

Bird TREKS

DAUPHIN ISLAND ALABAMA & Nearby Coastal Hot Spots First Stop for *Migrants* Crossing the Gulf of Mexico, *Rarities*, & many birds with a *Southern Drawl!*

Dates Saturday, 15 April through Saturday, 22 April 2017: 8 days and 7 nights

SPECIAL NOTE Please consider combining this tour with the **SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA TOUR** that immediately precedes it. Louisiana dates are 7-14 April 2017. You will receive a **\$200 discount** if you register for both tours.

WHY THIS TRIP? You'll stay in the same **BEACH HOUSE** every night of the tour. The house will give us a friendly, family atmosphere, and help to keep the cost as low as possible. And, there is nothing like a homemade breakfast!

HOT SPOTS We'll bird **Dauphin Island**, with its famous **Shell Mound** and **Goat Tree** migrant traps. This area of the Gulf Coast is where migrants get their first view of land after crossing the Gulf of Mexico. It is a great landing area for travel-weary migrants. Birding daily in some of these great locations is likely to provide an entirely different assortment of birds. **Fort Morgan, Bon Secour, and Henderson Camp Road** will provide a diverse group of songbirds, shorebirds, raptors, and long-legged waders.

Some of the birds that may show us a little Southern Hospitality include . . .

American White Pelican
Magnificent Frigatebird
Northern Gannet
Least Bittern
Tricolored Heron
Swallow-tailed Kite
Mississippi Kite
Black Tern
Sandwich Tern
Gull-billed Tern
Sora
Clapper Rail
Common Gallinule
Black-necked Stilt
Marbled Godwit
Black-billed Cuckoo
Swainson's Thrush

Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Prothonotary Warbler
Worm-eating Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Cape May Warbler
Northern Parula
Cerulean Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Kentucky Warbler
Hooded Warbler
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Baltimore Oriole
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak
Painted Bunting



You will see **Tricolored Heron** in full breeding plumage.

[Day-by-day itinerary begins on page 2]

- - *Sandy Roe, tour participant*

DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA

15 - 22 April 2017

DAY

AGENDA

- 1 Meet at the Mobile, Alabama Airport by about 12:00 noon. Or simply continue with us from Lafayette after completing the Southwest Louisiana Tour. We will bird our way to **Dauphin Island**, a lovely barrier beach island, where we spend every night in the same comfortable, spacious, beach house. We can check into the house anytime after 2:00pm, then go birding again!
- 2 Birding today will include the Dauphin Island hot spots - - Shell Mound, Goat Tree, the Audubon Sanctuary, and the Airport Wetlands. Target birds include **Northern Parula**, **Prothonotary** and **Worm-eating Warblers**, along with **Sora**, **Marbled Godwit**, and a good chance for **Clapper Rail**. Perhaps we'll get lucky again with a **Common Ground-Dove**, as we did on a previous tour.
- 3 After checking Shell Mound and Goat Tree for new arrivals, we will board the ferry to Fort Morgan, on the east side of Mobile Bay. Last year we found a single male **Bobolink** near the ferry terminal, plus scores of **Blue Grosbeaks**, **Indigo Buntings**, and **Orchard Orioles**. We will check out all of the birding hot spots near the Fort, a few little side roads, and Bon Secour Refuge. On the 2016 tour, two Magnificent Frigatebirds were spotted, slowly circling at low altitude, just east of Fort Morgan. We plan to have quite a unique, tasty lunch at Lambert's, 'Home of the Throed Rolls'.
- 4 We'll check those great spots again for rarities and new arrivals, then head for the productive flats and shallow pools at the west end of Dauphin Island. This area will yield a wonderful variety of **shorebirds**, **terns**, and perhaps a few **gulls**. On a recent tour we saw a number of **Manta Rays** very close to shore, and last year we found a **fossilized shark tooth!** We will have a chance for **Northern Gannets** and perhaps a **Parasitic Jaeger** or a flock of migrant **scoters**.
- 5 After breakfast, and a check of the local migrant traps, we will drive to Blakely Island, just east of Mobile. This area of massive flats and shallow pools is the premier shorebird spot in the entire state. We will see a large variety of shorebirds, from the diminutive Least and Baird's Sandpipers, to Marbled Godwits, Black-necked Stilts, and Whimbrel. The tiny **Least Terns** are always always a big hit. There will also be **herons**, **egrets**, **Glossy Ibis**, and **Fulvous** and **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks**. Our evening meal will be at a nice seafood restaurant near the beach.
- 6 What used to be Pelican Island is now a very long peninsula that extends miles into the Gulf. A recent hurricane changed the entire setting. **Shorebirds**, **gulls**, and **terns** abound there. **Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphins** often put on a very nice show, just beyond the surf. Later we will spend some time on several bird-filled private decks. On the 2016 tour, a Live Oak tree adjacent to one of these decks hosted a very sleepy **Chuck-will's-widow!** A repeat visit to any of our favorite songbird spots will certainly be in order.

[Days 7 & 8 are on page 3]

- 7 Today we will head north onto the Alabama mainland for a drive and a walk along Henderson Camp Road, and similar adjacent habitats. Here we have found **Red-headed Woodpecker**, **Eastern Meadowlark**, **Loggerhead Shrike**, **Swallow-tailed Kite**, **Brown-headed Nuthatch**, **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, and the large, beautifully-marked **Eastern Fox Squirrel**. At Bayou La Batre we will see a very impressive shrimp boat fleet, plus look for roosting **shorebirds** and **Black Skimmers**. A few short stops will round out the day as we head back toward Dauphin Island.
- 8 We will enjoy our final great breakfast, check the hot spots, and head toward the local Airport Marsh. This is our last day, so we will try to find any birds that may have escaped us earlier in the tour. We will finish at the Mobile International Airport for our afternoon flights home.

Click on the following link for a **map of the tour route**:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1HA1ejfsYPVEUP5pDFYVmMMPkLJU>



There will be **Piping Plovers** on the beach.

- - *Tom Amico*

A checklist of past tours is available by clicking on:

<http://www.birdtreks.com/birds-previously-seen/ALMS.pdf>

Leader Bird Treks' annual birding tour to the **GULF COAST of ALABAMA** will be led by **Bob Schutsky**. Bob is an experienced birder and trip leader, and has led numerous Gulf Coast tours from South Florida, all of the way around the coast to South Texas.

Price The tour fee is \$2535 per person. Register for this tour and the Southwest Louisiana Tour that immediately follows, and receive a **\$200 discount**. We will take a maximum of seven participants. On rare occasion we may extend the maximum to ten participants.

[More details on page 4]

Includes Expert guide service, entrance fees, all ground transportation within Alabama, **ALL meals** beginning with lunch on 15 April, and lodging for seven nights. **ALL tips** are also included in the tour fee, except for anything that you may wish to give to your tour leader(s).

Does not include cost of airfare to and from Mobile, Alabama. Bird Treks will, upon request, help you obtain the least expensive air transportation. Also not included are the cost of alcoholic beverages and items of a personal nature.

Deposit A \$600 deposit will assure your space on the tour. The balance is due 15 February 2017. Please register early for this fabulous tour.

Extra Services We offer the services of our exclusive BIRD TREKS travel agent, **Lori Heathcote**, in arranging your air travel. Lori has 32 years of experience in the travel industry and is a veteran birder. Contact her at Bailey Travel / Travel Time toll-free at **1-800-224-5399**, direct at **717-855-2128**, or e-mail her at **lori@trvltime.com**. By dealing with Lori you have the security of a 24-hour toll-free telephone number in case of any travel emergency. She can also assist you with all pre- and post-tour travel plans. There will be a small fee for these services.

Refund and Cancellation Policy With written notice more than 60 days prior to the first day of the tour, 100% of your deposit will be refunded, minus a \$75 service fee. With 30-60 days notice, you will receive a 50% refund of the full cost of the tour. No refund can be made with less than 30 days notice. You will receive a full refund if you provide a replacement for your spot on the tour. No partial refund can be given once the tour begins. We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect your investment. Contact **Allianz Global Assistance** and mention **BIRD TREKS, ACCAM # F021096**. You can apply via the Internet at this web site, **www.allianztravelinsurance.com** or by phone at **1-866-884-3556**.

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Bob Schutsky is your Gulf Coast tour leader.
- - *photo by Bev Smith*