



# NORTH ALABAMA BIRDWATCHERS SOCIETY

## SCHEDULE AND DESCRIPTION OF TRIPS, 2021-22



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Ken Ward, President

OUR 45<sup>th</sup> SEASON

Rufina Ward, Editor

Hi All ☺! For those of you new to us, the North Alabama Birdwatchers Society (NABS) is an informal group that focuses on birding in northern Alabama. We have been around since 1976 and are the only birding group in our area to offer a set of regularly scheduled trips each year. We visit a variety of areas across this part of the state, most of which are included on the North Alabama Birding Trail (NABT, <https://alabamabirdingtrails.com/>). We also have a Facebook group page, **North Alabama Birdwatchers Society (NABS)**, where folks can join NABS, post pics, discuss birds and related subjects, etc. NABS is open to everyone, including beginners, and especially young folks with an interest in birds; there are no membership dues.

The protocol for NABS outings is pretty simple. We convene at the designated time at our meeting spot, from which we'll either drive (usually) or walk to our birding area. Typically, we hang around for 10-15 minutes after the meeting time before we depart, which gives us a bit of time to work out logistics, talk about where we'll be going, etc. So, it's best to be on time, for obvious reasons. Attendees are responsible for their own transportation, although there usually are opportunities to carpool and we'll usually have a van for trips to Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

Our ultimate goal for any NABS outing is to give everyone an opportunity to observe (and hopefully hear) every bird species we encounter. That seldom happens, but we usually get pretty close. Cameras are welcome too, although the emphasis is on birding. Our rules of etiquette are few but the ones we do have are important:

1. Be reasonably restrained, as to making noise (no dogs or unruly children);
2. While cameras are most welcome, please don't let pic-taking disrupt the birding (see ultimate goal above);
3. Don't get out in front of the group -- flushing the birds before others can see them is not very nice;
4. Use of song/call recordings to attract birds is up to the discretion of the trip leader. The focus of using such is tied to our main goal of giving everyone a chance to see the species we encounter, especially uncommon or difficult-to-observe birds (e.g., Winter Wren). Beyond a certain point, recordings can become a form of harassment for the birds, thus it should be used sparingly. In particular, recordings should never be used around breeding birds, which can cause nest abandonment or even attract predators to a nest.
5. Above all, follow the guidance of the trip leader.

By birding with NABS, you'll have the opportunity to go out with experienced people who are familiar with the places we visit and who love to share their knowledge. NABS can also provide greater access to certain areas where such is restricted, e.g., driving behind locked refuge gates at Wheeler NWR, or visiting the privately-owned Jones 'Hawk Farm'.

Although the focus is on birds, NABS outings also offer opportunities to become more generally familiar with many of the beautiful and diverse natural areas characteristic of northern Alabama. The places we'll visit provide excellent opportunities to observe, study, photograph and appreciate a variety of flora and fauna, including wildflowers, trees, insects, reptiles/amphibians, and mammals. Some NABS regulars have considerable knowledge of these other groups and would be glad to answer questions and provide information during trips.

Most of our trips are on Saturdays, although we have a few Sunday outings, especially during the spring. **Please note that we have different meeting times for our trips, depending on time of year: Aug-Oct and late March-May meeting time is 7 am, while for Nov-early March trips we'll meet at 8 am.** Generally, birding is best, especially for songbirds, early in the morning during warmer times of the year (especially when migration is in full swing), hence the early start times then. Our trips usually require 2-3 hours, although half-day trips are usually the norm for our Wheeler trips and others that involve more travel. If we are done by lunch, we often find a spot to eat together, for those interested. Bring your binoculars, spotting scopes, cameras, field guides, refreshments, bug repellent and rain gear, as needed. We

seldom officially cancel trips; if the weather is bad (heavy rain) or dangerous (icy roads, severe storms) enough to warrant cancellation, we will send out an email notice.

For those of you who don't already know, this past season we implemented a rule that eligibility to attend NABS outings would require being on the NABS email list. This is related to 2 things: 1) establishment of rules several years ago by Wheeler NWR that limits attendance and number of vehicles allowed for group activities into restricted areas, and 2) much greater exposure of NABS to the public in recent years, primarily due to our having a NABS FB page. This has been a good thing in general, as attendance has improved quite a bit, but it also makes it necessary to keep a closer tab on attendance. We are currently restricted to a total of 5 vehicles into restricted areas (behind locked gates) on Wheeler, one of which can be a 15-person Refuge van, when available and with a qualified person to drive it (It's worth mentioning too that there is also a minimum attendance requirement of 8 for groups driving in restricted areas). Our other trips don't have a formal limit on attendance although, past a certain point, it could adversely affect the quality of some trips. As a result, we may have to restrict attendance; the email list is the best tool we have for doing that.

Finally, a note on covid. **We'll be following CDC guidelines relative to covid for all our trips.** Given guidelines may be modified over time, I'll be updating information in trip reminders, as needed. As of now masks won't be needed outside. However, attendees should bring one, just in case, especially on Wheeler trips, given how crowded the carpooling may be. **Finally, those who are not vaccinated should not attend.**

Send your comments, questions and suggestions to Rufina or Ken Ward (256-679-3570 or 8332; [kenphin1990@gmail.com](mailto:kenphin1990@gmail.com), [rufina.ward@gmail.com](mailto:rufina.ward@gmail.com)). **PLEASE NOTE OUR PHONE AND EMAIL INFORMATION HAVE CHANGED (the old wowway email no longer exists).**

Below are descriptions of the trips scheduled for this season, with directions to meeting spots, GPS Coordinates (for most of the trips), trip leaders and contact numbers. **Please note especially that we have added several non-NABS Christmas and Migration bird counts to the list. Some NABS members are heavily involved in these counts and we encourage you to consider participating in some of them, as they are always shorthanded.** Thanks for your support and we look forward to seeing you this season!

## 2021-22 NABS SCHEDULE AND DESCRIPTION OF TRIPS

### **1. Leighton Area Shorebird Trip, Wheeler Dam (NABT #2, 4, 5) – 28 August, 2021 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am**

We will explore the Leighton area and swing by Wheeler Dam on this trip. We'll be looking primarily for shorebird migrants, whose movement through our area should be peaking; our success will depend largely on water levels. We should pick up some neo-tropical songbird migrants as well. We'll meet at the Ingalls Boat Harbor Pavilion in Decatur: from the direction of Huntsville, cross the river bridge and take the first right onto Alt 72/20 (Wilson St.). Go about a mile and turn right on Neher St., follow to pavilion parking lot. – **Ken and Rufina Ward, Leaders (256-679-8332; [kenphin1990@gmail.com](mailto:kenphin1990@gmail.com))**

### **2. Indian Creek Greenway, Creekwood Park - 11 September, 2021 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am**

Indian Creek Greenway has been an interesting late spring migration spot for NABS the last few years. Our fall trip can also be productive, yielding a variety of songbird migrants, not to mention being a pretty place to bird and take pics. We'll access the greenway via Creekwood Park in SW Madison (360 Harvestwood Ct., **Madison, AL 35758**). From University Dr., take Slaughter Road south, turn left at Harvestwood (there will be a sign before the turn) and follow signs through the subdivision to the parking lot. This is a walking trip, likely around 2 miles round trip; getting back to your car is easy, if you need to leave early. – **Ken Ward, Leader (256-679-8332; [kenphin1990@gmail.com](mailto:kenphin1990@gmail.com))**

### **3. Swan Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) (NABT #21) – 18 September, 2021 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am**

This trip targets neotropical songbird migrants and shorebirds (depending on water levels), either breeding residents heading south or transients passing through from the north, mostly on their way to Central and South America. As many or more birds actually pass through our area in the fall than in spring, but the migration period is longer, and a defined peak is hard to pinpoint. We will meet at the southernmost parking lot of Calhoun Community College. From Huntsville, take I-565 W/Hwy 20 toward Decatur. Just before the river, take the Hwy 31 exit north, then turn right at the first traffic light past the Subway. – **Milton Harris, Leader (256-679-7501; [miltonh70@gmail.com](mailto:miltonh70@gmail.com))**

**4. Wheeler NWR Fall Migration Count (NABT) –25 September, 2021 (SATURDAY) 5-6 am (meeting time varies by count group)**

The format for this count is similar to that used for Audubon Christmas Counts – identify and count all birds seen or heard from dawn to late afternoon/dusk; different groups bird different parts of the refuge and nearby areas. This count is always scheduled during the peak fall migration period. **Birders of all skill levels are welcome; we need all the eyes and ears we can get and are usually short-handed on migration counts.** Cameras are also welcome, especially for documenting rarities, but the birding will be pretty intense, in order to cover areas sufficiently. Since we don't have a single gathering spot or time for folks to meet and join a group, new participants should contact Dwight Cooley by September 15 to get assigned to a party. We'll meet around 6 pm at the Refuge Visitor's Center for compilation; everyone is welcome. – **Dwight Cooley, Leader/Compiler (256-565-6239; [sabrewing@earthlink.net](mailto:sabrewing@earthlink.net))**

**5. Monte Sano State Park (SP) (NABT #29) - 2 October, 2021 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am**

We will be looking again for fall migrants, especially warblers; Monte Sano is one of the better birding spots in the state during migration. Take Monte Sano Boulevard off Governors Drive at the top of the mountain and follow the signs to the park (please note that day-use fees may be collected at the park entrance: \$5 per person, discounts for children, military, etc). Once there, go in the direction of headquarters and park at the Camp Store, in the gravel, if possible. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE BIRDING IS SOMETIMES BETTER EARLIER; FEEL FREE TO COME UP BETWEEN 6 AND 6:30 IF YOU LIKE, AS SOME OF US WILL PROBABLY ALREADY BE AT THE OVERLOOK (34.745325 -86.511672). – **Milton Harris, Leader (256-679-7501; [miltonh70@gmail.com](mailto:miltonh70@gmail.com))**

*Alabama Ornithological Society Fall Meeting, October 8-10 Dauphin Island, AL*

**6. Wheeler NWR –Limestone Bay/White Springs Dike (NABT #23) – 6 November, 2021 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)**

We'll start from Mooresville and travel a short distance to Arrowhead Landing Road, as usual, and bird our way down by car, stopping at several places to look out over the bay, including the boat ramp area. We'll then go behind a refuge gate into the White Springs Dike area, birding along the dike to the gate on the southern end, near Decatur. We'll see some waterfowl (still a bit early for them), perhaps some Sandhill Cranes, hopefully a good number of White Pelicans, potentially several raptor species and a variety of songbirds, many of them are returning winter residents. To get to the meeting place, take the Mooresville exit off I-565, go south towards Mooresville and meet at the parking area near where it intersects with old Highway 20 (34.627442 -86.880186). – **Tom Ress, Leader (256-233-3057; [resscat@aol.com](mailto:resscat@aol.com))**

**7. Wheeler NWR - Visitor Center and Garth Slough (NABT #16) – 13 November, 2021 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)**

We'll first spend some time around the Visitor's Center. There should be a few waterfowl around, perhaps considerable numbers of Sandhill Cranes in the fields beyond the observation pond and possibly a Whooping Crane or two, if some are already in the area. We'll then head to Garth Slough on the Refuge and bird along the Tennessee River and slough, looking for passing waterfowl, cranes, gulls and eagles, songbirds, raptors and possibly some shorebirds, depending on water levels. Overwintering sparrows should be around in numbers and we should see a good variety, including Song, Swamp, White-throated, perhaps Fox and White-crowned, and, possibly, Lincoln's. We'll meet at the Wheeler NWR Interpretive Nature (Visitor) Center off Hwy 67. From I-65, take exit 334 and head toward Decatur; after crossing the water, the road to the Visitor Center will be on the left (34.547406 -86.951136). –**Dwight Cooley, Leader (256-565-6239; [sabrewing@earthlink.net](mailto:sabrewing@earthlink.net))**

**8. Swan Creek Wildlife Management Area (NABT #21) – 20 November, 2021 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)**

This trip will give us a chance to visit one of the most productive segments of the Wheeler NWR Christmas Count circle. There is active duck hunting at Swan Creek this time of year, which will drive away most of the waterfowl. However, the area has lots of other birds. One area of interest is the set of fields on the north edge of the management area (behind the old warehouse). This spot usually has a number of sparrows, often including White-Crowned. Unless it rains heavily, we can expect to have some exposed mud flats where we could pick up some shorebirds and Lapland Longspurs. In the past couple of years, LeConte's sparrow had been found near the boat ramp within the management area compound. Other species we might encounter include Marsh Wren, Orange-Crowned Warbler, Palm Warbler and Common Yellowthroat, all uncommon to rare species this time of year in our area. We will meet at the southernmost parking lot of Calhoun Community College. From Huntsville, take I-565 W/Hwy 20 toward Decatur. Just before the river, take the Hwy 31 exit

north, then turn right at the first traffic light past the Subway.- **Milton Harris, Leader (256-679-7501; [miltonh70@gmail.com](mailto:miltonh70@gmail.com))**

**9. Wheeler NWR - Penny Bottoms/Blackwell Swamp/Rockhouse/Buckeye (NABT #26) – 4 December, 2021 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)**

Attendees will get to see another interesting part of the refuge on this trip. This area runs parallel to the Tennessee River and should yield a nice variety of songbirds, raptors, waterfowl, and other species. Take the Mooresville exit off I-565, go south on Mooresville Road and meet at the parking area near where it intersects with old Highway 20 (34.627442 - 86.880186). – **Dwight Cooley, Leader (256-565-6239; [sabrewing@earthlink.net](mailto:sabrewing@earthlink.net))**

**10. Wheeler NWR – Beaverdam Peninsula/Limestone Bay/White Springs Dike (NABT #20, 23, 24) – 11 December, 2021 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)**

This traditional NABS route is one of the best we have for productive late fall/winter birding and among the best places in the state to get great looks at a variety of waterfowl, which should be present in numbers, especially the Tennessee River backwaters and marsh near the Decatur end of the dike. Birding with a group like NABS provides an opportunity to drive behind locked gates (provided we have at least eight people!), thus gaining access to the best areas to see lots of ducks and geese. We'll be birding by car to cover the necessary area, but there will be plenty of stops and opportunities to walk around and enjoy the refuge. In addition to waterfowl, we'll be looking for Sandhill Cranes, White Pelicans, late shorebird migrants, raptors and returning winter-resident songbirds. We'll be behind locked gates for 2-3 hours and should be done around lunchtime. Take the Mooresville exit off I-565, go south towards Mooresville and meet at the parking area near where it intersects with old Highway 20 (34.627442 -86.880186) - **Dwight Cooley, Leader (256-565-6239; [sabrewing@earthlink.net](mailto:sabrewing@earthlink.net))**

**11. Wheeler NWR Audubon Christmas Bird Count (NABT) - 18 December, 2021 (SATURDAY) 5:30 am**

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count is the oldest and largest citizen science event in the world. For over a hundred years, people have gathered during the winter holiday season to identify and count birds. In the process, they have created a vast pool of bird data that is a valuable source of information on the status and distribution of early winter bird populations. Parties of birders are assigned to different parts of a count circle, 15 miles in diameter, to identify and count all birds seen or heard from dawn to dusk. There are currently 14 active count circles in Alabama and over 2000 nationwide. Wheeler is one of the more productive inland count areas around, usually yielding 115-120 species, and always including some unusual birds. **Birders of all skill levels are welcome and needed; we go in all types of weather. If you can't do the whole day but would still like to participate, we should be able to connect you with a party leader to arrange that (contact Dwight by 8 December).** To join a party, meet at the Wheeler NWR Interpretive Nature (Visitor) Center, south off Hwy 67, east of Decatur. From I-65 take exit 334 and head toward Decatur; after crossing the water, the road to the Visitor Center will be on the left (watch for a sign on the right). We'll regroup there at sundown for the tally (compilation), which is a lot of fun. Bring binoculars, a spotting scope, if you have one, your camera, if you wish and lunch. (34.547406 -86.951136). – **Dwight Cooley, Leader/Compiler (256-565-6239; [sabrewing@earthlink.net](mailto:sabrewing@earthlink.net))**

**12. Cullman Audubon Christmas Bird Count – 19 December, 2021 (SUNDAY) 6:30 am**

Another Christmas Count that sometimes gets overlooked in northern Alabama is held in the Cullman area. Counters meet at Culpepper Real Estate (601 7th Ave SW, Cullman, AL 35055, close to the Post Office) to assign areas to be covered. **This count is frequently short-handed, so we hope some of you will consider helping out.** Those who want to help for part of the day (morning or afternoon) can also participate. We will re-meet for compilation at 5:00 pm at Karma's Coffee House (103 1st Ave NE, Cullman, AL 35055). - **Vince Meleski, Leader/Compiler (256-739-4589; [vincemeleski@outlook.com](mailto:vincemeleski@outlook.com))**

**13. Waterloo AL Audubon Christmas Bird Count – 20 December 2021 (MONDAY) time here?**

**Coordination with compiler is required before the count.** This date is a change from historically first Saturday count, hoping to increase participation by folks involved in other first Saturday counts (Hint, Hint, Wheeler NWR Participants!) If anyone wants to join, I will gladly cut a "piece of the pie" for a separate party; this count already has a few pieces vacant. Additional participants are needed, please contact the compiler if you're interested. - **Damien Simbeck, Leader/Compiler (256-856-3079; [tnbarredowl@aol.com](mailto:tnbarredowl@aol.com)).**

**14. Guntersville Area Audubon Christmas Bird Count (NABT) - 26 December, 2021 (SUNDAY) 5:00-6:00 am (meeting time varies by count group)**

This Count, in another well-known birding area in northern Alabama, yields a wide variety of songbird, raptor and waterfowl species. The format is the same as that of the Wheeler Count. As with all our counts, Guntersville could also use more participants – please consider helping out, even if for only part of the day. Unlike the Wheeler Christmas Count, there is no single gathering spot for folks to meet and join a group. For this reason, please contact Linda Reynolds if you are interested in joining one of the eight parties of counters; meeting times for different parties may vary. The meeting spot for compilation is the Guntersville Public Library (address here). Look for the sign along Hwy 431 in Guntersville (past 227), to your right, if coming from the direction of Huntsville. – **Linda Reynolds, Leader/Compiler (256-298-1810; [rreynolds2970@charter.net](mailto:rreynolds2970@charter.net))**

**15. Wheeler Dam, AL Audubon Christmas Bird Count - 3 January, 2022 (MONDAY)**

**Coordination with compiler is required before the count.** If anyone wants to join, I will gladly cut a "piece of the pie" for a separate party; this count already has a few pieces vacant. Additional participants are needed, please contact the compiler if you are interested. - **Damien Simbeck, Leader/Compiler (256-856-3079, [tnbarredowl@aol.com](mailto:tnbarredowl@aol.com))**

**16. Wheeler NWR - Beaverdam Peninsula Tower/Limestone Bay/White Springs Dike (NABT #20, 23, 24) – 9 January, 2022 (SUNDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)**

Join us for another trip to one of our favorite birding areas, as we look for waterfowl, raptors, cranes, a variety of songbirds, etc. Expect to be behind locked refuge gates for 2-3 hours. Take the Mooresville exit off I-565, go south on Mooresville Road and meet at the parking area near where it intersects with old Highway 20 (34.627442 -86.880186). – **Ken Ward, Leader (256-679-8332; [kenphin1990@gmail.com](mailto:kenphin1990@gmail.com))**

**17. Guntersville City/Dam North/Hawk Farm (NABT #37) – 15 January, 2022 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)**

The Guntersville area provides some of our best winter birding, as we explore a variety of habitats along Guntersville Lake, the Tennessee River and nearby areas. We'll convene at the Guntersville Chamber of Commerce parking lot, on the south end of the Hwy 431 bridge, and bird first along the lakefront and some other spots of interest; we should see a large number and variety of waterfowl, water birds, raptors and songbirds. We'll break for lunch around 11-11:30, then reconvene about 12:30 at Guntersville Dam, north side, off Hwy 431 (10-15 miles back in the direction of Huntsville, to your left; watch for the sign). Meet at the picnic pavilion parking lot near the dam, to the left, as you face the dam. After birding near the dam, we'll visit some other nearby spots including, possibly, the Jones Hawk Farm (if accessible). In general, the area is excellent for raptors, including eagles, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawk, Northern Harrier, Kestrel, both species of vulture, etc. This is a good area for songbirds too, as well as diving ducks and loons on the river. **WE'LL ALL NEED TO BE TOGETHER TO VISIT THE FARM AND ARE NOT ALLOWED BEYOND THE STABLE AREA AT THE TOP OF THE HILL.** (34.363686 -86.291161). – **Linda Reynolds/Ken Ward, Co-Leaders (256-679-8332, [kenphin1990@gmail.com](mailto:kenphin1990@gmail.com))**

**18. Town Creek Embayment, Wheeler Dam, Joe Wheeler State Park (NABT #2, 3, 4) – 22 January, 2022 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)**

This trip primarily targets waterfowl and other water birds, but also includes some productive songbird areas, especially in the state park. We'll meet at the WalMart parking lot off Hwy 72 W in Athens (34.786933 -86.958486). - **Harry Dean, Leader (256-541-0842; [hdean@hiwaay.net](mailto:hdean@hiwaay.net))**

**Alabama Ornithological Society Winter Meeting, TBA, 28-30 January, 2022**

**19. Guntersville Waterfront/Peninsula, Guntersville Dam South (NABT #35, 36) – 5 February, 2022 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)**

This trip starts on Sunset Parkway along the west side of Guntersville. We should see a great variety of ducks, many loons and grebes, possibly some odd terns and gulls, eagles, etc. Meet in Guntersville at the Chamber of Commerce parking lot on the south end of the Hwy 431 bridge. From there, we'll go west on the Lake Loop Road and bird the waterfront. The tour will then go south and across the Hwy 69 Causeway to the south end of Guntersville Dam (34.363686 -86.29116). – **Linda Reynolds/Matt Morrow, Co-Leaders (256-298-1810; [rreynolds2970@charter.net](mailto:rreynolds2970@charter.net))**

**20. Swan Creek WMA/Round Island Recreation Area (NABT #21, 22) – 12 February, 2022 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)**

We'll start along Dairy Road in Swan Creek WMA and work our way west, searching for water birds, sparrows and other winter residents or early migrants. Mid- to late-February is a transition period for waterfowl and other birds, and weather will play a key role in what we see. We will meet at the southernmost parking lot of Calhoun Community College. From Huntsville, take I-565 W/Hwy 20 toward Decatur. Just before the river, take the Hwy 31 exit north, then turn right at the first traffic light past the Subway. - **Dwight Cooley, Leader (256-565-6239; [sabrewing@earthlink.net](mailto:sabrewing@earthlink.net))**

**21. Wheeler NWR-Limestone Bay/White Springs Dike (NABT #20, 23, 24) - 5 March, 2022 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am**  
**(NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)**

Our final trip to White Springs Dike for the season is in its third year, at a time when we are usually taking a break, as waterfowl start moving out of the area, and prior to spring migration. Duck numbers are still usually good, but with less variety, with migrating Blue-winged Teal moving through, good numbers of Green-winged Teal and Shovelers around, etc. A few years ago we got a big surprise, with the presence of a beautiful male Cinnamon Teal in the marshes near the Decatur end of the dike. Take the Mooresville exit off I-565, go south on Mooresville Road and meet at the parking area near where it intersects with old Highway 20 (34.627442 -86.880186). - **Ken Ward, Leader (256-679-8332; [kenphin1990@gmail.com](mailto:kenphin1990@gmail.com))**

**22. Monte Sano SP (NABT #29) – 2 April, 2022 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am**

On this trip, we hope to catch some early spring migrants, especially Louisiana Waterthrush. To get to our meeting spot, take Monte Sano Boulevard off Governors Drive at the top of the mountain and follow the signs to the park; once there, go in the direction of headquarters and park at the Camp Store, in the gravel if possible (34.745325 -86.511672). - **John Ehinger, Leader (256-536-2716; [johnehinger@yahoo.com](mailto:johnehinger@yahoo.com))**

**23. Hays Nature Preserve/Goldsmith Sanctuary (NABT #29) – 9 April, 2022 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am**

NABS has birded both areas regularly, especially Hays; there should be a few migrants present, especially neotropical songbirds. Meet at Hays which, from Huntsville, is about a mile past the Publix shopping center near Hampton Cove on Hwy 431, on the left just past the Taylor Lane light (there is a sign). Follow the road to the parking area on the right (34.644106 -86.466389). - **Ken Ward, Leader (256-679-8332; [kenphin1990@gmail.com](mailto:kenphin1990@gmail.com))**

**24. Wheeler NWR - Blackwell Swamp (NABT #26) – 10 April, 2022 (SUNDAY) 7:00 am**

This area has been getting more attention lately as a prime birding spot. There is flooded woodland and marsh habitat here, which can be explored by car, on foot or by canoe. A variety of wetland species may be present, including Great Blue Heron, Great Egret and Green Heron, and perhaps some other less common species, such as Snowy Egret or Little Blue Heron. Common Gallinule and Anhinga are rarely found here, and you might get a glimpse at an alligator 😊. There should be migrants around by this time, including such returning breeders as Prothonotary Warbler and Common Yellowthroat. This is also good woodpecker habitat, especially for Pileated and Red-headed. To get to our meeting place, take County Line Rd south off I-565, head south 5.5 miles and turn left on Jolly B Rd; there is a white 2-story house, with a rail fence, on the left just before the turn. From here it's about a mile to a gravel parking area on the right. We'll explore several areas, including a tree-lined refuge road (likely will walk it) near the parking area (good for songbirds), other wooded spots and several viewing areas on both west and east sides of the swamp (time permitting). - **Tom Ress, Leader (256-233-3057; [resscat@aol.com](mailto:resscat@aol.com))**.

**Alabama Ornithological Society Spring Meeting, April 15-17, 2022 Dauphin Island, AL**

**25. Marbut Bend Trail – 23 April, 2022 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am**

NABS made its first trip to Marbut Bend last year and was very impressed. Developed by TVA and Limestone County and opened in 2014, this area includes a 1.2-mile trail through wetlands, riparian habitat and open fields, along the Elk River. The gravel trail includes an elevated boardwalk across a beaver pond and two platforms overlooking the river and one of its embayments; the walk is easy and the scenery is beautiful. We'll meet at the trailhead northwest of Athens. From Huntsville, take U.S. 72 west to Athens and take the exit loop to U.S. 31 north. From there, go 2.4 miles and turn left on Alabama 99. Follow the signs along Alabama 99 for 12.4 miles to the trailhead entrance road on the left (34.911200 -87.104722) - **Dwight Cooley, Leader (256-565-6239; [sabrewing@earthlink.net](mailto:sabrewing@earthlink.net))**

**26. Guntersville Area – 24 April, 2022 (SUNDAY) 7:00 am**

We'll visit several places we've birded before, as time permits, including the Guntersville City waterfront, south side of Guntersville Dam and Guntersville State Park. We should see a wide variety of warblers and other migrants, as well as Red-headed Woodpeckers at the dam, eagles and ospreys over the river, etc. We may also visit a couple of other places, including the TVA boat launch on Hwy 79 (good for warblers) and a rural area near Guntersville where several Loggerhead Shrikes reside and nest. Meet in Guntersville at the Chamber of Commerce parking lot on the south end of the Hwy 431 bridge. - **Linda Reynolds/Matt Morrow, co-Leaders (256-298-1810; [rreynolds2970@charter.net](mailto:rreynolds2970@charter.net))**

**27. Wheeler NWR Spring Migration Count (NABT) – 30 April, 2022 (SATURDAY) 5:00-6:00 am (meeting time varies by count group)**

The format for this count is similar to Christmas Counts – identify and count all birds seen or heard from dawn to late afternoon/dusk; different groups bird different parts of the refuge and nearby areas. **Birders of all skill levels are welcome and needed, as we are usually short-handed for migration counts.** Arrangements can also be made to spend part of the day counting for those who can't commit to the whole day (morning or afternoon). We'll regroup at the Wheeler NWR Interpretive Nature (Visitor) Center (34.547406 -86.951136) around 6:00 pm for compilation (see Wheeler NWR Christmas Count trip #12 for directions). Since we won't have a single gathering spot for folks to meet and join a group, new participants should contact Dwight Cooley by 20 April. – **Dwight Cooley, Leader/Compiler (256-565-6239; [sabrewing@earthlink.net](mailto:sabrewing@earthlink.net))**

**28. Monte Sano SP (NABT #29) – 1 May, 2022 (SUNDAY) 7:00 am**

Join us near migration peak as we bird one of the best spots in the state for spring migration. The Park can be filled with birds this time of year, including an impressive variety of beautiful warblers in breeding plumage, orioles, grosbeaks, both species of tanagers, 4-5 species of vireos, all thrush species we can see in this area, etc. The birds are often relatively easy to see too; several hotspots near our meeting spot are easy to find, including the overlooks, camp store, Japanese Garden, planetarium, cyclists' and hikers' parking lots, etc., not to mention numerous accessible trails. You are also encouraged to visit the park at other times during late April-early May, especially after a weather front has passed through, which will often concentrate the migrants. There are almost always a few birders around the hotspots during this period (the earlier in the morning the better). To get to our meeting spot, take Monte Sano Boulevard off Governors Drive at the top of the mountain and follow the signs to the park; once there, go in the direction of headquarters and park at the Camp Store, in the gravel if possible. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE BIRDING IS SOMETIMES BETTER EARLIER; FEEL FREE TO COME UP BETWEEN 6:00 AND 6:30 IF YOU LIKE, AS SOME OF US WILL PROBABLY ALREADY BE AT THE OVERLOOK (34.745325 -86.511672). - **Harry Dean, Leader (256-541-0842; [hdean@hiwaay.net](mailto:hdean@hiwaay.net))**

**29. William B. Bankhead National Forest (NABT #14) – 7 May, 2022 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am**

Bankhead National Forest (BNF) in northwestern Alabama is 180,000 acres of mesic hardwood, mixed pine-hardwood, shortleaf pine, oak-hickory, hemlock-white pine and mountain longleaf pine forest, with many limestone bluffs, swift flowing streams and waterfalls; the 26,000-acre Sipsey Wilderness is also found here. Migration birding this time of year is usually quite productive in BNF and we've had some great trips there the past few years. We'll meet at Site 14 of the North Alabama Birding Trail (Central Firetower). This trip will mostly be a driving tour along an unpaved road where we'll likely encounter few or no people (see below). From Huntsville, take I-565/Hwy 20 to Decatur, then AL Hwy 24 west toward Moulton. From the intersection of Hwy 24 and AL Hwy 33 near Moulton, head south on Hwy 33 for 11.4 miles into BNF. The birding trail orientation kiosk is located near the firetower on the left side of the road at the US Forest Service Black Warrior Workstation. From there, we will go south a short distance and spend most of our time birding by car caravan and walking along the Northwest Road (turn right at the Black Warrior WMA sign). This is a beautiful setting with a wide range of forest habitat types varying in age, composition, and management (bordering the Sipsey Wilderness). Other areas we may visit include Brushy Lake Recreational Area (requires \$3.00 fee per car) and Sipsey River Picnic grounds. Visit the BNF website for more information on birding opportunities there. From west Huntsville/Madison to the meeting place is about an hour-long drive, via Decatur (34.3452, -87.3393). – **Ken Ward, Leader (256-679-8332; [kenphin1990@gmail.com](mailto:kenphin1990@gmail.com))**

**30. Graham Farm and Nature Center (NABT)/Paint Rock River Valley – 8 May, 2022 (SUNDAY) 7:00 am**

Come with us for a visit to beautiful Jackson County, where we'll bird in the Paint Rock River Valley, in particular the Graham Farm and Nature Center (GFNC). This is a property that was acquired by Auburn University and is managed by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System as a working farm/nature preserve and outdoor classroom. It's a beautiful place, roughly 500 acres of upland hardwood and bottomland forest, pastures and hayfields; the confluence of Larkin and Estill Forks forms the Paint Rock River on this property. GFNC has developed an extensive trail system and is now on the North Alabama Birding Trail. The birding should be great, perhaps a little past migration peak, but with some late transients still around and, of course, all of our breeding residents are here and doing their thing. We'll first explore the farm proper, taking a walk to the Paint Rock River, then check out some of the trail system. From GFNC we'll continue down CR 27, which loops back into Hwy 65 a few miles further north; it's a beautiful place to bird, with varied habitat along Larkin Fork, some open fields, etc. Cerulean warblers have been seen here and are documented breeders in the area. We'll meet at GFNC: if coming from Huntsville or other points west, take Hwy 72 east past Gurley to Hwy 65, turn left and go roughly 15 miles, until you reach the intersection of 65 and CR 27 (just before the bridge, a roughly 20 minute drive from the turn onto Hwy 65). Turn left here and go a short distance to the parking area, on the right after the farmhouse. - **Ken Ward/Dwight Cooley, Co-Leaders (256-679-8332; [kenphin1990@gmail.com](mailto:kenphin1990@gmail.com))**

**31. Leighton Area, Town Creek (NABT #4, 5) - 14 May, 2022 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am**

We will explore the Leighton area and Town Creek, targeting shorebird migrants, whose movement through our area should be strong at this time of year. Our success will depend largely on water levels and weather. We'll meet at the Ingalls Boat Harbor Pavilion in Decatur: from the direction of Huntsville, cross the river bridge and take the first right onto Alt 72/20 (Wilson St.). Go about a mile and turn right on Neher St., follow to pavilion parking lot. – **Harry Dean, Leader (256-541-0842; [hdean@hiwaay.net](mailto:hdean@hiwaay.net))**

**32. Winfred Thomas Agricultural Research Station (WTARS) (NABT #27) -15 May, 2022 (SUNDAY) 7:00 am**

WTARS is Alabama A&M University's research farm; it is a 970-acre property with lots of open grassland and pasture areas, plus small patches of forest and a sizable pond edged with black willow. It is one of the best places in the state to observe open country birds and always makes for a great trip (our most popular). Species we'll likely see or have a good chance of encountering include Grasshopper Sparrow, Dickcissel, Lark Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, Eastern Kingbird, several swallow species, Bobolink, Horned Lark, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Bobwhite, possibly Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (not as likely these days), perhaps some shorebirds, Green Heron, etc. From Huntsville, take Hwy 431 north and just past Meridianville Middle School, turn right on Walker Lane (light), then take the first right onto the farm; park at the first building on the right (34.900839 -86.560256). – **Ken Ward, Leader (256-679-8332; [kenphin1990@gmail.com](mailto:kenphin1990@gmail.com))**