



DAUPHIN ISLAND ALABAMA AND NEARBY COASTAL HOT SPOTS

14 APRIL - 21 APRIL 2018



Piping Plover is one of our targets on this trip.

This tour will concentrate on birding the greater Dauphin Island area, with its famous Shell Mound and Goat Tree migrant traps. This section 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. Due to the constant arrival of new 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. You'll stay in the same beach house every night of the tour, which means you will only have to unpack your bags once! The house will give us a friendly, family atmosphere and help to keep the cost as low as possible. And nothing beats a homemade breakfast!

Some of the specials that we hope to find on this trip include **American White Pelican, Magnificent Frigatebird, Northern Gannet, Least Bittern, Tricolored Heron, Swallow-tailed Kite, Mississippi Kite, Clapper Rail, Common Gallinule, Black-necked Stilt, Marbled Godwit, Black-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Blue Grosbeak, and Painted Bunting.**

Please note that the detailed itinerary below cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.

Itinerary (8 days/7 nights)

Day 1. Mobile International Airport to Dauphin Island

We will meet at the Mobile International Airport by about 12:00 noon. We will then bird our way to Dauphin Island, a lovely barrier beach island, where we will spend every night in the same comfortable, spacious beach house. We can check into the house anytime after 2:00 p.m. and then head out birding again!

Day 2. Dauphin Island

Birding today will include the Dauphin Island hot spots - Shell Mound, Goat Tree, the Audubon Bird Sanctuary, and the Airport wetlands. In these prime birding spots we will be targeting **Northern Parula** and **Prothonotary** and **Worm-eating Warblers**, along with **Sora**, **Marbled Godwit**, and a good chance for **Clapper Rail**. On our last tour this area yielded a **Common Ground-Dove**; perhaps we will get lucky again this time!

Day 3. Fort Morgan

We will check Shell Mound and Goat Tree for new arrivals first thing in the morning before boarding 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, including a few little side roads in the area and Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. We may be lucky enough

to spot **Magnificent Frigatebirds** soaring near Fort Morgan, as we encountered on our 2016 tour. A tasty lunch will be served at Lambert's, 'Home of the Throed Rolls'.

Day 4. Shores of Dauphin Island

We'll check the Dauphin hot 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 should 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 Gannet** and perhaps **Parasitic Jaeger** harassing the terns and gulls or a flock of migrant scoters.

Day 5. Blakeley Island

After breakfast and a check of the local migrant traps we will drive to Blakely Island, to the east of Mobile. This area is considered Alabama's premier shorebird spot and consists of massive mudflats and shallow pools. We will see a large variety of shorebirds, from the diminutive **Least** and **Baird's Sandpipers** to **Marbled Godwit**, **Black-necked Stilt**, and **Whimbrel**. The tiny **Least Tern** is always a big hit. Other birds likely to be seen include herons, egrets, **Glossy Ibis**, and **Fulvous** and **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks**. Our evening meal will be at a nice seafood restaurant near the beach on Dauphin Island.

Day 6. Pelican Island

What used to be Pelican Island is now no longer an island but rather a very long peninsula that extends miles into the Gulf, after a recent hurricane changed the entire setting. Shorebirds, gulls, and terns abound here. Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphins often put on a nice show just beyond the surf. Later we will spend some time on several bird-filled private decks. On the 2016 tour a Southern Live Oak tree adjacent to one of these decks hosted a sleepy **Chuck-will's-widow!** A repeat visit to any of our favorite songbird spots will certainly be in order.

Day 7. Alabama mainland

Today we will head north onto the Alabama mainland for a drive and a walk along Henderson Camp Road and similar adjacent habitats. Previously the area has yielded **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 Skimmer**. A few short stops will round out the day as we head back toward our beach house on Dauphin Island for the last night of the trip.

Day 8. Dauphin Island to Mobile International Airport

We will enjoy our final great breakfast, check the local hot spots, and head toward the nearby airport marsh. This is our last day, so we will try to mop up any birds that may have escaped us earlier in the tour. We will finish at the Mobile International Airport for your afternoon flights home.

Duration: 8 days
Limit: 3 – 7 (up to 10 with two guides)

Date: 14 April – 21 April 2018
Start: Mobile, Alabama
End: Mobile, Alabama

Price: US\$2670 per person

Price includes:

Meals
Accommodation
Guiding fees
Entrance fees
All transport while on tour
Tolls

Price excludes:

All domestic and international flights
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts
Alcoholic drinks
Personal insurance
Gratuities