

# Alabama's Dauphin Island: Migration!

## With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures



**April 10 – 15, 2022**

866.900.1146

800.426.7781

520.558.1146

naturalistjourneys@gmail.com

www.naturalistjourneys.com

or find us on Facebook at  
Naturalist Journeys, LLC



Naturalist Journeys, LLC | Caligo Ventures PO Box 16545 Portal, AZ 85632 PH: 520.558.1146 | 866.900.1146

Fax 650.471.7667 [naturalistjourneys.com](http://naturalistjourneys.com) | [caligo.com](http://caligo.com) [info@caligo.com](mailto:info@caligo.com) | [travel@naturalistjourneys.com](mailto:travel@naturalistjourneys.com)





Join us to discover Dauphin Island, one of North America's top spring migration destinations, on this spring bird migration tour. Of Alabama's 445 bird species, 95% have been seen here. This is where migrants first see land after crossing the Gulf; a critical rest and rejuvenation stop.

Spot Neo-tropical migrants; 25 or more species of warblers, including Worm-eating, Swainson's, Cape May, Kentucky, and Prothonotary; and see water, sea, and shorebirds, including Reddish Egret, Magnificent Frigatebird, Roseate Spoonbill, Tricolored Heron, and Snowy, Wilson's, and Piping Plovers.

Indulge on fresh seafood and visit several prime birding spots, hand-picked by your local guide. Take a ferry to Fort Morgan for a history lesson, then cruise the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, aptly called America's Amazon. We also take time to explore a rare pitcher plant bog and search for Swallow-tailed Kite.

## Itinerary

**Sun., Apr. 10**

### Arrive in Mobile | Travel to Dauphin Island

Welcome to Alabama! As our journey begins, you quickly realize why April is the perfect time to be on Dauphin Island.

On the way down to the Dauphin Island, we make a quick stop for snacks and supplies, and perhaps pop in to

## Tour Highlights

- Bird Dauphin Island's migration hotspots, including Shell Mounds Park, The Goat Tree Reserve, Cadillac Square, the East End, Audubon Bird Sanctuary, and Airport Marsh
- Spot 20+ species of warblers, both Summer and Scarlet Tanagers, several vireos, orioles, and both Painted and Indigo Buntings
- Off-Island, explore Grand Bay, and Splinter Hill Bog—one of the largest pitcher plant bogs in the world
- Explore the Dauphin Island Sea Lab
- Enjoy an eco-boat swamp cruise of the lower Mobile-Tensaw Delta and see Bald Eagle, American Alligator, Osprey, cormorants, herons, Brown Pelican, and Nutria

## Tour Summary

6-Day / 5-Night Migration Birding Tour with Andrew Haffenden  
\$2095, from Mobile, Alabama  
Airport is Mobile Regional (MOB)

Bayfront Park for Least Bittern, Common Yellowthroat, and Spotted Sandpiper. Once on Dauphin, we bird if there's action, or check in and then go out. In contrast to most birding, the afternoons are often the best on the island; the fastest fliers start to arrive off the Gulf at about 2:00 PM. From about 4:00 PM onward seems to be the busiest time, and depending on weather, the birds may touch and go, or stay until nightfall. *Accommodations for the week at Gulf Breeze Motel or similar, Dauphin Island (D)*



## Mon., Apr. 11 Dauphin Island

Today is an island day; we hit the hotspots wherever the birds are. With big influxes, these hotspots can be all over the island, though often just one or two areas are birdy, while others are quieter. Our guide, Andrew Haffenden, lives on Dauphin and has been birding solidly over the last few days; his knowledge and networking should have us in the right spots at the right times. The biggest factor is the weather; our order of activities takes this into account. If a day looks slow for migrants, we travel off-island, swapping an activity later in the tour to leave that day open for island birding. Birds in areas like the Delta, Grand Bay, and Splinter Hill Bog are not subject to the same weather constraints as the migrants. The best migrant trap on the island is Shell Mounds Park, and we return repeatedly. Cadillac Square, The Goat Tree Reserve, Audubon Bird Sanctuary, and the East End all warrant stops, usually several times each, as does the Airport Marsh for rails, Seaside Sparrow, Marsh Wren, herons, and egrets. A good birding day on the island yields about 20 species of warblers, several vireos, both Summer and Scarlet Tanagers, orioles, and both Indigo and Painted Buntings. Excellent days can see many of these species number in the 20s and more. Since we're on the Gulf, seafood is popular for dinner tonight.



In addition to the migrants, a few winter birds should still be around, including both Snowy and Piping Plovers and Western Willet, as well as freshly-arrived Eastern Willet. *(B,L,D)*

## Tues., Apr. 12 Dauphin Island

We check the Shell Mounds first thing this morning for lingerers or night arrivals, then head onto Pelican Spit beach. In addition to the well-known neo-tropical migrants, Dauphin offers a wide variety of beach birds, including Reddish Egret; Western, Semipalmated, and Least Sandpipers; Snowy, Piping, Semipalmated, Wilson's, and Black-bellied Plovers; both Eastern and Western Willets; Dunlin; dowitchers; American Oystercatcher; Ruddy Turnstone; a variety of terns,







including Least and Gull-billed; and more. Less assured, but regular, are Black-necked Stilt and American Avocet. After Pelican Spit, we have a break for lunch, then visit the Estuarium during the quiet part of the day. Part of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, the Estuarium is an exciting and educational aquarium, highlighting the four key habitats of coastal Alabama: The Mobile-Tensaw River Delta, Mobile Bay, the Barrier Islands, and the Northern Gulf of Mexico. The Estuarium showcases the plants, animals, and other natural resources found in the estuary and its surrounding marine habitats. There are exhibits with tanks of unusual ocean creatures, including tiny seahorses, skeletons in touch trays, eggs, and more. There's even a touch tank with rays and sharks. As mid-afternoon approaches, we start to check the warbler traps once again. (B,L,D)

### **Wed., Apr. 13 Splinter Hill Bog Preserve | Grand Bay**

This morning we venture off the island and head north to Splinter Hill Bog Preserve, home to a variety of habitats: sandy upland longleaf pine forests, seepage bogs, and inundated small stream swamp forests. Much of the site is covered by one of the largest and most visually-impressive white-topped pitcher plant bogs in the world. Here, we first listen, and then look for Bachman's Sparrow, a number of which should be singing loudly. With patience, they often give good views. Other pine forest birds like Brown-headed Nuthatch are also found here. We then return to the coast, watching for both Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites. After lunch in Forrest Gump's hometown, Bayou La Batre, we look for Whimbrel, snipes, Pileated and Red-headed Woodpeckers, and many other pine forest birds. We also check the Mississippi Sound for terns and ducks. We then head back to the Island for the afternoon arrival of migrants winging in from the Gulf. (B,L,D)

### **Thurs., Apr. 14 Five Rivers Delta | Fort Morgan**

Today brings Bald Eagle, Osprey, Alligator, and herons on a Delta Boat Tour. We head off the Island and swing around the bay, making a stop at the Blakely Mud Lakes (if good reports have come from here), to catch our 11:00 AM eco-boat swamp tour of the lower Mobile-Tensaw Delta. This is a "must do" for avid nature lovers! The Mobile-Tensaw Delta is Mobile's greatest biological jewel, and an area many think deserves National Park status. We float through the open marsh, watching for a variety of wildlife, including American Alligator, Bald Eagle, Osprey, herons, cormorants, Brown Pelican, and the aquatic mammal, Nutria. Similar to Clapper Rail, we watch and listen for King Rail, found in small areas of habitat here. Our guides share interesting points on the history, geology, ecology, and biology of the Delta. Meagher Park, just across the road from Five Rivers, often turns up good birds, including Groove-billed Ani and Roseate Spoonbill in 2015, and is reliable for Boat-tailed Grackle. We then head down to Fort Morgan, at the end of the peninsula that marks the eastern edge of Mobile





Bay. As well as the fort itself, part of Admiral Farragut's "Damn the torpedoes, full steam ahead" battle of Mobile Bay, the grounds are good for migrants in the woods and shorebirds like Golden Plover on the lawns if there's been rain. It's also Alabama's best rarity trap, so we look for surprises, too. We return to Dauphin Island across the mouth of the bay by ferry, sea watching as we go. (B,L,D)

### **Fri., Apr. 15 Dauphin Island | Mobile Airport**

Today we depart from the island, but check key spots for a final migration experience before heading to the airport. Plan your flight for after 11:30 AM since we plan to arrive at the airport by 10:30 AM. (B)

## **Guide Andrew Haffenden**



Andrew started in the tourist industry in 1968 on Australia's Dunk Island, then worked in the Melbourne Zoo's reptile department, followed by a stint at the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service. Here he did field work, supported by captive studies, on Brolgas, Sarus Cranes, Magpie Geese, Herbert River Ringtail Possums, Longtailed Pygmy Possums and a few others. He also participated in captive studies of tree kangaroos, antechinuses and leatherback turtles. In 1986 he started a small eco-tour company in North Queensland, which grew into a nature and adventure company. Once Andrew moved to the US, he was responsible for tours to the Pacific, Southeast Asia, Chile and Alaska, before starting Nature Travel Specialists in 2003. He resides in the peaceful birding haven of Dauphin Island where he quickly entered the local community to share interests of conservation.

## Cost of the Journey

### Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. Please note, starting in January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

### Travel Information

Please plan to arrive at Mobile Regional Airport (MOB) by 2:00 PM on April 10. Please book departure flights from 11:30 AM onward on April 15.

### Pair with our Texas Coast & Big Thicket Tour!

Following the tour in Dauphin Island, think about joining our Texas Coast & Big Thicket tour. Fly direct from Mobile into Houston and relax for a day before enjoying one of America's best birding hotspots. Talk to us for more details.

### Cost of the Journey

Cost of the journey is \$2095 DBL / \$2495 SGL per person, based on double occupancy, from Mobile, Alabama.

Cost includes five nights' accommodations; all meals as stated in the itinerary; group airport transfers; ground transportation; professional guide services; park, preserve, and other activity fees; and miscellaneous program expenses.

Tour price does not include: roundtrip airfare to and from Mobile, Alabama, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, portage, telephone charges, or alcoholic beverages.

### Photo Credits

Cape May Warbler, Peg Abbott (PA); Tricolored Heron, Mike Boyce; Roseate Spoonbill, Betty Andres; American Alligator, PA; Ruby-throated Hummingbird, PA; Prothonotary Warbler, Doug Pratt; Snowy Egrets, Noel Snyder; Blackburnian Warbler, Tom Dove (TD); Least Bittern, TD; Spotted Sandpiper, Mahlon Hale; Great Blue Heron, Sandy Sorkin (SS); Summer Tanager, SS; Osprey with Nest Material, Bud Ferguson; Mississippi Kite, Steve Wolfe; Group Birding Dauphin Island Beach, PA; White-topped Pitcher Plants, PA.

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