

ALABAMA COASTAL
BIRDING TRAIL

Guide Book



Alabama Coastal Birding Trail

The Alabama Coastal Birding Trail (ACBT) describes the birding spots most frequented by Alabama birders. This trail was developed during the late 1990s and officially opened soon afterward to offer bird enthusiasts an opportunity to view and enjoy a high diversity of bird species representative of Alabama's Gulf Coast and to promote birding through tourism in the region.

The ACBT features six birding loops in Baldwin and Mobile counties totaling over 200 miles. Each loop covers different ecological regions representative of the northern Gulf Coast and enables birders to experience different assemblages of bird species within each region. Since its opening, the ACBT has been a very popular birding attraction and in 2003 received the Alabama Tourism Partnership Award for its outstanding contributions to the state travel industry.

The ACBT development was originally a collaborative effort between various entities including the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Mobile Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Daphne, Ala., and the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries. After nearly a decade of existence, oversight of the ACBT was turned over to the State Lands Division (SLD) of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR). Upon

receiving the ACBT, SLD personnel evaluated the condition of the existing trail and recognized a need for portions of it to be revised. This need for revision was primarily due to the catastrophic effects of several hurricanes, including Ivan and Katrina, and land development that together affected the quality of birding at some of the existing stops. To address these issues, SLD personnel identified new replacement sites with an emphasis on public lands featuring Forever Wild tracts, municipal parks, nature preserves and restored mitigation sites. Once identified, each new site was placed in the appropriate loop as a stop to fit sequentially in the existing ACBT. Some original stops were renumbered to better fit in their respective loops. As a result, 17 new stops with full descriptions make up the revised 50-stop ACBT.

How to use this guide: Detailed directions to every stop along the ACBT are provided in a sequential fashion, but it is not necessary to follow the complete loop. Stops within each loop are relatively close to each other and allow for easy coverage in a relatively short time. For those who like to use Global Positioning Systems (GPS), latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates are provided in decimal degrees for every stop. Numbers within brackets imbedded within the stop descriptions represent the mileage between two points [i.e. 1.2]. Many of the stop descriptions list representative bird

species that are regular in occurrence or are most likely to be expected depending on the season. Some stops may also note past occurrences of rare species to keep in mind during your visit. As an additional resource, rare bird sighting reports can be accessed online at the Alabama Ornithological Society's website (<http://www.aosbirds.org/rarebirdalerts.php>), which is updated regularly. Also, be sure to visit the ACBT website (<http://www.alabamacoastalbirdingtrail.com>) for trail updates and other birding resources. Lastly, bird checklists of the Alabama coastal region are available on the ACBT website or can be picked up at select stops along the Trail including the Gulf State Park Nature Center (ACBT 6), the museum at Fort Morgan (ACBT 15), the Magnolia Springs Landfill (ACBT 19), and at area chambers of commerce and welcome centers. For further details about birds of this area or other areas in Alabama, see "A Birder's Guide to Alabama," The University of Alabama Press (2000).

Alabama's Gulf Coast is a paradise not only for birders, but for visitors with many different outdoor interests. Hunting also occurs in our area and usually runs from October through February, though non-consumptive use is permitted year around. For more information about hunting and fishing dates and regulations contact the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries

Division at 251-626-5474 or visit their district office at 30571 Five Rivers Blvd, Spanish Fort, AL 36527.

We hope you'll enjoy what this great region has to offer. Please be sure to visit one of the welcome centers located on the maps within this trail guide, or contact one of the organizations below and let us help you make plans to come back again.

5 Rivers – Alabama's Delta Resource Center

30945 Five Rivers Blvd.
Spanish Fort, AL 36527
251-625-0814
www.alabama5rivers.com

Alabama Gulf Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau

P.O. Drawer 457
Gulf Shores, AL 36547
800-745-SAND or 251-968-7511
www.gulfshores.com

Mobile Bay Convention & Visitors Bureau

P.O. Box 204
Mobile, AL 36601-0204
800-5-MOBILE or 251-208-2000
www.mobile.org

We remind all birders to exercise care while enjoying the birds along the coast; care for the birds and their habitat, care for the property owners who host our avian visitors, and care for other birders. Thank you!



Alabama Coastal Birding Trail *Loops*

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Gulf Shores –
Orange Beach

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Eastern Shore, Mobile
Bay Causeway and
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Gulf Shores – Orange Beach Loop



Gulf Shores – Orange Beach *Loop*

Gulf Shores – Orange Beach is a well-known resort area with many fine restaurants and accommodations as well as a variety of attractions and recreational opportunities. The Gulf Shores – Orange Beach Loop begins at the bridge over Perdido Pass, east of AL 59 on AL 182 [8.8].





Gulf Shores – Orange Beach Loop



Bill Summerour

Common Loon

1. Perdido Pass/ Alabama Point – East

[GPS] (N30.27689 W-87.55114)

(Formerly Florida Point when the state border was located at Perdido Pass.) This site is part of Gulf State Park (251-948-7275) and consists of beach and sea oat habitat where there are opportunities for bird observation, fishing, and viewing both Perdido Pass and the Gulf of Mexico. There are no posted hours for this park but overnight camping is not permitted. There are restroom facilities at the site. Snowy Plover, a species of conservation concern, nests in the area, and is most often found in depressions in the sand away from the water and near the first line of dunes. Alabama Point also provides critical habitat for the federally endangered Perdido Key beach mouse. A wide variety of shorebirds are common in summer,

as are wading birds. In winter, many Common Loons feed in the pass during changing tides. An occasional vagrant Red-throated or Pacific Loon may show up in their midst. A spotting scope is usually needed for the distant waterfowl. After viewing the pass take the loop under the bridge and return to AL 182.

2. Perdido Pass/ Alabama Point – West

[GPS] (N30.27725 W-87.55606)

Cross over the bridge traveling west and turn left (south) [0.6] into the parking lot for this portion of the Alabama Point facility. There is a sea wall along this side of the pass with benches. Portable restroom facilities are available. As with the east side, no overnight camping is allowed but there are likely to be some fisherman here at any hour of the day or night. This location provides another perspective on the same areas viewed from the east side. Rock jetties extend a considerable distance out into the Gulf on this side and can be accessed by walking west along the beach. This is a somewhat perilous venture since the rocks tend to be wet and slippery. The trip out does provide for a better chance to observe the winter seabirds that may be in the area, such as scoters, loons and phalarope.



Laughing Gulls on Orange Beach.



Great Blue Heron

3. Boggy Point

[GPS] N30.28420 W-87.55461

Continue west on AL 182 to AL 161 [2.0], turn right (north) and continue to Marina Road on the right [0.8], turn right (east) and proceed to the end of the peninsula [1.5] terminating at the Boggy Point Boat Launch, an Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources facility. There is a small beach here and an excellent view of Robinson Island, a roosting site for herons and egrets, to the east. This location gives an alternate view of Perdido Pass. Return to AL 161 and proceed across the intersection to the Catman Road parking lot to access the Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail system.



4. Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trails

[GPS] N30.28028 W-87.58223

The Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail system was developed cooperatively by the City of Orange Beach and Gulf State Park (*Alabama State Parks Division*) to provide non-consumptive recreational opportunities through one of the last remaining intact maritime forests along coastal Alabama. In addition to being a preserve for many of the area's native wildlife, this remnant natural area serves as a lifeline for millions of migratory birds each spring and fall by providing essential food and shelter resources, thereby making the birding potential excellent on any given visit. Over 11 miles of paved trails provide access from six entry points to a

diversity of coastal habitats representative of the maritime forest including sandy oak hammocks, pine flatwoods, relict dune swales, seepage swamps and a pitcher plant bog. Interpretive signs placed along each trail identify many of the natural features of the maritime forest.

Catman Road Trailhead: From Boggy Point (ACBT 3), return back to the AL 161 intersection and proceed across to the Catman Road Trailhead parking lot. This entry point is one of six that encircle the Backcountry Trial complex (*see map*). The entire trail system is open to hiking and cycling usage during daylight hours and features a screened picnic pavilion, butterfly garden, public restrooms and numerous benches to



Backcountry Trail KEY

- Catman Road (2.2 miles)
- Rosemary Dunes (1.75 miles)
- Twin Bridges (1 mile)
- Gulf Oak Ridge (2.75 miles)
- Rattlesnake Ridge (1.75 miles)
- Cotton Bayou (1.1 miles)
- T Trailhead

DISTANCES: Trail distances are measured from the beginning of each trail to its "end," or intersection with another trail. Distance markers are placed along each individual trail in increments of 1/4 mile, beginning with "0.0 mi." at each trailhead.

better accommodate your visit. No camping is permitted. For additional information about the Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trails, visit the website at www.backcountrytrail.com or call 251-981-1180.

5. Gulf State Park Pavilion

[GPS] N30.25472 W-87.64431

From the Catman Road Trailhead parking lot (ACBT 4), turn right on AL 161 and continue south to the AL 182 intersection [0.8]. At the light, turn right (*west*) and proceed 3.6 miles to the Gulf State Park Pavilion and Beach on the left (*south*). There is a nominal parking fee. This is a large, covered picnic pavilion with tables and benches, restrooms and water fountains. The pavilion closes at sunset. This is another great place to look for

seabirds, particularly in winter. Northern Gannet is common off shore during migration. Any flock of loons should be carefully studied for Red-throated and Pacific. Walk the beaches for plovers and peeps.

6. Gulf State Park Nature Center/Education Center

[GPS] N30.26335 W-87.64224

From the pavilion parking lot, continue west on AL 182 to CR 2 [0.6], turn right (*north*) and proceed 0.5 miles to Campground Road, turn right (*east*) and continue to the campground check station. Pay a nominal entrance fee and proceed east another 0.5 miles to the Nature Center/Education Center turn-off. The Nature Center exhibits plants and animals

that are native to the Gulf Coast region. It is open and staffed Monday-Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., but is closed during regularly scheduled off-site programs. Bird checklists are available and the naturalist on duty can give you the latest information on birds in the park. For additional information about guided tours and interpretive programs, call 251-948-7275 ext 124.

Return to CR 2, turn right and head north. Along the way, you have the option to stop at the Gulf Oak Ridge Trailhead (*the western entry point to the Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trails*) [1.1] or proceed on to Marsh Bridge (ACBT 6A).



Osprey

6A. Marsh Bridge

[GPS] N30.25611 W-87.67858

Continue north from Campground Road following CR 2 to the intersection with AL 135 [2.4] and bear to the left (*south*) at the intersection. The park headquarters will be uphill on your right. Continue south on AL 135 one mile to Marsh Bridge; the stream is the effluent from Shelby Lakes and Little Lagoon. Cross the bridge and there is parking on the left. Check for Osprey, bitterns, rails and winter sparrows. In December-January check for Great Horned Owls in Osprey nests.



Royal Tern

7. Shelby Lake Picnic Grounds

[GPS] N30.25312 W-87.66513

Continue on AL 135 to the entrance of the picnic grounds [0.9] where there is a nominal admission charge. Within the picnic grounds, there are bathhouses and restrooms. The area closes and the gate is locked at sunset. Check the main lake for waterfowl and gulls in winter; an occasional rarity has appeared in the past. Gray Kingbird is possible here during the summer months and large numbers of transient Black Terns are often observed flying along the lake's edge in late summer. Be sure to check the small lagoon southeast of the easternmost parking lot.

8. Gulf State Park Fishing Pier

[GPS] N30.24996 W-87.66819

Exit the picnic area to the left (*south*) and enter the right lane of AL 135. Proceed to AL 182 and drive straight across at the traffic light and into the fishing pier entrance. Park in the parking lot, trying to avoid the places reserved for anglers. There is a small admission for sightseeing, including birding. The end of the pier is



Northern Gannet

an excellent viewing point for seabirds, especially in winter. Previous Christmas Bird Counts have yielded Red Phalarope and all three scoters at this site. Northern Gannet is common offshore during the winter months.

9. Little Lagoon Pass

[GPS] N30.24180 W-87.73671

Leaving the fishing pier, turn left (*west*) on AL 182 and drive through the main beachfront intersection at AL 59 and continue to the bridge over Little Lagoon Pass [4.2]. There is a parking lot on the right (*north*) with restrooms. Little Lagoon is now essentially surrounded by development, but birds can be seen from this little park provided by the City of Gulf Shores. From here you may scan a sandbar (*north*) and part of Little Lagoon. A fair number of gulls, terns, Brown Pelican and, occasionally, American White Pelican and shorebirds are generally found here. Chances to see rarities increase during migration. Reddish Egret occurs here regularly. Birding is usually best around low tide.

10. Wade Ward Nature Park

[GPS] N30.25222 W-87.68882

Return east on AL 182 to AL 59, turn left (*north*) and continue two blocks. On the right (*east*) is the Wade Ward Nature Park, owned and operated by the City of Gulf Shores. The park offers scenic boardwalks overlooking canals and coastal salt marshes. A unique rarity in the midst of such a vibrant resort city, it is a relatively new birding site. It offers ideal habitat for bitterns and rails. Public parking is available just south, one block east of AL 59 between East Second and East First Avenue.



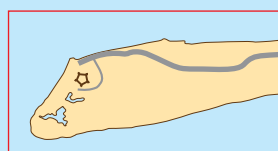
Great Egret

This is the end of the Gulf Shores – Orange Beach Loop. You may continue northward on AL 59 to the intersection with AL 180 and the beginning of the Fort Morgan Loop or to the AL 59/US 98 intersection in Foley and the beginning of the South Baldwin County Loop.

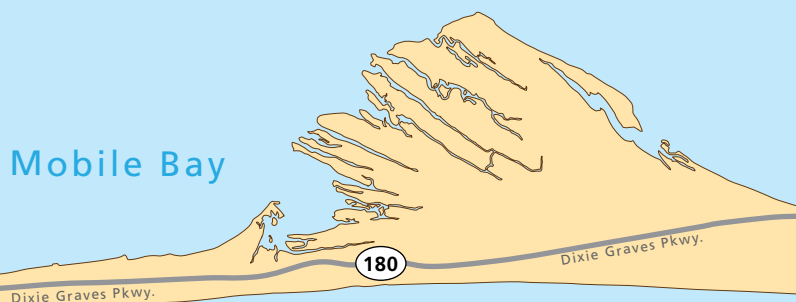


Fort Morgan Loop

Mobile Bay



See detailed map of Fort Morgan Historic State Park

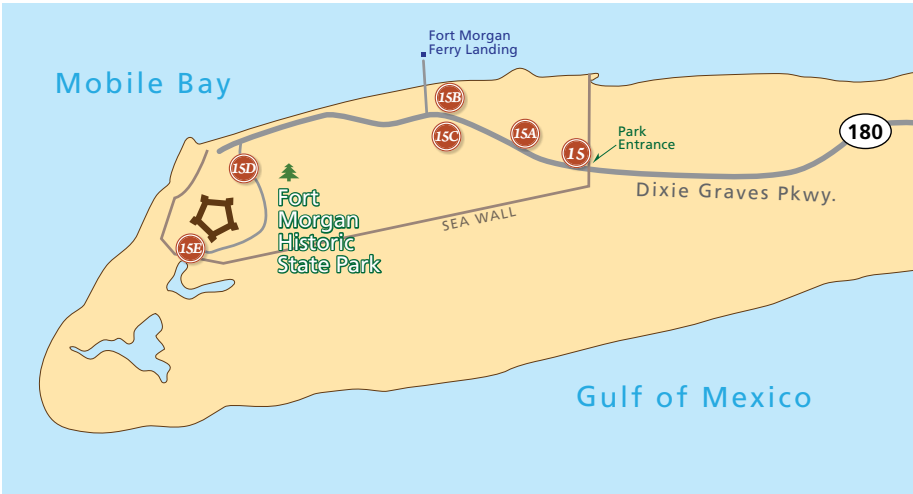


Fort Morgan *Loop*

The Fort Morgan Loop begins at the intersection of AL 59 and AL 180 in Gulf Shores. Much of the Fort Morgan Peninsula is in the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, and the extreme western end is in the Fort Morgan Historic State Park. Other parts of the peninsula are under intense development and much of the access is on private property. Although there are no motels on the peninsula, there are rental condominiums, beach houses and bed and breakfast accommodations. Only a few service stations and restaurants are available.



Detailed map of Fort Morgan Historic State Park.





Fort Morgan Loop

11. Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge – Jeff Friend Trail

[GPS] N30.24433 W-87.78747

From AL 59, travel westward on AL 180 to the Jeff Friend Trail on the left (*south*) side of the road [6.0]. Drive through the gate and follow the road to the parking lot and trailhead. The Jeff Friend Trail is a one-mile loop to Little Lagoon and is accessible to disabled persons. Habitats include maritime forest, freshwater marsh and open water along the north shore of

Little Lagoon. A small observation deck midway down the trail at Little Lagoon is a great place to set up a spotting scope and scan the water. In winter, look for Bufflehead, Common Loon and Horned Grebe. In spring, Osprey, Sandwich Tern and Northern Rough-winged Swallow are regularly seen. Expect to see Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Summer Tanager and Northern Parula during the summer months. At dusk and dawn (*please keep in mind the refuge is closed at dark*), Chuck-will's-widow and Great Horned Owl are commonly heard.



Bill Sumner

Maritime Forest on Bon Secour NWR

Eastern Screech-Owl is also occasionally detected. The two-mile Centennial Trail connects the Jeff Friend and Pine Beach Trails and has forested wetlands on the eastern end. Along this trail, look for Northern Waterthrush, Prothonotary Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler and other species during migration. Return to AL 180.



Pine Warbler

Bill Summerour

12. Bon Secour NWR – Pine Beach Trail

[GPS] N30.24758 W-87.82941

From the Jeff Friend Trail, travel westward on AL 180 [1.5]. The refuge office is on the right (*north*; *look for sign on left*) and you may want to stop for information about the refuge and the latest bird sightings. From the office, continue westward on AL 180 for 1.5 miles (*three miles west of the Jeff Friend Trail*) until you see the Pine Beach Trail on the left (*south*) side of the road. Enter the parking lot. An interpretive kiosk here has trail maps and bird lists. This is a two-mile trail (*each way*) southeastward to the beach by way of Little Lagoon and Gator Lake. The hike is an enjoyable walk through a variety of habitats including oak mottes, sand pine scrub, fresh and saltwater marshes, dunes and beaches.

The Pine Beach Trail will generally have the best birding on the refuge during migration and can also provide excellent winter birding opportunities. Species commonly observed in woodland areas during migration include Red-eyed Vireo, American Redstart, Magnolia Warbler, Palm Warbler and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Open habitats along the trail often have Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Bluebird and Prairie Warbler. Once you reach the western shore of Little Lagoon, look for Red-breasted Merganser, Bald Eagle, and Peregrine Falcon during winter. A large observation deck near the bridge at Gator Lake will provide a good opportunity to set up a scope and look for wintering ducks, alligators and grebes. The two-mile Centennial Trail connects the Pine Beach and Jeff Friend Trails and the western end of this trail features an observation deck where you may spot Sora, Common Yellowthroat, and Swamp Sparrow. At the end of the trail, keep an eye out for Common Ground-Dove in the dunes and Snowy Plover on the beach. Please be sure to stay on the trail and observe all closed area signs since this is a Snowy Plover nesting area.

13. Bon Secour NWR – Mobile Street

[GPS] N30.23641 W-87.83038

Just west of the Pine Beach Trail parking lot is Mobile Street, a paved road leading to a public parking lot near the gulf beach. There are in-holdings in this area so birders should be particularly careful to respect the private property here. The road out to the beach is through marsh and palmetto habitat with the occasional opportunity to observe American Alligators. Caution is urged in these places, some of which are

fenced to provide a healthy reminder not to get too close. There is also good habitat for winter sparrows and some waders in the wetland swales along the road. About 0.75 miles down the road on the left is the parking area for the one-mile (*each way*) Gator Lake Trail, which connects Mobile Street with the Pine Beach Trail. This narrow trail can be good for winter birding where you may see Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Yellow-rumped Warbler. At the end of Mobile Street, the beach provides a vantage point for Common Loon, Northern Gannet and other seabirds and shorebirds. Common Ground-Dove is often spotted near the dune walkover. Return to AL 180.



Beach/Dunes

Bill Summerour

14. The Pines

[GPS] N30.23905 W-87.89011

From Mobile Street, continue westward on AL 180 to the wide open beach and boat ramp at the site known as the Pines [4.0]. This provides the best open view of Bon Secour Bay to the north. If it is a good winter for ducks (*cold enough northward to force them south*) there can be large rafts of waterfowl and grebes. Long-tailed Duck and scoters have been observed from this point.



Six flags of Mobile

Bill Summerour

15. Fort Morgan

[GPS] N30.22951 W-88.00827

Fort Morgan [2.0] is located at the western extremity of the peninsula and is an important stopover for spring and fall neotropical migrants. This is a classic migrant trap, and a birding paradise when adverse weather during spring migration may cause spectacular “fallouts” of colorful migrants. Many vagrant species find their way to this favorite birding spot, which can equal Dauphin Island in excitement. In fall, hundreds of migrating hawks can be seen moving west over the Fort. Winter produces many waterbirds and sparrows. Summer is the slowest season, but can be good for terns. There are restrooms at the ferry landing and at the museum, plus a snack bar at the ferry landing. Bird checklists are available at the museum.

15A. Stables

[GPS] N30.23018 W-88.01197

Just after the entrance kiosk at the eastern sea wall, park and bird the wooded area on the right known as the Stables [0.2]. This is the best spot in the park for passerine migrants, and should be explored thoroughly. The Hummer/Bird Study Group maintains their banding station in the Stables area each April and October and welcomes visitors.



Bill Sumner/our

Brown Pelican with Laughing Gull

15B. Ferry Landing

[GPS] N30.23164 W-88.01497

From the Stables, continue west to the ferry landing parking lot [0.1], where an admission fee is paid to enter the park. The ferry to Dauphin Island runs every hour and a half starting at 8:45 a.m. Check the adjacent lawn and Live Oaks just west of the parking lot for migrants.

15C. Middle Ground

[GPS] N30.23082 W-88.01485

The brush and scrub opposite the landing are known as the Middle Ground, another good migrant spot. Fields and lawns to the west, between the ferry landing and the museum, are excellent for open-country birds.

15D. The Fort

[GPS] N30.22916 W-88.02168

From the ferry landing parking lot, continue west to the Fort parking lot [0.5]. Check the thick vegetation around the Fort for a variety of migrants.

15E. Marsh

[GPS] N30.22712 W-88.02380

The marsh and field area south of the Fort can be observed from the sea wall on the south side. Please take care around the homes here. Walk to Mobile Point to the south, either along the beach or between the dunes and the marsh. This is a good seawatching spot, and the point itself is excellent for gulls and terns.

This is the end of the Fort Morgan Loop. At this point you may either return to Gulf Shores, perhaps to rest for the evening, or start the South Baldwin County Loop by driving north on AL 59 to the US 98 intersection.

Map of Fort Morgan Historic State Park.





South Baldwin County Loop



South Baldwin County *Loop*

This loop begins at the intersection of AL 59 and US 98 in Foley. It is an inland route featuring sites offering an interesting mix of habitats and providing great opportunities to see a diversity of species. This section is not really a loop but several excursions off of AL 59.



Detailed map of Lillian.





South Baldwin County Loop



Bill Sumner

Brown-headed Nuthatch

16. Lillian Swamp Forever Wild Tract

[GPS] N30.42215 W-87.41866

From AL 59 in Foley, turn right (*east*) onto US 98 and drive to Lillian [15.0]. In Lillian, turn left (*north*) at the last stoplight before the bridge onto Boykin Blvd. Continue to Oak Street [1.7], turn left (*north*) and park in designated parking area. There is no parking or entrance fee. Be sure to check the billboard for hunting season dates. Enter from the parking lot (past locked gate) and follow the sandy roads into the tract. Bicycles are allowed, but can be difficult to use where roads traverse through deep sand. Lillian Swamp encompasses nearly 3,000 acres managed for conservation by the ADCNR State Lands Division and hosts a variety of

habitats representative of the lower Coastal Plain. At any time of year, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Eastern Bluebird, Brown Thrasher and other resident species are common in the piney uplands and adjacent thickets. In spring and fall, varying assemblages of migrants can be seen depending on weather conditions. Continuing north on the road, the piney uplands transition to forested swamplands and open pitcher plant bogs. These areas are good for wintering sparrows, migratory shorebirds, waterfowl and an assortment of waders. Recent notable winter sightings include Rusty Blackbird, a species of high conservation concern. Osprey and Bald Eagle are seen regularly year around, particularly along the Perdido River to the east. Because of the large size of this tract, be prepared to spend at least a half day and bring plenty of water, snacks and insect repellent.

17. County Road 95 Park/Arnica Bay

[GPS] N30.31500 W-87.53737

Return to US 98 in Lillian and turn right (*west*). Continue to CR 95 [6.7] and turn left (*south*). While traveling down CR 95, watch for Loggerhead Shrike on the power lines. Proceed to the end of CR 95



Loggerhead Shrike

[7.3], which dead ends overlooking Arnica Bay. This site is a small public access point maintained by the county. Various species of wintering waterfowl may be seen. Also look for Brown-headed Nuthatch in the surrounding pines.

18. Graham Creek Nature Preserve

[GPS] N30.34847 W-87.62774

Return to US 98, take a left (west) and proceed through the town of Elberta to the Foley Beach Express [6.1]. Take a left (south) on the Expressway and travel to CR 12 [3.6]. Turn left (east) onto CR 12 and continue 1.3 miles to Wolf Bay Road and turn right (south). Follow Wolf Bay Road south and around sharp curve to the east and the nature preserve entrance is on the right [0.7]. The nature preserve is 484 acres and is managed by the City of Foley. In addition to protecting a portion of the Wolf Bay watershed, this preserve also possesses open pine forest with extensive wire grass and pitcher plant bogs. The combination of habitats is attractive to a diversity of bird species including Northern Bobwhite, Great Blue Heron, Red-tailed Hawk, Loggerhead Shrike, Yellow-throated Vireo, Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak

and several species of waders along the creek. Birding potential increases during migration in spring and fall. Additionally, watch for secretive wintering sparrows like Grasshopper Sparrow foraging between wire grass clumps or within the pitcher plant bogs. Recreational amenities include several jogging/hiking/biking trails, a canoe launch, several wildlife viewing areas, a pavilion and picnic area, and a new comfort station. The preserve is open daily during daylight hours and there is no admission fee. Guided tours are available by appointment. For more information about the preserve and upcoming events, call 251-952-4011.

19. Magnolia Springs Landfill

[GPS] N30.44683 W-87.77292

From Graham Creek Nature Preserve (ACBT 18), return west on CR 12 (*passing through the Foley Beach Express*) to AL 59 [3.0], turn right (*north*) and proceed to the AL 59/US 98 intersection [3.5]. Turn left (*west*) onto US 98 and continue to CR 49 in Magnolia Springs [5.0]. Turn right (*north*) on CR 49 and continue straight through the CR 24 intersection to a sharp curve westward [2.5], and continue another 0.4 miles to the entrance of the



Magnolia Springs Landfill

landfill on the right (*north*). This is a county landfill and is open Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. Proceed to the second gate and enter the landfill. Park in the parking area and stop by the office to ask permission to access the birding sites. Bird checklists are available in the office. After checking in, drive straight ahead (*east*) and proceed up the hill. At the top, turn left (*north*) and park well off to the side of the road. A path leads to a viewing platform offering birders a vantage point to thoroughly scan for wintering gulls and other birds. Ninety-nine percent of the gulls utilizing the landfill in winter are comprised of Laughing, Ring-billed, and Herring Gulls, but rarities like Franklin's, Thayer's, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous Gulls are all additional possibilities. American Pipits (*winter*), Fish Crows and both vultures are also regular. In January 2009, a Snow Bunting was seen, accounting for the first state record. As you leave the landfill, be sure to check the small ponds on the west side of the entrance road for waterfowl and shorebirds during the winter months.

Note: While visiting the landfill, take care not to block or otherwise interfere with the heavy machinery. Do not enter the pit area for any reason. View birds from the roadside or designated sites only.

20. Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

[GPS] N30.41917 W-87.82968

Return to Magnolia Springs and turn right (*west*) on US 98 and proceed about four miles. After crossing the Fish River, turn into the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve on the left. The Visitor Center is only a short distance from the



Sora

highway and provides restrooms, bird checklists and other informative material. Inquire here about recent sightings. Explore along the boardwalk leading to an observation platform viewing Weeks Bay. To the east of the center is a paved trail (*paralleling the south side of US 98*) that leads to the new Arthur C. "Skipper" Tonsmeire III Weeks Bay Resource Center. Next to the resource center is a public boat launch. At any season, watch or listen for Brown Pelican, Clapper Rail, Sora (*winter*), Laughing Gull, Royal Tern, and Marsh Wren. At dusk, this is also a regular place to find Great Horned Owl. Hours are Monday-Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For guided tours call 251-928-9792.



Male and female Lesser Scaup

20A. Weeks Bay NERR – Pitcher Plant Bog Trail

[GPS] N30.41615 W-87.81902

Exit Weeks Bay Reserve and turn right (*east*) on US 98, continue over the Fish River bridge and turn left onto CR 17 [0.8]. Then proceed 0.3 miles to the pitcher plant bog parking lot on the right (*east*).

The boardwalk offers a pleasant walk with interpretive signs along the way. The boardwalk circles a pitcher plant bog and then continues to its terminus overlooking the Fish River. Bird species expected include Brown Pelican, Osprey, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Common Yellowthroat, Pine Warbler and Indigo Bunting.

21. Mullet Point County Park

[GPS] N30.41680 W-87.90805

Exit the Weeks Bay Reserve parking lot and turn left (*west*) on US 98; continue approximately five miles to where US 98 turns abruptly north. Continue straight (*west*) at this intersection and bear to the left on CR 1, and proceed south approximately 0.4 miles to the Mullet Point County Park on the right. There is ample parking, portable restrooms and picnic facilities. The Park provides an excellent view of the bay from an elevated perspective. This has been a good site in the winter for waterfowl. Surf and Black Scoters have been seen here in the cold weather months.

22. Bon Secour Bay

[GPS] N30.30164 W-87.73741

Return east on US 98 back to Magnolia Springs and turn right (*south*) on CR 49 [8.5]. Proceed through the little village, crossing Magnolia River and continue south on CR 49. Where CR 49 eventually curves east [6.1], it will cross Skunk Bayou

and continues eastward crossing CR 19 [1.4] to CR 10 [2.2]. Turn right (*south*) onto CR 10 and continue to River Road, the main street of Bon Secour. Turn right (*west*) a few hundred yards to the waterfront and a seafood wharf. Park in the parking lot and scan the bay and the small canal next to the parking lot. In winter look for Black-crowned Night Heron in addition to the usual gulls and terns. Return along River Road, continuing past CR 10 to the eastern end. Park in an out-of-the-way location and walk to the shore where you can look northeast up the Bon Secour River. Please be sure not to trespass on private property, which includes all the piers along the river. In winter look for Hooded and Red-breasted Mergansers and Horned Grebe; Eared Grebe is also a possibility.



Male and female Hooded Merganser

This is the end of the South Baldwin County Loop. Return northward along CR 10 following it as it turns right (*east*) [2.3] to AL 59 [2.5]. Here you may turn right to return to Gulf Shores or turn left (*north*) to move on to the Eastern Shore, Mobile Bay Causeway and Blakeley Island Loop.

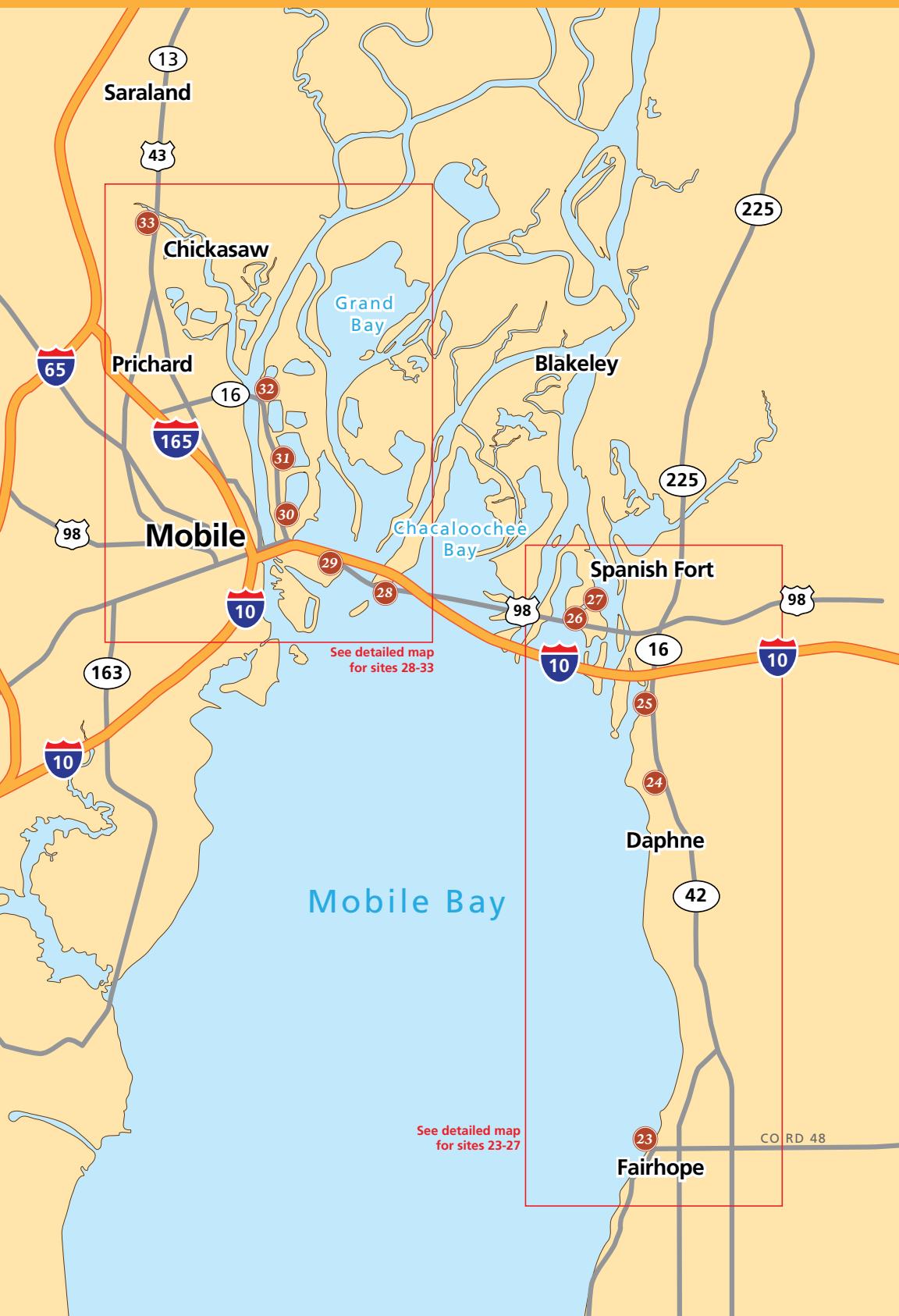


Eastern
Shore,
Mobile Bay
Causeway
and
Blakeley
Island
Loop



Eastern Shore, Mobile Bay Causeway and Blakeley Island *Loop*

This loop covers the northern portion of the Eastern Shore from Fairhope to Daphne, then crosses Mobile Bay on the Causeway (US 90/98) and continues northward up US 90A to Blakeley Island. The final site is on US 43 and offers a picnic area and boardwalks overlooking Chickasaw Creek. The balance of this loop will generally involve birds at a distance and a spotting scope is very helpful, if not necessary. There are many accommodations for food and lodging in the area, particularly around the intersection of US 98 and I-10 at exit 35.



Saraland

13

43

33

Chickasaw

Grand Bay

Prichard

65

165

16

32

31

30

10

Mobile

98

163

10

Mobile Bay

See detailed map
for sites 28-33

See detailed map
for sites 23-27

225

Blakeley

225

Spanish Fort

98

10

16

10

Daphne

42

Fairhope

CORD 48

23

25

24

26

27

28

29



Eastern Shore, Mobile Bay Causeway and Blakeley Island Loop



Belted Kingfisher

Bill Summerour

23. Fairhope Municipal Pier and Beach

[GPS] N30.52456 W-87.91165

This loop begins at the municipal park at the west end of Fairhope Avenue just off US 98A in Fairhope. There is no charge for the pier, but in summer there is a charge for entry to the beach. The pier is a good location for winter ducks, loons, gulls and terns.

24. Village Point Park

[GPS] N30.62872 W-87.91215

From Fairhope Municipal Park, follow Fairhope Avenue east to the center of Fairhope and turn left (*north*) onto US 98A (*N. Section Street*) [0.5]. Follow US 98A

through Montrose to Daphne, turning left (*west*) at Village Point Park [7.9]. At approximately 70 acres, Village Point Park is the largest park in the city of Daphne. A parking lot with bathrooms and a picnic pavilion marks the beginning of a 3,000-foot main trail that takes visitors westward toward Mobile Bay. Along the bay are a pier and an extensive boardwalk where visitors can walk north towards Bayfront Park, another Daphne city park. Mixed pine and hardwoods dominate the property. Yancey Branch flows along the southern boundary of the park and a small marsh is found near the bay. Common residents include Red-bellied Woodpecker and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. On occasion, Great Horned and Barred Owl might be encountered. Great Blue Heron, Great Egret and Tricolored Heron can be seen along the shores of the bay and marsh. Birds seen year around over water include Brown Pelican, Laughing Gull and Caspian Tern. In winter, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Ring-billed Gull and Forster's Tern are common. Gadwall is the dominant winter duck, although Green-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup and Bufflehead can be common at times. Bald eagle is not uncommon from this vantage point as well.





Bill Summeour

Tricolored Heron

Within Village Point Park is D'Olive Cemetery, a burial site of early Daphne settlers. Jackson's Oak, a massive Live Oak, is the site where General Andrew Jackson is said to have once bivouacked his troops.

25. D'Olive Bay Overlook

[GPS] N30.65145 W-87.91349

Just before the intersection with I-10 [1.5], D'Olive Bay overlook is on the left (*west*) behind the Shell service station. This spot provides an excellent view of the bay. In winter, check the bay for ducks and pelicans as well as wading birds year around. In addition, Peregrine Falcons are occasionally seen perching on top of the causeway light poles along I-10.



Bill Summeour

Snowy Egret

26. Meaher State Park

[GPS] N30.66917 W-87.93565

From the D'Olive Bay overlook, continue north on US 98 across I-10. You can either turn left (*northwest*) on US 98 and go to the next site, Meaher State Park (*skip to next paragraph for directions to Meaher State Park*). Or, you can continue straight 0.1 miles and take the next left onto Larry Dee Cawyer Drive and stop at the Scenic Overlook, which is atop the hill and surrounded by a rock wall. Area information and restrooms are available at the overlook, which is also the location of the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce.

From the Scenic Overlook, return to US 98, turn right at the light (*west*) and proceed to the junction of US 90/98/31 (*Mobile Bay Causeway*). Continue west on the Mobile Bay Causeway to the entrance of Meaher State Park on the left (*south*) [1.9]. Picnic facilities and restrooms are available here and the park closes at sunset. Stop at the gate house to pay a nominal entrance fee and then drive to the shell road, which runs a quarter mile to the boardwalk trail. Park here (*there is a chain across the shell road at this point*) and walk on toward the boardwalk that extends out into Mobile Bay. In winter, watch for Swamp and White-throated Sparrows as you approach the boardwalk. Herons, egrets, and gulls can be seen from the boardwalk, and rarely Least Bittern (*summer*) and Clapper Rail. In winter, American White Pelican finds this a favorite spot as do large rafts of waterfowl. In summer, this is a great place for terns, including Gull-billed Tern. In addition, Least Terns often gather on the railings of the boardwalk offering excellent views. On the south side of the island, looking west into the bay, there are often



Northern Cardinal

Bill Summerour

White Ibis. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron can be frequently seen near the entrance eating crabs.

27. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center

[GPS] N30.67511 W-87.93106

Leaving Meaher State Park, proceed directly across US 90/98/31 and follow the signs to 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center. This facility is managed by the ADCNR State Lands Division for outdoor recreation, conservation and land stewardship. Its name recognizes the five

ivers of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, which include the Mobile, Spanish, Tensaw, Apalachee and Blakeley Rivers (*from west to east*) that flow into Mobile Bay. These drainages encompass over 250,000 acres of meandering waterways, floodplain forests and extensive wetlands. The center features an exhibit hall, theater, gift shop, Delta boat tours, canoe and kayak rentals, hiking trails, and picnic areas. Visit the website for hours of operation and upcoming programs and events: www.alabama5rivers.com

The decks of the Delta Hall and the perimeter trail around the facility provide excellent vantage points to observe birds that are representative of the lower Mobile-Tensaw Delta marsh and waterways. In spring and summer look for Brown Pelican, Osprey, King Rail, Marsh Wren and several species of herons and egrets. Occasionally, Least Bittern and Purple Gallinule may be encountered along the margins of the emergent marsh. Painted Bunting may also be possible in the thickets



Least Terns at Meaher State Park

Bill Summerour



Bill Summerour

Boat-tailed Grackles

near the buildings. In fall, you may see rafts of American White Pelicans foraging. In winter, the vegetation along the water's edge is good habitat for Gray Catbird and a variety of sparrows. Across from the Delta Hall are hiking trails that meander through a grove of live oaks. Check here for migrants in spring and fall.

28. Mobile Bay Mudflats

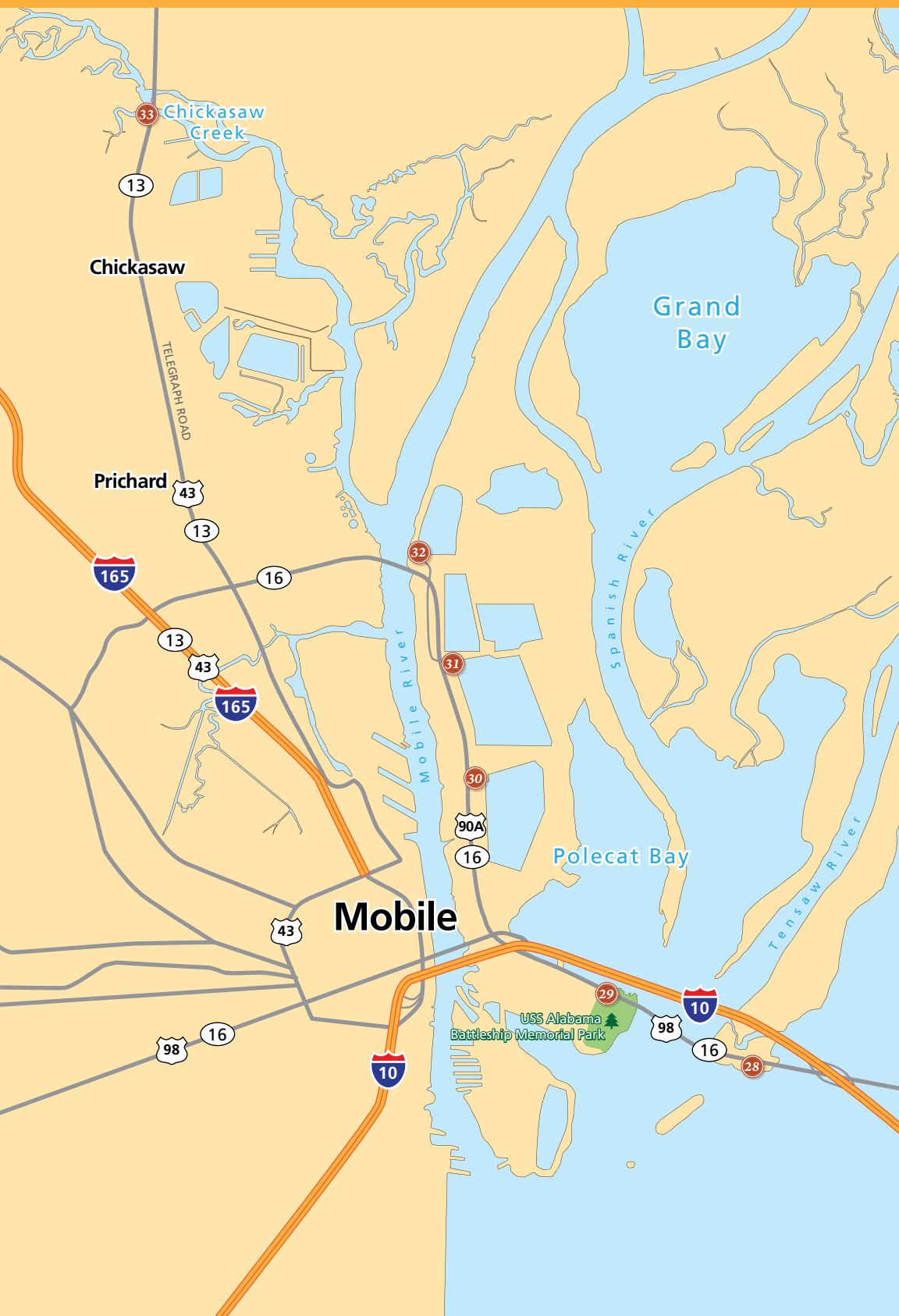
[GPS] N30.67996 W-88.00183

From 5 Rivers, proceed west on US 90/98/31 toward the Mobile Bay mudflats. Along the way, you may want to stop [3.4] at the public boat launch on the right just west of the I-10 interchange, to view a nesting colony of Cliff Swallows under the I-10 Causeway. Continue west another 0.5 miles to an unpaved overlook on the left (*south*) side of the causeway. The best viewing at this site is during low tide when the mudflats are exposed. This is a good place to look for herons, egrets and Boat-tailed Grackles any time of year. An assortment of sandpipers and plovers are regular during spring and fall migration. During high tide in winter, American Coot and waterfowl are regular.

29. Battleship Park

[GPS] N30.68529 W-88.01731

Cross over the bridge going westward and turn into the USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park on the left (*south*) [1.6]. Admission is charged per vehicle to enter the park which entitles you to use the restrooms in the gift shop. Immediately following heavy rains, the lawns of the park can be excellent for shorebirds including Black-bellied Plover, Least Sandpiper, and Short-billed Dowitcher. As you drive into the park, look for a paved walkway to your right leading to an observation deck overlooking Pinto Pass. During low tide this area is filled with herons, egrets and occasionally ibis, especially in late summer. Black-necked Stilt may be around almost any time of the year at low tide. In summer, Gull-billed Tern is present and Least Bittern often fly across from one marshy area to the next. During migration the mudflats are filled with shorebirds. Look for dabbling ducks in the shallows and bay ducks farther out in the deeper water to the south. There may be numbers of Yellow-crowned Night Herons here with many immatures in late summer and Black-crowned year round. Continue around to the parking lot to the east side along the bay, checking for gulls and terns. At the extreme north end, park and survey the lawn from this vantage point for plovers and sandpipers that you might have missed from the other side.



Chickasaw Creek

13

Chickasaw

TELEGRAPH ROAD

Prichard

43

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165

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90A

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Polecat Bay

Mobile

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USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park

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Spanish River

Tensaw River

30-32 Blakeley Island and Mud Lakes Dredge Disposal Areas Overview

Leaving Battleship Park, turn west on US 90/98 and proceed straight (past the traffic light at Bankhead Tunnel where the exit from I-10 merges [1.0]) onto US 90A and continue north to the Blakeley Island Dredge Disposal Area stops. There are three stops along this leg of the trail: North Blakeley Island Disposal Area, Blakeley Island Mud Lakes and South Blakeley Island Disposal Area. The dredge disposal areas contained within the dikes at Blakeley Island are the premier shorebirding spots in the state. Spring and fall migration can offer looks at hundreds of shorebirds. It is a reliable place to see a variety of ducks in winter. The shallow pools along the road as you approach the dikes are often good for shorebirds and one of the most reliable spots for Black-necked Stilts.

NOTE: This notice only applies to the Blakeley Island Mud Lakes Disposal Areas. The Mud Lakes are former industrial waste treatment sites and the waters in these dredge material management ponds can be extremely caustic. The ponds are currently used for the disposal of dredge materials by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Alabama State Port Authority. Do not leave the road or the tops of the dikes for any reason! Entry to the upper ponds is by permit only and requires the annual submission of a liability waiver form to the Alabama State Port Authority and notification of a visit beforehand. Weekdays call 251-441-7085, and on weekends call 251-441-7777 to notify the Port Authority of your intention to visit. You may download the required forms from the Alabama Ornithological Society (AOS) web site at www.aosbirds.org/blakeley.php. The forms may also be obtained at the welcome centers in Gulf Shores and Orange Beach or at Fort Conde in Mobile. The forms may be mailed to the Alabama State Port Authority (the address is on the forms) or faxed to: 251-441-9395. The AOS web page also has a map indicating which ponds are currently open to visitors. Insect repellent is in order. Be advised: any of the following trips are potentially long, hard, hot walks, so prepare accordingly.



Bill Summerour

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck

30. Blakeley Island – South Blakeley Disposal Area

[GPS] N30.71260 W-88.03362

From the traffic light at the Bankhead Tunnel, continue north on US 90A to access the South Blakeley Disposal Area

[1.4]. Park well off the road near the locked gate across from the “Bender Yard 9” sign, and leave the permit sheet visible on the front dash of your car. Bear to the left as you walk on the dirt road leading northeast to the diked pond. At the top of the dike, scan the large ponds in various stages of management; you must stay on the perimeter dikes. Best areas usually are in the northwest and southwest corners of the pond. This is a regular site for Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, where they now breed.

31. Blakeley Island – Mud Lakes [GPS] N30.72378 W-88.03659

Continue north from the traffic light to the locked gate [0.8], access Mud Lakes, park well out of the way, and walk the dirt road up the dike. Continue east on the dike road, remembering not to leave the dike



Red-winged Blackbird

Bill Summerour

for any reason. Depending on water levels and time of year, the first pond on the right (*south*) often offers the best conditions for viewing waterfowl like Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Mottled Duck, and Northern Shoveler, and various shorebirds, gulls and terns. This is also one of the best places to find White-rumped and Baird's Sandpipers in late spring.

32. Blakeley Island – North Blakeley Disposal Area

[GPS] N30.73343 W-88.03795

Continue northward on US 90A to access North Blakeley Disposal Area at the foot of the Cochrane-Africatown USA bridge, where you will note a road to the left (*west*) with a sign indicating "Alabama State Port Authority" [0.1]. Follow this under the bridge, carefully examining any birds that may be in the canals. As the road veers left, take the second dirt road right, which leads east to a locked gate at the base of a dike to the left [0.6]. Climb the dike to check the area, which, under the proper conditions, may produce waterfowl and shorebirds.

33. William Brooks Park

[GPS] N30.78175 W-88.07326

Return to US 90A and turn left (*north*) crossing the Cochrane-Africatown USA Bridge to the intersection with US 43 North [2.2]. Turn right onto a connector

road and travel a short distance [0.2] to the US 43 North intersection (*Telegraph Road*). Take a left (*north*) and proceed 3.3 miles to Williams Brooks Park located on the left (*west*) before you cross the bridge over Chickasaw Creek. This site is managed by the City of Chickasaw and features numerous picnic pavilions, trails, a boardwalk system and a couple of piers. The trails pass through a variety of habitats ranging from mixed pine-hardwood uplands to forested bottomlands. Look for migrants during the spring and fall. Prothonotary Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Summer Tanager, and Red-winged Blackbird are regular summer residents. The boardwalk system offers an easy walk that accesses a viewing pavilion. Check for waterfowl, waders and Osprey in the open areas over the creek.

This is the end of the Eastern Shore, Mobile Bay Causeway and Blakeley Island Loop. To proceed on to the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta Loop, continue north on US 43 to AL 158. Turn left (west) on AL 158 to I-65. Go North on I-65. As you cross over the Mobile River, you will have a spectacular view of the water and forest land below. Continue to AL 225 at exit 31, where you will go north on AL 225. Or you can return to US 90A and go south to the intersection of US 90 and I-10. Head west on I-10 to do the Dauphin Island – Bayou La Batre Loop. Drive on I-10 to the west side of Mobile to exit 17-A, AL 193 South. Go south on AL 193 to Dauphin Island. See the Dauphin Island – Bayou La Batre Loop section for further directions to the birding sites in this loop.



Mobile-
Tensaw
River
Delta
Loop



Mobile-Tensaw River Delta *Loop*

This loop begins at the intersection of I-65 and AL 225 just south of Stockton, AL. In this area northeast of Mobile, the waters of the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers merge into a maze of channels, creeks and bayous that make up the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. Though best explored by boat, these bottomlands can be accessed at several points along the eastern periphery from AL 225 and AL 59. The main attraction for birders is the abundance of breeding songbirds; other species such as large waders and kites also can be seen. Early May is the best time to do this loop. Start at the northern extreme of this loop, where good woodland birding may be found and then work your way southward. Insect repellent is a must!





Mobile-Tensaw River Delta Loop

34. Upper Delta Wildlife Management Area – French’s Lake

[GPS] N31.13559 W-87.84507

From Stockton, drive north on AL 59 and look for the Upper Delta Wildlife Management Area (WMA) sign [12.5]. Turn left on St. Luke Church Road. Follow the WMA signs to the tract and then follow signs to the French’s Lake Coastal Access Kiosk and Canoe Launch [1.2]. There is no parking or usage fee. This site is located on the Clearwater Forever Wild Tract and features an access point into the vast Mobile-Tensaw Delta system via the Bartram Canoe Trail managed by the ADCNR State Lands Division. Several featured trails start from this launch offering great opportunities to experience the natural wonders of the Delta. Wood Duck, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl, Acadian Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, American Redstart and Northern Parula are just a few of the birds that you will likely encounter. Specialties include Swallow-



Bill Summerour

Northern Parula at nest.

tailed Kite and Swainson’s Warbler. For more information about the featured trails, overnight trip possibilities and river stages, visit www.bartramcanoetrail.com. If you’d rather stay on land and bird, walk along the water’s edge or into the adjacent upland piney woods any time of year. During the summer months, look for Eastern Wood-Pewee, Yellow-throated Vireo, Brown-headed Nuthatch and Indigo Bunting. For more information about the WMA contact the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division at 251-626-5474; 30571 Five Rivers Blvd., Spanish Fort, AL 36527.



Bill Summerour

White-topped Pitcher Plants at Splinter Hill Bog.

Splinter Hill Bog – Overview

Located within the headwaters of the Perdido River watershed, Splinter Hill Bog is a biologically rich, Longleaf Pine ecosystem that is characterized by extensive pitcher plant bogs and openly-spaced pines over a gently rolling landscape. Representative parcels of this bog are owned separately by The Nature Conservancy, Forever Wild Land Trust and ADCNR State Lands Division, but together are managed as a large nature preserve accounting for more than 2,200 acres in conservation stewardship. Biologically, Splinter Hill Bog supports a high diversity of plant and animal species including many that are exclusively dependent on this fire-adapted ecosystem. Among these are some of North America's most sought-after birds such as Bachman's, Henslow's and LeConte's Sparrows. Splinter Hill Bog is represented by two sub-sites (described below), each featuring a trail system that traverses through several of the bog's characteristic habitats and offers an opportunity to view many of this ecosystem's associated bird species year around.

35A. Splinter Hill Bog – The Nature Conservancy Property

[GPS] N31.02534 W-87.68503

From the Upper Delta WMA, return to AL 59 and turn right (south) and proceed 3.4 miles to CR 96 and turn left (east). Continue on CR 96 and then turn left at CR 47 [8.5] and proceed 3.4 miles to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) parking lot on the right (south). The TNC parcel is approximately 924 acres and is open to the public from March 1 to October 15. From the parking lot follow an easy-to-walk trail with interpretive signs describing the natural features of the preserve. Along the trail, look for Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great Crested Flycatcher, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting, which are just some of the breeding songbirds that will likely be encountered. American Kestrel is possible any time of year. The trail leads to a kiosk where there are additional interpretive signs, brochures and special postings. For more information about this tract or The Nature Conservancy, call 251-433-1150 or visit www.nature.org/alabama.



Bill Summerour

Bachman's Sparrow

35B. Splinter Hill Bog Forever Wild Tract

[GPS] N31.02310 W-87.67862

From the TNC parking lot, continue east on CR 47 for 0.4 miles to the Forever Wild Tract parking lot on the left (north). The state-managed parcels make up a combined 1,350 acres that are open year-round. During the hunting season, be sure to check the sheltered billboard before entering the property. From the parking lot follow a primitive trail north into the property. The trail passes through pine-dominated sandhills, blackwater streams, and several pitcher plant bogs. In the higher, sandy portions of the tract, look for Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Bachman's Sparrow and soaring raptors. In the drains, White-eyed Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and resident songbirds are common. In winter, American Woodcock frequent these drains. Continuing into the pitcher plant bogs, look for Eastern Wood-pewee, Loggerhead Shrike and Common Yellowthroat. During the winter months, these bogs are home to Sedge Wren and numerous sparrow species including the coveted Henslow's and LeConte's Sparrows. Because of the large size of this

tract, be prepared to spend at least a half day and bring plenty of water, snacks and insect repellent. For more information about this tract or the Forever Wild program, visit www.alabamaforeverwild.com.

36. Cliff's Landing

[GPS] N30.86382 W-87.89517

From Splinter Hill Bog, continue east on CR 47 to I-65. Turn onto I-65 and travel south to exit 31 and turn left on AL 225 [14.0]. Continue southward on AL 225 to Cliff's Landing Road (CR 7) [6.6] on the right (west). Drive west on CR 7 from AL 225 [1.7] and turn into the large parking lot. One of the best spots in Alabama to view Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites, spring and summer, is at Cliff's Landing south of I-65. Look for kites and other raptors across the river to the west, with best light in the morning. Return to AL 225.



Bill Summerour

Prothonotary Warbler

37. Mobile Tensaw Delta Wildlife Management Area

[GPS] N30.81899 W-87.91393

Continue southward on AL 225 to CR 86 on the right (west) [1.9]. Turn onto CR 86 and continue to a fork in the road [0.8] and bear left and continue



Bill Summeour

Road leading to old town site; Historic Blakeley State Park.

to the wildlife management area at the end of the road [2.9]. Located along the east bank of the Tensaw River is an 850-acre parcel of the Mobile Tensaw Delta Wildlife Management Area. Purchased by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as part of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway mitigation, this area is managed by the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division. A variety of habitats may be found on this WMA including flooded hardwood bottoms along the river to upland hardwoods and pines. Also located on the WMA is a lake and peripheral freshwater marshes. During the breeding season common species include Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl, Red-eyed Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler and Northern Parula. Swallow-tailed Kite may be spotted flying along the river banks just above the tree line. Hunting season in the management area runs from mid-October to the end of February, though non-consumptive use is permitted year around. For more information contact the Alabama

Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division at 251-626-5474; 30571 Five Rivers Blvd, Spanish Fort, AL 36527.

38. Historic Blakeley State Park

[GPS] N30.73235 W-87.90010

Return to AL 225 and continue south to the park entrance [7.5] on the right (west). Turn right and get park information at the welcome station. Follow the road into the site. Park hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily and a nominal admission fee is charged. The park gives easy access to the usual woodland species in a pleasant setting.

This is the end of the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta Loop. Return to AL 225 turn right and continue southward to I-10 and head west. Continue west on I-10 to exit 17-A, AL 193 South, to Dauphin Island. Go south on 193 to the beginning of the Dauphin Island – Bayou La Batre Loop.



Dauphin
Island –
Bayou
La Batre
Loop



Dauphin Island – Bayou La Batre *Loop*

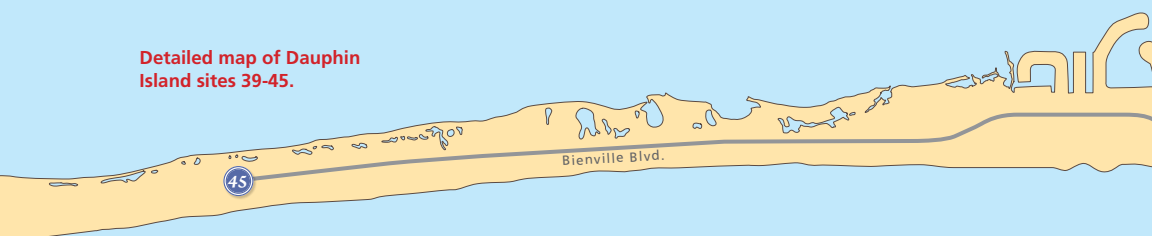
Dauphin Island is one of the most popular places on the Gulf Coast for birding during spring migration. As a classic migrant trap, it can be an overwhelming experience during a spring fallout when a cold front moving southward brings rain and northerly winds that cause birds to literally fall from the sky. Birding can be equally good in the fall but seems to linger longer. Motels are conveniently located for birding as are several excellent restaurants. The loop begins at the water tower on Dauphin Island at the southern end of AL 193, covers the forested eastern portion of the island, then the western portion. The loop then continues across the bridge and causeway to the mainland and ends west of Bayou La Batre.





Dauphin Island – Bayou La Batre Loop

Detailed map of Dauphin Island sites 39-45.



Bill Summerour

Scarlet Tanager

39. Shell Mound Park

[GPS] N30.25586 W-88.10752

From the water tower, drive east on Bienville Boulevard to Iberville Street [0.3], turn left (*north*) and you will see Shell Mound Park straight ahead. Park on the shoulder and explore the trails through the mounds, which are ancient Indian shell middens. The park is managed by

the ADCNR Marine Resources Division, whose offices are on the back side (*northeast corner*) of the park. Check in the office for a tide table as it will be an invaluable resource if birding for waders and shorebirds. The ancient live oaks provide the insects and cover that neotropical migrants depend on at their first landfall. It is not unusual to see 20 species of warblers here on a good day. Check the information box at the north side of the mounds for recent bird sightings and a bird card for the island. Look northward from here across the field to the feeders on the edge of the lawn. Check for both Shiny and Bronzed Cowbirds that may show up occasionally.

40. Goat Trees

[GPS] N30.25333 W-88.10172

After leaving Shell Mound Park turn left (*east*) onto Cadillac Avenue and continue



east to Grant Street [0.4]. Park on the shoulder out of the traffic and bird the trails amongst the large oaks on the left. Migrants frequently feed in these trees.

41. Cadillac Square

[GPS] N30.25172 W-88.10222

Turn right (*south*) on Grant Street and return to Bienville Boulevard. Across the street you will see Cadillac Square, a roadside park with old live oaks, picnic tables and restrooms. It is also a good place to bird. Black-whiskered Vireo has been seen here in the recent past.

42. Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuary

[GPS] N30.25114 W-88.08761

Continue eastward on Bienville Boulevard passing Audubon Street to the Dauphin Island Audubon Bird Sanctuary [0.9]. Turn



Painted Redstart

right (*south*) onto a small gravel drive (*look for the sign*) and proceed to the parking area [100 yards]. During peak migration in mid-April, you may have to park in the median on Bienville Boulevard when the parking lot is full. Check the information box in the parking lot for brochures and study the map. The sanctuary consists of

Bill Summerour

164 acres of largely maritime pine forest with several miles of trails. Passerines prefer the oak grove of the old Banding Area to the extreme east end of the Campground Trail and the south boundary of the swamp along the Dune Edge Trail. Swainson's Warbler is regularly found at the Banding Area and Black-whiskered Vireo may be found there occasionally. In addition, a Painted Redstart was seen here in spring 2011, which accounted for the second state record.

43. Pelican Point

[GPS] N30.24978 W-88.07608

Continue eastward along Bienville Boulevard past the ferry landing. You may want to pause here for the restrooms and/or look at the far shore for seabirds, waders and shorebirds. Ferry landings are always good for gulls and terns. Continue past the Estuarium and on around the east end of Fort Gaines to the parking lot at the end of the road [0.9]. This spot provides an excellent view of the Gulf of Mexico and Mobile Pass.

Check the jetties for shorebirds. Black-bellied Plover and Ruddy Turnstone are common. Marbled Godwit and Red Knot are fairly regular in spring along the shore. Bobolinks frequent the field and underbrush between the road and the fort during migration.

44 Airport

[GPS] N30.25746 W-88.12391

Return along Bienville Boulevard back to the water tower. Continue to the next intersection and turn right (*north*) on Lackland Street after passing the town hall on the left. Proceed on Lackland



Bill Summerour

Clapper Rail

two blocks to Chaumont Avenue, turn left (*west*) and continue on Chaumont to Omega Street. Bear right toward the airport where there is marsh on both sides of the road. Continue to the end of the road and park. Observe the no trespassing signs for the airport proper. Though this is a small general aviation strip there is regular helicopter traffic out to the gas wells in the Gulf.

Check the marshes carefully for rails. Clapper Rail is common. In fall and winter, Virginia Rail and Sora are fairly common, though secretive. Yellow Rail is very rare in winter as is Black Rail most of the year. Also check the marshes for Nelson's and Seaside Sparrows. Check the ponds and sandbars to the north for Reddish Egret. Also in winter, scan the bay for waterfowl including Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Horned and Eared Grebes. Long-tailed Duck is an occasional visitor. During spring and fall migration check the brush and trees near Omega Street for passerines, particularly after a front with strong west winds. This is the time and place for possible vagrants.



Snowy Plover

Bill Summerour

45 West End

[GPS] N30.24877 W-88.19136

From the parking lot, turn right (*south*) onto Omega Street and proceed to Bienville Boulevard. Turn right (*west*) on Bienville and continue westward after the boulevard turns to two lanes, and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road just beyond the turnaround. Parking is not allowed at the turnaround just before the parking lot. Admission is charged at the



Bill Summeour

Wilson's Plover

parking lot when the beach concessions are open. Picnic tables and public restrooms are available here. A spotting scope is recommended to take full advantage of the birding at this locale.

Walk the shore between the water and the high-tide line to avoid disturbing nesting habitat for Snowy and Wilson's Plovers. Large numbers of gulls, terns, shorebirds and wading birds often congregate along the water's edge on the sound side of the west end. Watch for seabirds and waterfowl offshore and raptors overhead. Common Nighthawk has been known to breed on the extreme West End. Return to the water tower.

46. Bayfront Park

[GPS] N30.35748 W-88.11713

From the Dauphin Island water tower, proceed north on Le Moyne Drive (AL



John Borom

Indigo Bunting

193) across the bridge to the mainland, carefully driving and looking at the same time. Do not stop on the bridge, although the sandbars and shoals will be full of birds at low tide. Continue northward to Bayfront Park on the right (east) [7.7]. This is a county park that affords a good view of the open bay with some marsh habitat. There are picnic tables and public restrooms available. Look

for gulls and terns on the pilings in the bay and shorebirds along the shoreline. From the shoreline, walk the boardwalk to an inland marsh. Look closely for Least Bittern and Clapper Rail. During fall and winter, Virginia Rail and Sora are regular, but secretive. Marsh Wren, Common Yellowthroat and Boat-tailed Grackle are also common.

47. Muddy Creek Wetlands

Management Area

[GPS] N30.51702 W-88.15276

From Bayfront Park, continue north on AL 193 to a four-way stop [10.2]. Follow AL 193 by turning left (*west*) and traveling 0.7 miles to the next intersection. Turn right (*north*), following AL 193 and proceed 0.9 miles to Degussa Road. Turn left (*west*) on Degussa Road and continue to a stop sign and a railroad track crossing [1.2]. Cross the railroad tracks and turn left onto Industrial Road and travel 0.7 miles to a paved parking lot on the right (*north*). The Muddy Creek Wetlands Management Area consists of 200 acres of restored wetlands and adjacent uplands managed by the Alabama State Port Authority to mitigate for construction impacts on the Theodore Channel. In cooperation with the Alabama Department of Corrections, restoration actions included clearing rubbish, removing invasive, non-native plants, replanting over 20,000 native trees and shrubs, erecting 80 nest boxes and building an extensive trail system. This national award-winning mitigation project features a 2.3-mile easy-to-walk interpretive trail that traverses through several distinctive habitats offering excellent birding opportunities throughout the year. The upland portions are a reliable place to find Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Wood-pewee,

Prairie Warbler and Blue Grosbeak. The trail then leads to a long boardwalk over Muddy Creek and adjacent bottomland forest. Scan the Bald Cypress, hardwoods and wetland shrubs for an assortment of vireos, warblers and resident species. Eventually, the trail winds to a large beaver impoundment along the northern end of the tract where Wood Duck, Common Yellowthroat and Northern Parula are common. This area is open to the public daily during daylight hours and closes at dark. For additional information about the Muddy Creek Wetlands Management Area, call 251-441-7001.



John Borom

Northern Mockingbird

48. Bellingrath Gardens

[GPS] N30.43097 W-88.14664

Leaving the Muddy Creek parking lot, turn right (*west*) on Industrial Road and travel to the Bellingrath Road intersection (CR 59) [1.0]. Take a left (*south*) and continue 5.7 miles and bear left (*east*) on a cutoff road toward the gardens. At the intersection, proceed east to the parking lot [1.0]. The entire 900-acre complex is a bird sanctuary and there is an observation tower overlooking the Fowl River and salt marsh. Although good year-round, birding potential for neotropical migrants increases during the spring and fall months. Cruises



Ruddy Turnstone

through the waters of the Fowl River aboard the Southern Belle are available March through November. The gardens open at 8 a.m.; closing time is seasonal. Call Bellingrath Gardens at 251-973-2217 or visit www.bellingrath.org for admission costs to the gardens and the river cruise. Return to Bellingrath Road, turn left (*south*) and continue to AL 188 [4.0].

49. Coden Belt Road

[GPS] N30.37155 W-88.22811

Turn right (*west*) at AL 188 and proceed to Clark Road [3.7] in Coden, turn left (*south*), follow the road to the water's edge and park at Rolston Park. Continue westward on Coden Belt Road. There

will be a few sandbars exposed at low tide, which may be good for shorebirds, gulls and terns. Occasionally a large flock of Black Skimmers can be viewed out over the water. Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot and Dunlin may be found in winter on the sandbars. If it's a cold winter there may be bay ducks out on the water.

50. Henderson Camp Road – Grand Bay Savanna Forever Wild Tract

[GPS] N30.42149 W-88.32637

Coden Belt Road loops back to AL 188 at the Coden Bayou Bridge. Turn left (*west*) and continue west on AL 188 through Bayou La Batre. Continue following AL 188 by turning left (*west*) at



John Borom

Whimbrel

the McDonald's [3.4]. Proceed 5.9 miles to Henderson Camp Road and turn left (*south*). The highlight of this stop is in spring during migration. After 2.5 miles or so, begin scanning the cattle pastures and fallow fields on both sides of the road. In April, look for Swallow-tailed Kite foraging over freshly cut fields and flocks of Whimbrel scattered in the pastures. Whimbrel flock sizes occasionally exceed into the hundreds, making this one of the premier places in coastal Alabama to observe this species during migration. Throughout the winter months American Kestrel, Loggerhead Shrike, Field Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlark are regularly encountered. In spring, Painted Bunting is occasional along fence rows.

Continue south to the gravel parking lot on the left where the pavement ends [3.5] to access the northwestern section of the Grand Bay Savanna Forever Wild Tracts. Four contiguous parcels together make up more than 5,300 acres managed as a nature preserve by the ADCNR State Lands Division and a community hunting area by the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division. The tracts host a variety of marsh, bog and lowland forest habitats representative of the northern Gulf Coast.

From the parking lot, take either a hiking trail east along the property boundary or walk the dirt road south of the parking lot. Before you enter the property, be sure to check the sheltered billboard during the hunting season. Along the north boundary trail, knee boots are recommended for the low-lying areas the trail crosses. Red-headed Woodpecker, White-eyed Vireo and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher are common here. Alternatively, following the road south allows easy viewing of the pine savanna where residents like Brown-headed Nuthatch are regular year-round. Birding opportunity increases along this stretch during spring and fall migration.

This is the end of the Dauphin Island - Bayou La Batre Loop. Hopefully your tour of the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail was a memorable experience and you will return again and again to enjoy the extraordinary bird life of our area. Return to AL 188 from Henderson Camp Road. To head for I-10 and Mississippi, turn left (north) and take AL 188 to Grand Bay and I-10. To retrace your path, turn right and continue eastward on AL 188 to Alabama Port and the intersection with AL 193. At this point you may turn left (north) and return to I-10 and Mobile. Or, you can turn right (south) and return to Dauphin Island. You may want to stay on the island or take the ferry to Ft. Morgan.

American Birding Association's Code of Birding Ethics

Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first.

1. Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.

- (a) Support the protection of important bird habitat.
- (b) To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming. Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered or of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area. Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites. In such sensitive areas, if there is a need for extended observation, photography, filming, or recording, try to use a blind or hide, and take advantage of natural cover. Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.
- (c) Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance can be minimized, and permission has been obtained from private landowners. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities.
- (d) Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; otherwise keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

2. Respect the law and the rights of others.

- (a) Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.
- (b) Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas, both at home and abroad.
- (c) Practice common courtesy in contacts with other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike.

3. Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments are safe.

- (a) Keep dispensers, water and food clean and free of decay or disease.
- (b) It is important to feed birds continually during harsh weather.

(c) If you are attracting birds to an area, ensure the birds are not exposed to predation from cats and other domestic animals, or dangers posed by artificial hazards.

4. Group birding, whether organized or impromptu, requires special care. Each individual in the group, in addition to the obligations spelled out in Items #1 and #2, has responsibilities as a Group Member.

(a) Respect the interests, rights, and skills of fellow birders, as well as those of people participating in other legitimate outdoor activities. Freely share your knowledge and experience, except where code 1(c) applies. Be especially helpful to beginning birders.

(b) If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation and intervene if you think it prudent. When interceding, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.

Group Leader Responsibilities [amateur and professional trips and tours].

(c) Be an exemplary ethical role model for the group. Teach through word and example.

(d) Keep groups to a size that limits impact on the environment and does not interfere with others using the same area.

(e) Ensure everyone in the group knows of and practices this code.

(f) Learn and inform the group of any special circumstances applicable to the areas being visited (e.g., no tape recorders allowed).

(g) Acknowledge that professional tour companies bear a special responsibility to place the welfare of birds and the benefits of public knowledge ahead of the company's commercial interests. Ideally, leaders should keep track of tour sightings, document unusual occurrences, and submit records to appropriate organizations. Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first.

PLEASE FOLLOW THIS CODE—DISTRIBUTE IT AND TEACH IT TO OTHERS.

Additional copies of the Code of Birding Ethics can be obtained from:

American Birding Association
4945 N. 30th Street, Suite 200
Colorado Springs, CO 80919-3151
800-850-2473 or 719-578-9703
member@aba.org

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Black-necked Stilt

Showcasing dynamic coastal habitats and a high diversity of bird species, the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail is an Alabama treasure that blends the best of conservation and tourism. The State Lands Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, current manager of the ACBT, would like to thank the partners listed below. The ACBT would not be possible without their continued cooperation and generous support.

Alabama State Lands Division

5 Rivers Delta Resource Center

Alabama Chapter, The Nature Conservancy

Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau

Alabama Historical Commission

Alabama Ornithological Society, Coastal Birding Association

Alabama State Port Authority

Baldwin County

Bellingrath Gardens

Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, USFWS

City of Bayou La Batre

City of Chickasaw

City of Coden

City of Daphne

City of Dauphin Island

City of Fairhope

City of Foley

City of Gulf Shores

City of Mobile

City of Orange Beach

City of Spanish Fort

Daphne Ecological Services Field Office, USFWS

Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries

Forever Wild Land Trust

Historic Blakeley State Park

Magnolia Springs Landfill

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Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, ADCNR

USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park



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www.outdooralabama.com
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www.alabama5ivers.com
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