularly noting thrush numbers. Flight call identification materials are currently in preparation, which should aid nocturnal studies considerably. Experimentation with night recording by fixed microphones, with subsequent analysis during the day, has already been performed; this technique, perhaps aided by computer sound identification, may be promising down the road. Might we see an automated array of nocturnal flight call recorders, linked in a national network?

Will the Internet help us monitor migrants? Webcams are growing in popularity, allowing remote viewing of bird nests, water holes, etc. Just last year I looked at live images of polar bears in the Canadian Arctic and elephants in South Africa simultaneously, so who knows what can be done as technology improves? Could these tools, especially with future enhancements, be used to count birds at coastal points, mudflats, ponds, and other known gathering sites in our area?

When the cold wind blows

Many birds winter in our region, including those from within and outside our area. Our primary monitoring tool for decades has been the popular Christmas Bird Count, which likely will continue in force for many years. Though flaws exist in determination of population distribution and densities, the Christmas counts provide useful information about birds in early winter. We may embark on other, more rigid, winter population studies in the future, which could include point counts.



On the bounding main

Pelagic birding in the Gulf of Mexico is both frustrating and exhilarating. The low density of birds in the Gulf makes detection difficult, but may increase the excitement when even small numbers of sea-loving species are found. In recent years deepwater trips have targeted areas of interesting undersea topography, yielding good results. We have already used satellite tools available on the Internet, estimating sea surface temperatures and detecting currents and water interfaces; this has so far had limited success in our area, though has proven useful in other locales. The greatest problem recently has been availability of large, fast boats to improve the journey to deep waters. In the Northeast, some offshore trips are done from stable and fast jet catamarans, and future improvements in boat and satellite technology may make the search for pelagic species less difficult and more regular.

Monitoring of migrants and seabirds by birders on deepwater drilling platforms has already yielded considerable useable data, and may be expanded in the future. The ability to live offshore and search the seas on a daily basis should help our understanding of pelagic birds even more than sporadic pelagic boat trips.

Writing it all down

All the monitoring in the world means little if the resultant data are not recorded, analyzed, and made available. Accurate record-keeping will continue to be vital well into the future, and improvements in style and substance can be made. Recording of information may change in format over the years—we've already moved from pen to typewriter to computer—but the basic need to make and submit accurate notes and counts should not change.

Throwing in your hat

We already have a good system of record collection and processing in our area, but this could be enhanced. Broader participation is important to exploit the talent pool. Many birders do not submit records of the birds they encounter. They may feel they don't have a contribution to make, are reticent to enter the process, or simply don't want to bother with writing down their discoveries. Their experiences in the

field could be multiplied by sharing them with others, though. I hope more AOS members in the future will become part of the records system through submission of interesting observations. There are so many ways even a casual birder can contribute important information, including simple discoveries such as evidence of breeding.

Those of us involved in processing bird records have not handled all situations as well as possible, which has led to a few people being discouraged by the process. A fear of rejection concerns some, and a few do not want others reviewing their personal sightings. An evaluation process is necessary, though, to try to keep the official records as accurate as possible. References full of erroneous sightings are of no use to anyone. Everyone who enters the field makes mistakes in identification; those with years of experience and study tend to do so less frequently, but no one is immune. Caution in identification of rare birds is important, and observers should always consider variability in more common species.

Our records system requires documentation of rarities by any observer, regardless of experience. We often know the observers who are submitting records; what about decades from now, when others will be examining our sightings? How will future researchers know that "Joe Smith" was experienced and reliable? Identification parameters change over time as well, and knowing what characters were used to identify a rare species is important to substantiate the claim, both now and for later years.

When a rare bird is not accepted into the state records, it does not suggest the observer was unskilled or even incorrect. It means there was reasonable doubt about whether the observed characters prove the identification. Many times birds simply don't allow all the necessary points to be seen. Submitting observers should not feel slighted if a review, by anyone from a Christmas count compiler to the state records committee, is negative. Exciting advances in still and video cameras, as well as sound recording, have made documentation of unusual birds even easier now, and this is likely to improve substantially in the future.

The final form

Appearance of sightings in publications, through AOS or other venues, is important for sharing information. The

Internet, such as the AOS-sponsored list server ("AL-Birds") and distribution of the Rare Bird Alert transcript, makes knowledge of many discoveries almost instantaneous. More traditional routes, such as sightings columns in *Alabama Birdlife* and *North American Birds* will continue to be important, though, as these are reviewed for accuracy and include analysis on a regional or continental basis. Journals may be electronic in future years, supplanting our paper versions, but the type of information will likely be similar.

It has been 25 years since Tom Imhof published the second edition of his superb ALABAMA BIRDS. A lot has transpired in the interim, with great advances in our knowledge and many changes in bird populations. A new state book is anticipated in the next decade, concentrating on status and distribution, and including the BBA results.

Keeping the lines open

More than just bird records needs to be shared and published. We are a dynamic, interactive organization, and to stay so will need to maintain and improve lines of communication. The Society newsletter and journal are obvious starting points, and should continue to play important roles in keep the membership informed. I predict the latter will remain a paper journal (or may be published on paper and electronically); improvements, such as more color illustrations and photographs, may be possible.

Electronic communication is already an important force in the lives of many members, and is amazing in its ability to distribute information rapidly to masses of people. As the years progress, most members will probably be online. What improvements may be seen in future years are anyone's guess. We now have an excellent web site to serve the organization, with upgrades on a regular basis. This can provide a central clearinghouse for information, and is easily accessible to most members. As more birders come online, the Society newsletter may change from paper and "snail mail" to an electronic newsletter. Our list server has already proven a hit, and should see a steady increase in subscribers. The same is true about the Rare Bird Alert, which likely will cease tape operations and become a wholly electronic function in the future.

What other forms of communication will be available? In Britain, rarity information has been distributed for years by pager services. Though this has not spread as well to our area, improvements in cellular phones, especially miniaturization, may allow similar means of instant notification of rare birds in the future. Email is already received by many cell phones—are we really that far away from the time the RBA will be regularly noted on your wrist phone? In the meantime, two-way radios could be employed to better advantage at birding sites, especially at AOS meetings.

Webcams were mentioned earlier in reference to bird monitoring, but what about their use just in checking out a distant birding site? If technology improves, I can see a time when you just log onto the Internet to get high-resolution images and quality sound from your favorite birding area, to decide where to bird. Sure that's a little lazy, but how many times have we all driven long ways just to find dry ponds or empty shores? These devices wouldn't replace the experience of birding, but could be used as tools to enhance and direct it.

What about old-fashioned, face-to-face communication? Meetings have always played a vital role in our organization, and should continue to flourish in the future. We love to get together over a good bird, and should continue to use these opportunities for fun and education. The social aspects of birding are part of our reason for being a society, of course, and will not be ignored in future years.

Pumping up the ol' brain cells and spreading the word

Education has always been important to AOS. We teach each other in various ways, using publications, lectures, field trips, and one-to-one learning experiences. All these forums will continue to improve our skills and knowledge about birds. Workshops on specialty topics, such as identification or photography, may be useful in the future at meetings. Field trips with a specific purpose have occasionally been offered at meetings, and these have proven fun and educational. The collective knowledge of our members is impressive, and we should work on more ways to share this information with others.

It is not just our members and guests who need education. We should do more in the future to teach the public

about birds and their importance. This ties directly with conservation programs, as an informed public is more likely to support conservation initiatives. The Sargents, in conjunction with the Hummer/Bird Study Group, have made great strides in education of lay persons. Their lectures to groups on hummingbirds have been very popular, and have led to a vast network of hummingbird reporters. Anyone who has seen Bob work a crowd of school children at the Ft. Morgan banding station knows the importance of what he is doing. Witness the brightness of young eyes seeing a banded bird up close, then releasing it from a tiny hand; this should leave an impression to be called upon later as an adult. Our Society should find ways to involve the public more in our activities, as was done with the 1999 BirdFest. Under the direction of Tommy Pratt, AOS programs involving schools and camps are a good start, too. Our members are actively teaching birding and nature appreciation in many locales, and these activities should be encouraged.

Computers and the Internet will provide excellent tools for education of our members, as well as dissemination of information to the public. Our web site may offer more ways to learn, allowing children and adults to tap into the knowledge base of our members and share our delight with birds.

Keeping the birds around

Sometimes birders are reluctant to face it, but if we don't do things to promote conservation, we may not have many birds to enjoy in future decades. We have a broad mix of political opinions in our group; just as diversity benefits an ecosystem, I feel this gives us greater strength rather than causing divisiveness. We should use this to benefit the birds.

The primary goal now, and likely well into the future, is habitat preservation. We have lost tremendous quantities of natural lands just in the last couple of decades. Given the pressures of population growth, this will not abate. Environmentalists, including birders, have a reputation for opposing things. Often this is necessary, as was seen in the 1994 fight to save Ft. Morgan from development, but we need to pick our battles wisely and act in concert. It would be wonderful to think that things will "stay the same," but that's fantasy. Cities and communities will expand, people will build homes and

will need facilities, and we will all need energy (birders in particular use a lot of fuel). The trick will be to have growth without severe impact on the birds; this means protecting the areas that are the most productive and being willing, begrudgingly, to let some of the others fall to the axe.

Instead of just offering negative actions and words, we should further pursue proactive ways to protect habitat. The current property acquisition on Dauphin Island, and that projected for the future, is a prime example of this positive action. Involving other organizations and businesses in this goal will be important. Official designation of sites as important for birds on a regional or national scale also can help in this fight.

Going back to education, the public, and particularly the business community, has to be informed of the value of birds and their habitat. We've made some advances here, particularly with birders' use assessments and the establishment of the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail. We still have a long way to go to catch up with hunters and other outdoor sports groups, though. Those who hunt and fish have done a good job putting a value on those activities; we need to let communities know that saving a certain vital marsh, pond, or tract of forest is important monetarily. We will achieve our best efforts working with communities instead of against them, and should direct our actions to making the tangible worth of birds known.

One of the important uses of the data we accumulate in various monitoring and discovery projects is to know which areas are most important to the birds. That way we can target our resources at the most important sites. In the future, we need to work with other agencies, governmental and private, to generate and share this information. Having facts in credible and usable form will be important.

Communication within our Society and with other groups will be vital to assess and react to threats. The Internet and email should prove valuable tools in distributing accurate information and drumming up support. Organized reaction, based on sound information, will be important to protect our remaining special places.

Most current AOS members will mark the Society's next 50-year celebration only in spirit. Hopefully our activities now and in the future will have positive impact, and those who follow will perceive our work as valuable. May we all have fun in the process!

EPILOGUE

By Dan Holliman

A

LL OF US PAINT DIFFERENT INTERIOR LANDSCAPES when considering what draws us to birds. When asked what attracted him to birds, Roger Tory Peterson was quick to reply, "Perhaps it is their vitality and the way they lead such serious lives." Maybe it is an innate drive for us to be part of something larger than our own lives. E. O. Wilson coined the term "biophilia" to describe the human need to be a part of the natural world. Perhaps it is the belief that we are members of the Earth Community of Life in the same sense and on the same plane in which all other living creatures are members of the Community. Maybe we believe that we, along with all other species, are integral elements in a system of interdependence determined not only by the physical environment, but also by our relation to other living things.

This biocentric outlook on nature embodies one's relation to other living things, and the ecosystems that make up

our biosphere. This common bond has evolved since the beginning of time. Wild communities are understood to be deserving of our moral concern because they have a kind of value that is exclusively theirs. This worth is not derived from the actual or possible usefulness to us, or because we find them enjoyable to look at or interesting to study. Taylor, *RESPECT FOR NATURE* (Princeton University Press, 1986). This paradigm of "wildness" espoused by Thoreau, the father of ecology, is the source of the vital heat necessary for us to be effective members of the Earth Community.

As we read through this history of the Alabama Ornithological Society, we come to believe that we are all "ecologists" in some way. Those Legends who came before us, those Pilgrims who are working among us, and those visionaries who perhaps can see our future, *all* give us our direction as members as we attempt to fulfill the mission of the Alabama Ornithological Society.



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IN CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF AOS



WHITE-EYED VIREO
(*Vireo griseus*)

Watercolor by Bill Summerour



IN CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Published By The
ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
April 19, 2002