



NORTH ALABAMA BIRDWATCHERS SOCIETY

SCHEDULE AND DESCRIPTION OF TRIPS, 2019-20



VOLUME 43

Ken Ward, President

OUR 43th 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/>). Each summer, NABS trip leaders get together and come up with a schedule like you see here, which we then post on our website (www.northalbirding.com) and send out by email to our members. We also now have a Facebook group page, **North Alabama Birdwatchers Society (NABS)**, where we post our trips and 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. If you show up for an outing, you can consider yourself a member.

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 are usually opportunities to carpool. Depending on numbers attending, carpooling may become a necessity (some areas we visit have a limitation on attendance and the number of vehicles allowed).

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. 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. Be reasonably constrained in the use of birdsong apps, pishing, etc. to attract birds, especially breeders;
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 it's restricted, e.g., driving behind locked refuge gates at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge (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 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 Nov-early March trips will meet at 8 am.** Generally speaking, birding is best, especially for songbirds, early in the morning during the warmer times of the year, hence the early start times then. Half-day trips are the norm, although a few are shorter and some could include extended birding into the afternoon, for those interested. Please note that, although it's usually easy to leave early, there are a few trips behind locked gates that involve a 2- to 3-hour time commitment (see Wheeler NWR trip descriptions). Bring your binoculars, spotting scopes, cameras, field guides, refreshments, bug repellent and rain gear. 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.

If we don't already have your email address, please consider sending it to us to add to the NABS mailing list. We can then email you this schedule, as well as trip reminders, cancellation notices, and a few other items of interest.

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

Below are descriptions of the trips scheduled for this season, with directions, GPS Coordinates (for most of the trips), trip leaders and contact numbers. We have also included some "Events of Interest" for nature lovers. Thanks for your support and we look forward to seeing you this season!

2019-2020 NABS SCHEDULE AND DESCRIPTION OF TRIPS

1. Leighton Area Shorebird Trip, Wheeler Dam (NABT #2, 4, 5) – 24 August, 2019 (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. – **John Ehinger, Leader (256-536-2716; johnehinger@yahoo.com)**

2. Monte Sano State Park (SP) – 14 September, 2019 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am

Monte Sano is an excellent spot for fall migration birding. As many or more birds actually pass through our area in the fall compared to spring, but the migration period is longer and a defined peak is more difficult to pinpoint. 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 AND 6:30 IF YOU LIKE, AS SOME OF US WILL PROBABLY ALREADY BE AT THE OVERLOOK (34.745325 -86.511672).** - **Ken Ward, Leader (256-679-8332, kenphin1990@gmail.com)**

3. Swan Creek Wildlife Management Area (NABT #21) – 21 September, 2019 (SATURDAY) 7:00 am

This trip targets neotropical songbird migrants and shorebirds (depending on water levels), including breeding residents heading south, transients passing through from the north, mostly on their way to Central and South America, and some returning winter residents. We will meet at the southernmost parking lot of Calhoun Community College (northeast corner of Highway 31 and Airport/Sandy Road). Turn right at the first traffic light past the Subway, if headed north on Highway 31. - **Ken Ward, Leader (256-679-8332, kenphin1990@gmail.com)**

4. Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Fall Migration Count (NABT) –28 September, 2019 (SATURDAY) 5:00-6:00 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.** 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 pm** for compilation (see Wheeler NWR Christmas Count trip # 11 for directions). Since we won't have a single gathering spot or time for folks to meet and join a group, new participants should contact Dwight Cooley, the count leader. – **Dwight Cooley, Leader (256-565-6239; sabrewing@earthlink.net)**

5. Monte Sano SP (NABT #29) - 5 October, 2019 (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; 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)**

EVENT OF INTEREST: John L. Borom Alabama Coastal Birdfest – 2-5 October, 2019
(<http://www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com/>; <https://www.facebook.com/groups/AlabamaCoastalBirdFest/>); online registration August 12, 9 am – September 20, 4 pm CST, 251-625-0814

EVENT OF INTEREST: Alabama Ornithological Society Fall Meeting, Dauphin Island – 11-13 October, 2019
(Harry Dean, 256-541-0842; hdean@hiwaav.net)

6. Wheeler NWR – Beaverdam Peninsula Tower/Limestone Bay/Arrowhead Landing/White Springs Dike (NABT #20, 23, 24) – 2 November, 2019 (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 just be arriving to overwinter. 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, when we'll likely head to Apple Lane Farms to eat, for those interested. 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). – **Harry Dean, Leader (256-541-0842; hdean@hiwaav.net)**

7. Wheeler NWR - Visitor Center and Garth Slough (NABT #16) – 9 November, 2019 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)

We'll first spend some time around the Visitor's Center, including especially the wildlife observation building. 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 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)**

8. Wheeler NWR - Penny Bottoms/Blackwell Swamp/Rockhouse/Buckeye (NABT #26) – 17 November, 2019 (SUNDAY) 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). - **Dick Bruer, Leader (256-714-1992; dick.bruer@gmail.com)**

9. Wheeler NWR - Beaverdam Peninsula Tower/Limestone Bay/Arrowhead Landing/White Springs Dike (NABT #20, 23, 24) – November 23, 2019 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am (NOTE LATER MEETING TIME)

Our second trip to the White Springs Dike area should be productive. Waterfowl variety and numbers will likely be impressive and most or all winter-resident songbird species will be around. We'll head first to the goose tower observation platform, then bird nearby Beaverdam Peninsula, which is excellent for waterfowl, raptors, cranes, some open-country songbirds (pipits, horned larks, possibly longspurs), etc. Then we'll head to Limestone Bay and White Springs Dike along our regular route, where we'll be behind locked gates for 2-3 hours. We should encounter lots more waterfowl here, e.g., Canada, White-Fronted, Snow, perhaps Ross' and Cackling Goose, a variety of dabbling and diving ducks, White Pelican, etc. There should be plenty of songbirds and raptors along the way too; Bald Eagles have been regularly sighted in this area the past several years. We should be done by lunch; Apple Lane Farms, anyone? 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)**

10. Swan Creek Wildlife Management Area (NABT #21) – 7 December, 2019 (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. The past couple of years LeConte's sparrow has 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 (northeast corner of Highway 31 and Airport/Sandy road). Turn right at the first traffic light past the Subway, if headed north on Highway 31. - **Milton Harris, Leader (256-679-7501; miltonh70@gmail.com)**

11. Wheeler NWR Audubon Christmas Bird Count (NABT) - 14 December, 2019 (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).** 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 (256-565-6239; sabrewing@earthlink.net)**

12. Cullman Audubon Christmas Bird Count - 15 December, 2019 (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 (256-739-4589; vincemeleski@outlook.com)**

13. Guntersville Area Audubon Christmas Bird Count (NABT) - 26 December, 2019 (THURSDAY) 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. Look for the sign along Hwy 431 in Guntersville (past 227), to your right, if coming from the direction of Huntsville. – **Linda Reynolds, Leader (256-298-1810; rreynolds2970@charter.net)**

14. Wheeler NWR -Beaverdam Peninsula Tower/Limestone Bay/Arrowhead Landing/White Springs Dike (NABT #20, 23, 24) – 5 January, 2020 (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, afterwards lunching at Apple Lane Farms, for those interested. 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). – **Dick Bruer, Leader (256-714-1992; dick.bruer@gmail.com)**

15. Guntersville City/Dam North/Hawk Farm (NABT #37) - 11 January, 2020 (SATURDAY) 8:00 am

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, birding 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 the nearby Jones 'hawk farm'. The dam area and farm are both good for raptors. There should be Bald Eagles around, both types of vultures, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, Kestrels and Harriers. If we are lucky, we may pick up one or two unusual species that have been seen irregularly over the years, e.g., Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Rough-legged Hawk, or Golden Eagle. Another treat may be Wild Turkey, which we encounter fairly regularly on the farm. **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). – Ken Ward, Leader (256-679-8332; kenphin1990@gmail.com)

EVENT OF INTEREST: Huntsville & Decatur Festival of the Cranes, 11-12 January, 2020, Wheeler NWR Interpretive Nature (Visitor) Center (www.friendsofwheelerrefuge.org)

16. Town Creek Embayment, Wheeler Dam, Joe Wheeler State Park (NABT #2, 3, 4) – 18 January, 2020 (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). - Dick Bruer and Harry Dean, Leaders (256-541-0842; hdean@hiwaay.net)

EVENT OF INTEREST: Winter Meeting, Alabama Ornithological Society, 24-26 January, 2020 (Location TBA) (Harry Dean, 256-541-0842; hdean@hiwaay.net)

17. Guntersville Waterfront/Peninsula, Guntersville Dam South (NABT #35, 36) – 1 February, 2020 (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). – Bill McAllister, Leader (256-534-8354; billmcallister94@gmail.com)

18. (NEW TRIP) Swan Creek Wildlife Management Area/Round Island Recreation Area (NABT #21, 22) – 8 February, 2020 (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'll meet at the southernmost parking lot of Calhoun Community College (northeast corner of Highway 31 and Airport/Sandy road). Turn right at the first traffic light past the Subway, if headed north on Highway 31. – Dwight Cooley, Leader (256-565-6239; sabrewing@earthlink.net)

19. Wheeler NWR-Limestone Bay/Arrowhead Landing/White Springs Dike (NABT #20, 23, 24) - 7 March, 2020 (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. Shorebird numbers can be good too, depending on water levels. Three 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 (this species has been seen since then in our area). 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)

20. Monte Sano State Park (NABT #29) – 28 March, 2020 (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)

21. Hays Nature Preserve/Goldsmith Sanctuary (NABT #29) – 11 April, 2020 (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). – **Bill McAllister, Leader (256-534-8354; billmcallister94@gmail.com)**

22. Wheeler NWR - Blackwell Swamp/Penny Bottoms/Buckeye (NABT #26) – 12 April, 2020 (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 a few 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 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). – **Dick Bruer, Leader (256-714-1992; dick.bruer@gmail.com)**

EVENT OF INTEREST: Alabama Ornithological Society Spring Meeting, Dauphin Island – 17-19 April, 2020 (Harry Dean 256-541-0842; hdean@hiwaay.net)

23. Wheeler NWR Spring Migration Count (NABT) – 25 April, 2020 (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; 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 #11 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. – **Dwight Cooley, Leader (256-565-6239; sabrewing@earthlink.net)**

24. Monte Sano State Park (NABT #29) – 26 April, 2020 (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)**

25. William B. Bankhead National Forest (NABT #14) – 2 May, 2020 (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). 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 orientation kiosk is located near the firetower on the left side of the road (birding trail sign there). From there, we will go south a short distance and spend most of our time birding along the Northwest Road (turn right at the sign...where the Black Warrior WMA check-in station is located), 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, Sipsey River Picnic grounds, Borden Creek trailhead and Walston Ridge Road. You are encouraged to 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)**

26. (NEW TRIP) Guntersville Trip – 3 May, 2020 (SUNDAY) 7:00 am

NABS has actually led a few trips to the Guntersville area during spring and fall migration, but it's been a long time and we are overdue for an outing there. We'll visit several places we've birded before, including the south side of Guntersville Dam, the Guntersville City waterfront 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. Time permitting, 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. We'll meet at the parking lot of Guntersville Dam south. To get there from Huntsville, take Hwy 231 south past Lacey Springs and turn left on Union Grove road. Follow the road several miles and turn left at the dam sign (birding trail sign there too). Alternatively, go to Guntersville and take the Hwy 69 causeway south, turn right on Union Grove road, then right again at the dam sign – **Linda Reynolds, Leader (256-298-1810; rreynolds2970@charter.net)**

27. Leighton Area, Town Creek (NABT #4, 5) - 9 May, 2020 (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 and Dick Bruer, Leaders (256-461-0626; hdean@hiwaay.net)**

28. Winfred Thomas Agricultural Research Station (WTARS, NABT #27) -10 May, 2020 (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. 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 Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (probably nesting by this time), Grasshopper Sparrow, Dickcissel, Lark Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, Eastern Kingbird, several swallow species, Bobolink, Horned Lark, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Bobwhite, 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)**