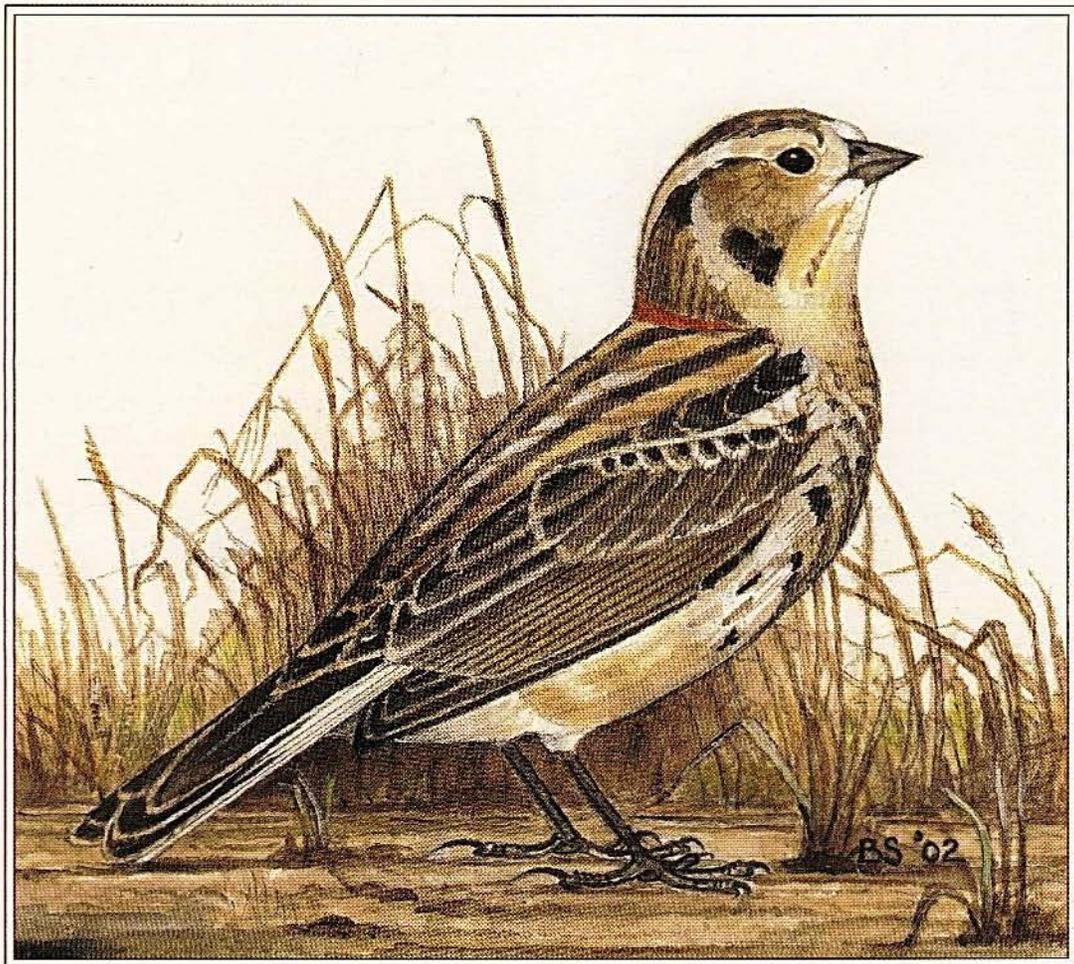


A FIFTY-YEAR
HISTORY OF
THE ALABAMA
ORNITHOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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.

Introduction by Dan Holliman.....	2
The Beginning by Dan Holliman.....	4
Our First President by Dan Holliman.....	5
Those Earlier Years by Julian L. Dusi.....	6
Dauphin Island – A Sense of Place by Dan Holliman.....	7
Dauphin Island – The AOS Connection by John F. Porter.....	9
Scientific Contributions by Bill Summerour.....	12

PART TWO

LEGENDS . . . They came before us. They did not want us to follow in their footsteps, but find our own trail. Our members requested life sketches of these individuals be a part of our 50-Year History.

Blanche Evans Dean by Alice Christenson.....	14
P. Fairly Chandler by Margaret Chandler Woodrow.....	17
A Naturalist's Gazetteer by Dan Holliman	
John Findlay III by Harriett Wright (Findlay).....	19
Thomas Anthony Imhof by Sharon Hudgins.....	20
Tom's Bird by Julian Dusi, Dan Holliman, and Jim Keeler	
Burrowing Owls and Blue Lights by Dan Holliman	
Walter F. Coxe by Jerome "Buddy" Cooper.....	24
The Red Bandanna by Dan Holliman	
M. Wilson Gaillard by Robert R. Reid, Jr.....	26

PART THREE

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS . . . Each one of us has our own way to make contributions to the life of birds. These personal accounts were requested by our members to be a part of our 50-Year History.

A Summary of the Nongame Program in the Game and Fish Division in Alabama by James E. Keeler.....	29
Heron Research Experiences by Julian L. Dusi.....	31
Hummingbirds by Robert and Martha Sargent.....	32
A History of AOS and Conservation Issues by Robert R. Reid, Jr.....	35
The Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries: An Idea Whose Time Has Come by John F. Porter.....	42
Through The Eye of a Camera by Helen Kittinger.....	46
The Northwest Florida Connection by Robert A. and Lucy Duncan.....	47
The Revival Years: 1987-1991 by Greg D. Jackson.....	50

PART FOUR

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.

The Presidents' State of the Union Address by Larry Gardella & Allen Tubbs.....	53
Binoculars Focused on the Horizon by Greg D. Jackson.....	56
Epilogue by Dan Holliman.....	61
A Chronology of AOS Officers.....	62

P A R T O N E

— THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY —

THIS 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.

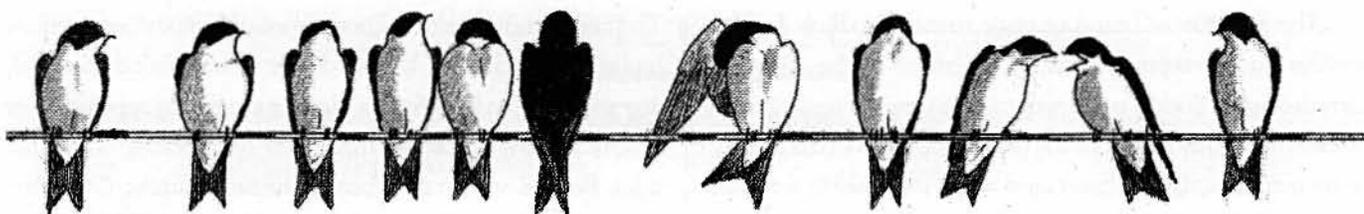
Bird Mortality (1%): Most of this data came from tower collisions during migration. A fair amount of regional climatic information accompanies each account.

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,

Pilcated 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

M

ORTON 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



AT 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.

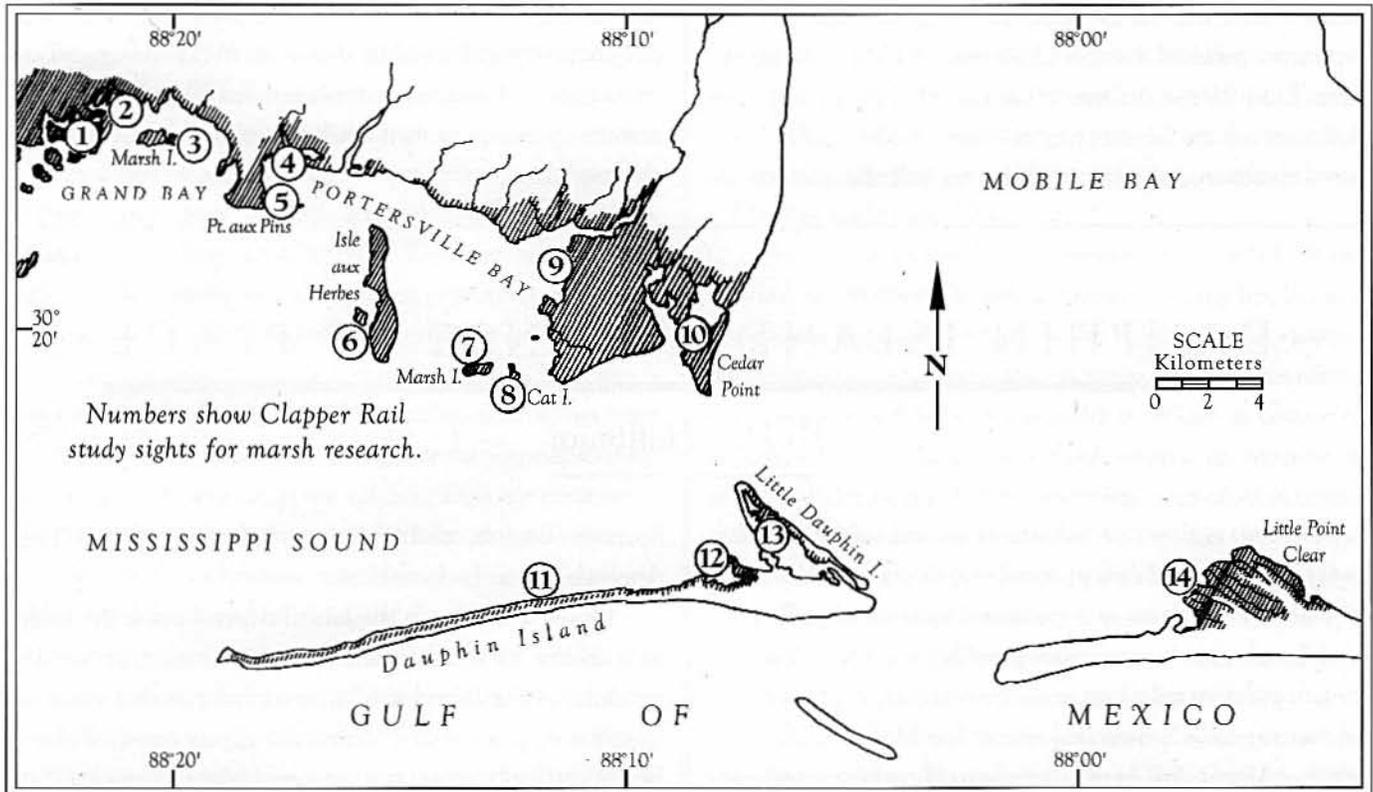
—Julian Lee Rayford, *WHISTLIN' WOMAN AND CROWIN' HEN* (Rankin Press, Mobile, Alabama 1956).

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 offload 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!

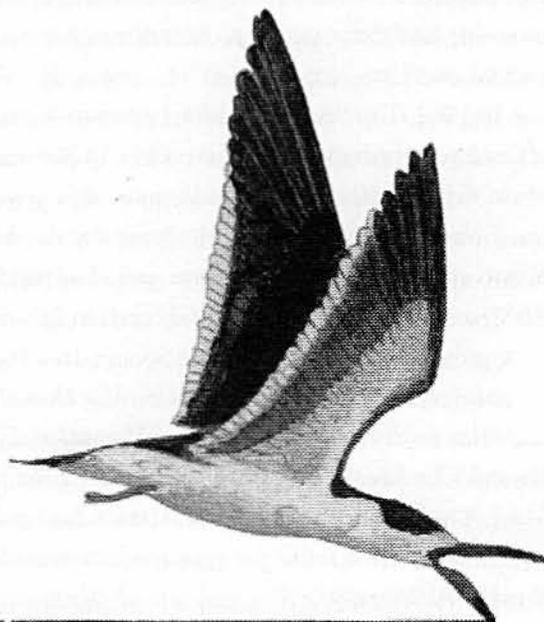
Unbelievably, spring of 2000 brought a repeat performance. As our friend, the Ol' Coot (Jeff Wilson), put it:

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

S

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.

PART TWO
 LEGENDS

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 Acpico 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