

GULF COAST MIGRATION MANIA

Alabama, Mississippi, and the Yucatán Express!

April 24-May 1, 2025

A birding tour organized by *Seven Ponds Nature Center* and *Nature Travel Specialists*

Each spring over three billion birds leave their winter homes in Central and South America, undertaking an incredible and dangerous journey, flying thousands of miles to their breeding grounds far north. Over half of those migrating birds cross the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico, making landfall all along the U.S. Gulf Coast. Dauphin Island in Alabama is renowned among birders for its spring arrival of colorful songbirds. Join us as we roll out the red carpet and welcome these mighty aerial endurance athletes upon their arrival. During our tour, we'll also seek out the resident birds that call the Gulf Coast home year-round. This is sure to be a great way to spend a week of spring birding, taking in the Gulf Coast Migration Mania!



The Yucatán Express...

"They lift off at dusk, clearing the canopy heading out, over the Gulf of Mexico, climbing gradually into a tropical sky. Yesterday's sky.

At two thousand feet, beneath planets and stars, they level off, fixing a course along coordinates locked in genetic flight plans, falling into the rhythm of flight. A series of flaps followed by a folded wing glide. For the next twenty-one hours, this will be the rhythm of their lives."

--Pete Dunne, *The Feather Quest*

TOUR ITINERARY

Our daily activities will be flexible based on species we've seen to date and recent bird reports, but the following daily outline provides a preliminary plan of how we will spend our days. Our plans are subject to change based on rare bird sightings, weather conditions, and road closures.

DAY 1 – Thursday, April 24 – Arrival in Mobile Plan your arrival in Mobile by midday and arrange your transportation to our lodging in Tillman's Corner. *Night in Tillman's Corner, AL.*

DAYS 2 through 4 – Friday, April 25 through Sunday, April 27 – Alabama birding During our first three days birding the Gulf Coast we'll focus our time birding in Alabama, with all of our birding locations less than 90 minutes from our hotel – some much closer. The premier location will be legendary Dauphin Island, where mid-afternoon sees the arrivals from the Yucatán Express.



Mornings will be spent at a number of different birding hotspots, including possible stops at Battleship Memorial Park, Splinter Hill Bog, Meaher State Park, Bayfront Park, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, Fort Morgan State Historic Site, Grand Bay Savanna, and Gulf State Park, just to mention a few of the many possibilities.

Depending on weather conditions – we'll be looking for favorable winds – we'll head to Dauphin Island after lunch in hopes of catching the arrivals from Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. Songbirds and many other migrants lift off at dusk, making the long flight across the Gulf of Mexico, and will be arriving on the coast early-to-mid afternoon, seeking landfall and an opportunity to refuel before continuing north. With several afternoons available to us, we'll hope to catch a big fallout on at least one day.



During one of our mornings in Alabama, we'll explore the Mobile Bay Delta by boat. This boat trip will provide us with access to places we couldn't otherwise go to and will give us looks at many birds in the delta. *Nights in Tillman's Corner, AL.*

DAYS 5 through 7 – Monday, April 28 through Wednesday, April 30 – Mississippi birding Our final three days of birding will be spent in nearby Mississippi, with all of our birding locations less than 90 minutes from our hotel – some much closer. As in Alabama, we'll have plenty of options for birding locations. Some of our possible stops include Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, Graveline Beach, Davis Bayou—Gulf Islands National Seashore, and Hancock County Marsh Coastal Preserve. We will make the most of our time birding in Mississippi, and we'll always be close enough to Dauphin Island to make an afternoon run there if it looks like a good fallout is occurring. *Nights in Tillman's Corner, AL.*



DAY 8 – Thursday, May 1 – Departure from Mobile Plan your departure for any time today. Enjoy breakfast at the hotel and make arrangements for your transportation to Mobile Regional Airport.





TOUR LEADERS

Drew Haffenden is a naturalist and birder who lives on Dauphin Island where his main interest is shorebirds. Originally from Australia, where he was a wildlife researcher, he has a small US-based travel company that specializes in nature-based custom and small group tours to select world destinations, including Cuba. He is President of the Alabama Ornithological Society, a voting member of the Alabama Bird Records Committee, and VP for Land Acquisition of Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, which identifies important bird habitat on the island and purchases lots to preserve it. Drew is also on numerous conservation committees for both government and NGO organizations. He has conducted courses for Audubon on identifying shorebirds, terns, and gulls and is especially interested in simplified methods to identify shorebirds in the field, though his main shorebird interest is monitoring and protecting breeding beach birds, especially Snowy

Plovers. He is the #2 eBirder for Mobile county, #4 for the state (despite a reluctance to chase birds more than 30 miles away), and his species list for Dauphin Island stands at 315 spp of the 334 spp recorded there.

Daryl Bernard is a long-time birder and amateur naturalist who loves being outdoors and embraces every opportunity to share nature with others. He enjoys organizing trips and tours and strives to ensure that every participant has a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Daryl has organized and led numerous birding field tours throughout North America, many local birding trips in Michigan, and bird walks for Seven Ponds as well as birding festivals. Daryl is the Executive Director at Seven Ponds Nature Center in southeast Michigan, and regularly presents birding programs at Audubon clubs, garden clubs, libraries, and birding festivals.





FEE and REGISTRATION INFORMATION

- Tour Fee: \$2200 per person in double occupancy from Tillman's Corner, Alabama
- Deposit: \$300, due at online registration
- Single supplement, pending availability: \$500
- Final Payment: \$1900, due April 1, 2025
- Group size is limited to **8-10 individuals** and early registration is encouraged

WHAT THE TOUR FEE INCLUDES:

- guide service for six full days of birding – Drew will be with us every step of the way
- hotel accommodations for seven nights in a single location in Tillman's Corner, Alabama
- all meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 8
- Mobile Bay Delta boat trip
- van transportation in a single large van
- all park entrance fees, highway tolls, and ferry fees
- pre-trip information and a post-trip mailing with a list of all species observed by the group
- eBird checklist sharing (for those using eBird)



WHAT THE TOUR FEE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- your airfare to and from Mobile
- ground transportation between Mobile Regional Airport and Tillman's Corner (10.5 miles)
- alcoholic beverages
- laundry
- other items of a personal nature
- gratuity for birding guide services (optional)



**ONLINE REGISTRATION WILL OPEN
FOR SEVEN PONDS MEMBERS ON
TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2025 at 9:00 AM**

**ONLINE REGISTRATION WILL OPEN
FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC ON
TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2025 at 9:00 AM
(if space remains)**

Registration for this tour will take place online at www.sevenponds.org with a \$300 deposit due at the time of registration. At the Seven Ponds home page, go to Programs then Seven Ponds Field Tours and select the Alabama-Mississippi Birding Field Tour registration button. You should receive an email confirmation upon successfully completing your online registration. Registered participants will be mailed a registration form to return.

For more information, contact Daryl Bernard at (810) 796-3200 or (989) 513-5195 (cell) or via e-mail at dbernard@sevenponds.org

