



Birds of North Alabama



Many Kinds of Birds Call North Alabama Home

The northern tier of Alabama has several distinct landforms including the Tennessee River Valley and the Southern Cumberland Plateau. The variety of terrain and the large expanse of forest in the Bankhead National Forest provides wonderful bird habitat and offers excellent opportunities for birding. Some of the best opportunities for birding are during spring migration and the late spring/summer nesting season.

Paying for the Privilege

The birds of North Alabama have had no better friend than the American hunter. In 1937, the Pittman-Robertson Act, also known as the Wildlife Restoration Act, earmarked an excise tax on firearms and ammunition, and later, archery equipment. Since that time, millions of acres of habitat have been conserved and managed nationally. The money is available to state wildlife agencies for wildlife management on a 3:1 matching basis. Wildlife management efforts benefit both game (hunted) and nongame (unhunted) species. It is no coincidence that many sites on the North Alabama Birding Trail are located on Alabama Wildlife Management Areas where hunting is allowed. Perhaps the single most important way a citizen can contribute to conservation and management of "all birds" is to purchase a state hunting license—pay for the privilege whether you hunt or not.



Scarlet Tanager/USFWS, Steve Maslowski

Neotropical Migrants

Birds that nest in the United States but winter in Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean or South America are known as neotropical migrants. Breeding Bird Survey data suggests that populations of these birds have been declining primarily because of rangewide habitat loss. Look and listen for these brilliantly colored birds throughout the forest.



Acadian Flycatcher/Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Greg W. Lasley

Riparian Birds

The combination of streams and forest vegetation provide excellent habitat for certain birds. Along Bankhead's many streams, look for numerous songbirds such as Acadian Flycatcher, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Swainson's Warbler.



Eastern Wild Turkey/USFWS, Gary M. Stolz

Upland Birds

The upland forests found on Bankhead are a mixture of hardwood and pine trees. Many of the forests found here are from 40 to 120 years of age. Forest and wildlife management practices sustain the health and diversity of the forest. Prescribed fire is used to replicate a range of natural fire conditions. Common birds that nest here are the Hooded Warbler, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Wild Turkey.



Red-shouldered Hawk/USFWS, Lee Karney

Birds of Prey

Hunting through the open areas of the forest, raptors such as Red-shouldered Hawk and Broad-winged Hawk keep a watchful eye out for rodents and small birds. A variety of owls such as Barred Owl and Eastern Screech-Owl work the night-shift hunting for small animals, similar to their daytime counterparts.

Bird Watching Tips

- Respect wildlife homes—leave nests and their occupants as you found them.
- During hunting season, wear a cap or vest of hunter orange for safety.
- Share your lunch only with other humans.
- Limit the use of recordings, calls, or whistles to attract birds.
- Use binoculars or a spotting scope so you can view birds from a distance.
- Leave pets at home.
- Obtain permission before birding on private land.