



## Atlanta Audubon Receives Grant for Additional Habitat Restoration at Big Creek Greenway



Eastern Bluebird, by Steve Rushing.

Atlanta Audubon was recently awarded a grant in the amount of \$20,900 from the Georgia Ornithological Society's (GOS) Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grant fund to implement a second phase of bird-friendly habitat restoration at Big Creek Greenway in Alpharetta. Atlanta Audubon will restore ten additional acres of bird-friendly habitat, building on the 12 acres restored during phase one of this project in 2019. Atlanta Audubon will partner with the City of Alpharetta, Georgia Native Plant Society, and the Ed Isakson/Alpharetta Family YMCA to complete this work.



Before: A ceremonial privet cutting to open Phase I of the habitat restoration project in 2019. Photo by Dottie Head.

The focus of this restoration project will be to create bird-friendly habitat by removing invasive and exotic plant species such as Chinese privet and English Ivy, and installing native plants as appropriate that will assist resident and migratory birds to use the area as nesting, foraging, and stopover habitat.

In addition to the restoration work, Atlanta Audubon will monitor bird activity at the site and will create a set of data from which to better inform conservation decisions in the future. In particular, the data collected through field surveys and banding sessions will provide valuable information on individual and species movement, survival rates, annual apparent reproductive success, habitat selection, species density at focal locations, site fidelity, and dispersal of offspring. Additionally, this project will allow Atlanta Audubon to conduct volunteer work days and community education programming, which will help raise awareness of the importance of birds and healthy habitats.

Big Creek Greenway is a linear park that runs approximately eight miles from its northernmost point near Windward Parkway in Alpharetta to its southernmost point near Mansell Road in Roswell. This park has proved to be a very important greenspace for resident and migratory birds in Fulton County, with more than 190 bird observations recorded on eBird. Birds that will benefit from the habitat restoration work include several species that are listed on Georgia's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), including the Brown-headed Nuthatch, Common Grackle, Chimney Swift, Brown Thrasher, Wood Thrush, and Rusty Blackbird. SWAP is a statewide strategy to conserve populations of native wildlife species and the natural habitats they need before these animals, plants, and places become rarer and more costly or difficult to conserve.



After: A section of the habitat restoration area after invasive plants have been removed and replaced with native species. Photo by Dottie Head.

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### STAFF

**Jared Teutsch** | Executive Director  
jared@atlantaudubon.org

**Adam Betuel** | Director of Conservation  
adam@atlantaudubon.org

**Victor Fioresi** | Director of  
Administration and Finance  
victor@atlantaudubon.org

**Melanie Furr** | Director of Education  
melanie@atlantaudubon.org

**Michelle Hamner** | Director of  
Development  
michelle@atlantaudubon.org

**Dottie Head** | Director of Membership  
and Communications | *Wingbars* Editor  
dottie@atlantaudubon.org

**Gabe Andrie** | Conservation  
Program Coordinator  
gabe@atlantaudubon.org

**Beverly Fooks** | Membership and  
Development Associate  
beverly@atlantaudubon.org

**Lillie Kline** | Education Program Coordinator  
lillie@atlantaudubon.org

**Mim Eisenberg** | *Wingbars* Proofreader  
mim@wordcraftservices.com

### COORDINATOR

**Lillie Kline** | Field Trip Coordinator  
lillie@atlantaudubon.org

*Wingbars* is the official newsletter of Atlanta Audubon Society and is published 10 times a year. We feature news, upcoming events, meetings, field trips, and projects. We hope you will join us. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect policies of Atlanta Audubon Society.



# From the Executive Director

By Jared Teutsch

Spring seems to have arrived just in time to wash away the seemingly never-ending back and forth weather shifts between winter and summer. Life celebrates as the days get longer and spring rains bring a fresh sense of green back into our lives. As birders, we feel this explosion of life through the lens, figuratively and literally, as spring migration sharpens and excites our senses. While some species are already on the move by late February, we are waiting for the bulk of those northbound travelers that arrive in April and May.

With such an abundance of opportunity, it's no wonder we like sharing our excitement with others. After all, everyone is a birder, they just might not know it yet. Birds bring us together and help us understand our connection to nature.

Studies show that spending time connecting to nature, especially with birds, is beneficial to our physical and mental health. Among many things, it reduces stress and improves blood pressure, helps lift depression, decreases the risks of acute and severe diseases, and boosts short-term memory. Whether you're a Master Birder or a novice bird enthusiast, it's a great time to celebrate birds, especially at Atlanta Bird Fest.

As Georgia's largest bird and nature festival, Atlanta Bird Fest features a full month of activities, including field trips to Georgia's best birding hotspots, nature-based workshops, and guest speakers. Events are tailored to all levels of bird, nature, and outdoor enthusiasts, so there's something for everyone at Atlanta Bird Fest.

It's also a great time to showcase our work and how you can get involved and share your passion with others. Whether you are committed to restoring key habitat through our Wildlife Sanctuary Program, or enjoy learning and connecting others through our adult and school environmental education programs, or sharing a passion for birds on field trips, Atlanta Bird Fest 2020 will highlight and provide opportunities to get involved and do more. From the mountains to the coast and the places in between, Atlanta Audubon is committed to building ecosystems where birds and people thrive through conservation, education and community engagement.

Have a great spring, and I hope you can join us at a special place for birds and people: Atlanta Bird Fest. See you there!



*Studies show that spending time connecting to nature, especially with birds, is beneficial to our physical and mental health.*

*Photo by Dottie Head.*

## Spring Plant Sales Are Coming Soon!

Spring is just around the corner, and Atlanta Audubon is gearing up for several native plant sales this spring. Please join us on Saturday, April 25, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, when we will be collaborating with Blue Heron Nature Preserve and Beech Hollow Wildflower Farms for a native plant sale at our offices at the Blue Heron Nature Preserve. There are several other native plant sales in the works for this spring, so keep your eyes out for more information in *Bird Buzz* and via e-mail.

Native plants not only provide the highest-quality resources for wildlife but have many benefits to people as well. Homeowners can save water by reducing lawn size, and the added plants can even help control flooding. Native plants are hardy and well-adapted, so they thrive without synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, which hurt our pollinators, reduce prey availability, and can run off into streams. Finally, native plants and the wildlife they sustain provide color and beauty, right in your own backyard. We hope to see you at a plant sale this spring.



*Bee on a purple coneflower (Echinacea purpurea), by Dottie Head.*



# Atlanta Bird Fest Raffle

Try your luck at one of two great prizes we have lined up for this year's Atlanta Bird Fest raffle: one set of Zeiss TERRA ED 8x42 binoculars and the framed, original Atlanta Bird Fest 2020 artwork featuring a Barred Owl. Raffle tickets may be purchased for \$5 each or \$20 for 5 tickets. The drawing will take place at our Atlanta Bird Fest Closing Celebration on Sunday, May 17, at SweetWater Brewery.



Zeiss TERRA ED 8x42 binoculars.  
Photo provided by Zeiss.

Zeiss TERRA ED Binoculars combine SCHOTT ED glass (TERRA ED 32+42) with ZEISS MC coating for pure, bright and vivid images, even in low light. With an awesome close focus and a wide-angle field of view, you'll never miss a thing. And their extremely compact size aids mobility in the field. Retail Value: \$399.99

The Atlanta Bird Fest 2020 artwork is a pen and ink drawing that features a Barred Owl surrounded by whimsical flora and fauna. The artwork was commissioned by Atlanta Audubon from local artist Laura Bell and is one-of-a-kind. The original artwork has been framed to a finished size of 18" x 21". Retail Value: \$750

For more information and to purchase raffle tickets, visit [www.atlantaaudubon.org/raffle](http://www.atlantaaudubon.org/raffle).



Atlanta Bird Fest 2020 framed original artwork. Photo by Michelle Hamner.

## Call for Youth Art: *Three Billion* Art Exhibit to Open This Spring

In May 2020, the Hudgens Center for Art and Learning in Gwinnett County will feature an art show entitled *Three Billion*—representing the three billion North American birds that have been lost in the past 50 years, according to a recently released study in the journal *Science*. The causes for these losses, many of them familiar backyard birds, include habitat loss, overuse of pesticides, building strikes, and free-roaming domestic cats. *Three Billion* is a group show curated by Brickworks Gallery owner and artist, Laura W. Adams. The show will feature a small group of artists whose work either features the plight of birds or whose work celebrates nature, birds, and their habitats. All of the artists chosen have shown a long and strong commitment to protecting wild birds and their habitats.



This paper collage on canvas, titled "Red Winged Blackbirds, Flock Series #1," by Laura Adams, will be on display during the exhibit, along with work from other artists.

In addition to the fine art programming of the show, a collaborative Children's Art Exhibit entitled #BringBirdsBack will be featured, where children of all ages can participate in creating a large collage. Youth aged 18 and under are invited to submit a piece of artwork for inclusion in the Children's Exhibit. Children's artwork must address the #BringBirdsBack call to action through depiction of one or more of the seven solutions to protecting birds laid out in the *Science* study. Complete information, including instructions on where to submit artwork, can be found at [www.atlantaaudubon.org/three-billion](http://www.atlantaaudubon.org/three-billion).

**Three Billion Art Exhibit Public Opening:** Saturday, May 9, 2020, 2:00 to 4:00 PM  
Hudgens Center for Art and Learning  
6400 Sugarloaf Parkway, Building 300  
Duluth, GA 30097

The full exhibit will run from May 1 to August 1, 2020.

## ASK CHIPPY

**Q:** We recently moved into a newly constructed home, and we have been having a disturbing number of Cedar Waxwings fatally fly into our windows, including five over the past few weeks. I've read that these birds can sometimes become disoriented after eating over-ripened berries, and there are a number of holly bushes on and around our property. Is there something we can do to protect the birds?

**A:** Thanks so much for reaching out. It's true that sometimes Cedar Waxwings become "drunk" from fermented fruits, but window collisions are unfortunately fairly common. It's great that you're offering plenty of food for the birds, but if your holly bushes are too close to your windows, the birds are likely confused by the reflection. Birds don't see glass as a barrier like people do. They only see the reflections of the vegetation and then try to fly there, often with fatal results. Make sure there are no nandina bushes around your home, as these non-native berries are toxic in high quantities to gluttons like waxwings. The best way to prevent window collisions is with a variety of window treatments that break up the reflection. Spacing is very important for these treatments, so make sure to do your homework. You can find a full list of products on our Project Safe Flight Atlanta page. If you have blinds on your windows, that will help too.

—Chippy



Cedar Waxwings are known to gorge on berries.  
Photo by Sandy Spicknall, Audubon Photography Awards.

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT On Adam Betuel

By Steve Phenicie

(This is the 44th in a series on Atlanta Audubon volunteers, board members and staff.)

Like George Washington when he became president, Adam Betuel has had to define his job as Atlanta Audubon's conservation director because no one did it before him.

His position grew out of an issue the board considered in 2015: Should Audubon remain primarily a birding club or become an overall conservation organization? The board chose the latter and knew that it would need both a conservation director and a development director. Adam assumed his duties in September 2015.

To get started, he talked with anyone he thought might help. This included other staff members, counterparts in other large cities, and local plant expert Walter Bland, who was eager to give bird-friendly advice about plantings on local habitat restoration projects. "Lots of people were generous with their time," he says. He also looked to Audubon's Wildlife Sanctuary Program for inspiration and explored Buckhead to get an idea of where birds were being killed by hitting buildings.

So with his fifth anniversary looming this fall, how does he feel about his accomplishments? Adam is particularly pleased with Project Safe Flight Atlanta, which focuses on reducing bird-building collisions. Volunteers monitor parts of Atlanta, collecting dead and injured birds, and the information is used to approach building owners, politicians, and architects to try to reduce the threat. There's still plenty to do, but progress is being made through retrofitting problematic buildings,

reducing the glow of the city through the Lights Out Atlanta program, and having new construction projects be bird-friendly. Georgia Tech, for example, decided to install avian-harmonious glass on a new building. And Adam has been asked to speak to the Atlanta chapter of the American



Adam (on left) recently led a group of intrepid birders to Costa Rica. Photo by Steve Phenicie.

Institute of Architects about his goals. He'd like to work at either the local or state levels to achieve bird-friendly construction mandates. Such a measure has recently been enacted in New York City.

Adam is also proud of the educational aspects of his job. He teaches workshops to both children and adults, and conducts local bird walks, but has also led birding

trips to Merritt Island, Florida, and the Georgia coast as well as international trips to Paraguay, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. He feels that his efforts are making an impact in the local conservation community, that Atlanta Audubon is being invited to a seat at the table when the big issues arise.

On a more personal level, Adam and his wife, Melissa, are the parents of a 2-year-old daughter, Cora Teal. Adam is a native of Columbus, Ohio, graduated from Ohio State University with a degree in zoology, and is a Ph.D. candidate at Indiana State University, where he is pursuing the study of White-throated Sparrows. Adam also likes a good beer and even keeps a life list of the brews he has sampled. As of a few months ago, his beer life list was running a couple of hundred ahead of his birding life list.

# THANK YOU!

## A Million Thanks...

... to our bird walk leaders for March: **Libby Howze, Charlie Muise, Jason Ward, Jay Davis, Anne McCallum, Mary Kimberly, Gus Kaufman, Jamie Vidich, and Jonah McDonald** ... to a couple of bird walk leaders for February we didn't mention earlier, **Todd Burtner** and **Max Brown** ... to **Jensy Shell, Stella Wissner, Sandy Miller, Gina Charles, Larry Stephens, Steve Cook, Robyn Newman, Steve Newman, and Les Cane** for the help with March Peel & Stick ... to **Adam Betuel** for presenting at the February Monthly Meeting about the Atlanta Audubon trip to Costa Rica ... to **Robyn and Steve Newman, and Danielle Bunch** for helping to organize and lead the Valentine's Day Evening Red-winged Blackbird Event at the Clayton County Water Authority Treatment Wetlands ... to **Laura Waddick, Mary Nevil, and Sandy Miller** for their help assembling packets of notecards ... to **Jennifer Ruscilli, Angie Lewis, and Philip Pritchard** for leading GBBC bird walks ... to **Chrishanna Desrosiers, Rona Cook, and Steve Cook** for tabling at Callaway Gardens ... to **Joy Carter** for assisting with Atlanta Toolbank's feeder workshop.

## Order Your Atlanta Bird Fest 2020 T-shirts Soon

The 2020 Atlanta Bird Fest T-shirts are on sale now. Featuring a design created by local artist Laura Bell, the shirts feature a Barred Owl, a species that may be found throughout Georgia. This year we are excited to partner with Recover Apparel to offer T-shirts that feature 100% recycled materials: 50% recycled PET from plastic bottles and 50% upcycled cotton, with each shirt taking eight plastic bottles out of the waste stream.

Style Info: Unisex: Buffy Brown and Sweet Blue Ladies: Sweet Blue

Unisex sizes are available in sizes small through 2XL, and ladies' shirts are available in sizes small through XL. Please note that the ladies' style offers a more fitted cut, with a V-neck and capped sleeves. The unisex shirts are a more traditional cut, with high neck and regular sleeves.

Shirts are \$20 plus tax (and optional shipping) and may be ordered on our website at [www.atlantaaudubon.org/shop-in-our-online-store](http://www.atlantaaudubon.org/shop-in-our-online-store). Quantities are limited, so order soon.





# Atlanta Audubon Receives Wildlife Viewing Grant for Chimney Swift Tower at Freedom Park

Atlanta Audubon Society has been awarded a grant through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Viewing Grants program to construct and install a 12-foot-tall Chimney Swift tower at Freedom Park in Atlanta, Georgia. Even in the heart of our state's largest city, opportunities exist to view wildlife and to educate the public about conservation tools that will help vulnerable species such as the Chimney Swift.

Since the 1950s, Chimney Swifts and other aerial insectivores have experienced drastic population declines due to several factors, such as the increased use of pesticides that harms their main prey, flying insects, and the loss of swifts' nesting and roosting habitat (formerly hollow trees and more recently, man-made chimneys). Chimney Swifts, now listed as Vulnerable by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, have responded to these challenges by increasingly flocking to urban areas that offer abandoned factory smokestacks or historical home chimneys that have been left uncapped and which mimic their natural breeding and roosting sites. By locating our Chimney Swift tower at a highly visible Atlanta park, we will utilize the project site to engage and educate the public about the link between native plants, birds, and other wildlife while also providing an effective tool to assist in the overall conservation of Chimney Swifts in Georgia.

The Chimney Swift tower installation at Freedom Park will complement existing bird- and pollinator-friendly habitat work that has been completed by the Freedom Park Conservancy and their partners at the Freedom Park Bird and Wildflower Garden. Certified as an Atlanta Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary and located in Freedom Park at the corner of North Avenue and Candler Park Drive, the garden is a site for the reintroduction of native plants and shrubs for bird and pollinator habitat. The garden further engages the community through habitat work days and community science monitoring during

events such as the Great Georgia Pollinator Census. The tower location at Freedom Park places this wildlife viewing opportunity squarely in the midst of eight urban Atlanta neighborhoods. With access to the park available via public transportation and more than six miles of PATH trails, the tower's location in Freedom Park allows Atlanta Audubon to continue to serve underrepresented populations and to increase accessibility for all communities to view and appreciate nature.

Freedom Park is a free public park that was born out of formidable citizen activism linking the movements of environmentalism, urbanism, historic preservation and more. As one of Atlanta's largest public green spaces, Freedom Park spans more than 200 acres, linking diverse areas such as the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, Old Fourth Ward, Inman Park, Poncey-Highland, the Carter Center and the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Candler Park, Druid Hills, Virginia Highland, and Little Five Points.



*Atlanta Audubon will be constructing a 12-foot Chimney Swift Tower at Freedom Park that will be similar to this one at Henderson Park. Photo by Tim Lynn.*

## Ornithologist and Pulitzer Prize Finalist Author Scott Weidensaul to Open Atlanta Bird Fest 2020

Atlanta Bird Fest 2020 kicks off its month-long celebration of birds, nature, and Georgia's natural history on Saturday and Sunday, April 17 and 18. This year we are excited to welcome ornithologist and Pulitzer Prize finalist author Scott Weidensaul for several events on opening weekend, including a keynote address on Sunday, April 18, from 3:00 to 6:00 PM at the Trees Atlanta Kendeda Center.

Even as scientists make astounding discoveries about the navigational and physiological feats that enable migratory birds to cross immense oceans or fly above the highest mountains, go weeks without sleep or remain in unbroken flight for months at a stretch, humans have brought many migrants to the brink. Based on his forthcoming book *A World of Wings*, author and researcher Scott Weidensaul will take us around the globe—with researchers in the lab probing the limits of what migrating birds can do, to the shores of the Yellow Sea in China, the remote mountains of northeastern India where tribal villages saved the greatest gathering of falcons on the planet, and the Mediterranean, where activists and police are battling bird poachers—to learn how people are fighting to understand and save the world's great bird migrations.

In addition, copies of many of Scott's previous books will be available for sale, and Scott will sign books following the keynote address.

Tickets are available at \$25/person for Atlanta Audubon members or \$30/person for non-members. For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit [www.atlantaaudubon.org/atlanta-bird-fest](http://www.atlantaaudubon.org/atlanta-bird-fest). Your participation in Atlanta Bird Fest supports Atlanta Audubon's education, conservation, and community engagement programs.



*Scott Weidensaul with a Swainson's Hawk. Photo by Bill Clark.*

# ATLANTA BIRD FEST EVENTS

## Owl Prowl Presented By Atlanta Audubon

Saturday, May 2, 6:30 to 9:00 PM (Drop-in) Location: Chattahoochee River Environmental Education Center  
8615 Barnwell Road, Johns Creek, GA 30022 (Carpooling is recommended due to limited parking)  
Cost: Free to attend, but registration required.

Join Atlanta Audubon and the National Park Service for a family-friendly evening celebration around the campfire with s'mores and live owl programs by AWARE Wildlife Center, ending with an easy guided night hike by Jerry Hightower. Discover new facts about the wildlife of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area and their nocturnal habits. Dress for the weather and wear comfortable outdoor clothes and shoes suitable for walking on a forest trail. Don't forget your flashlight! Learn more or register at [www.atlantaudubon.org/abf-events](http://www.atlantaudubon.org/abf-events)



The Owl Prowl is a great activity for the whole family. Photo by Tammy Bates.

## Bird and Nature Photography Hike at Clyde Shepherd Nature Preserve

Saturday, May 3, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Trip Leader: Stephen Ramsden Limited to 20 participants  
Cost: \$30/person Location: Decatur, GA (DeKalb County)  
Difficulty Level: Moderate, walking on level, packed-dirt trails. Ages 8+, please.

Stephen W. Ramsden, director and founder of the global STEM nonprofit Sunlit Earth, will host a hands-on photography hike through one of intown Atlanta's best birding spots, the Clyde Shepherd Nature Preserve. The hike is open to all skill/equipment levels but the lessons are aimed at DSLR or manual settings accessible camera users. Stephen will discuss how the camera chip works, what the main settings do and how to use them, framing shots, background selection, and will give a brief overview of processing RAW images. This hike can immeasurably improve your end results if you are a novice camera user.

Clyde Shepherd is a 28-acre nature preserve located in DeKalb County. Featuring many different habitat types in a small area, including a pond and wetlands area, an emerging pine forest, a low-shrub meadow, and wooded uplands, this birding hotspot attracts many exciting species each spring, including migrating warblers, breeding waterfowl, including Wood Duck, and sometimes some uncommon surprises.

Learn more or register at [www.atlantaudubon.org/abf-events](http://www.atlantaudubon.org/abf-events).



Photo by Stephen Ramsden.

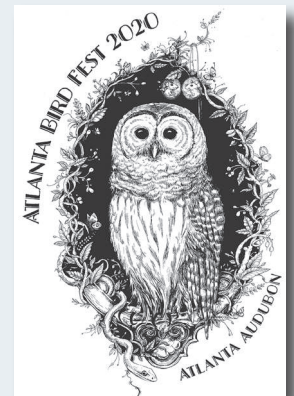
## Workshop: Mixed Media Techniques with Atlanta Bird Fest Featured Artist Laura Bell

Saturday, May 9, 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM Instructor: Laura Bell Limited to 12 participants  
Cost: \$50/person Location: Atlanta Audubon at Blue Heron Nature Preserve, Atlanta, GA (Fulton County)

In this workshop our featured artist for Atlanta Bird Fest 2020, Laura Bell, will lead participants in artistic techniques featuring a combination of cut-paper, ink-drawings, and watercolor or colored inks, to create a dimensional artwork. No experience with any of the above techniques is necessary. Students should bring supplies listed, as well as any other supplies that they wish to use, in creating their artwork.

SUGGESTED MATERIALS: Ink pens, pencils, other drawing tools, X-acto knife with blades, small cutting mats, watercolor paints, colored inks, brushes, white glue, Bristol paper, watercolor paper, or other papers selected or preferred by the student.

Learn more or register at [www.atlantaudubon.org/abf-events](http://www.atlantaudubon.org/abf-events).



Atlanta Bird Fest 2020 Artist Laura Bell will teach a mixed media workshop.

# Atlanta Bird Fest Closing Celebration, Featuring Dr. Trish O'Kane



Dr. Trish O'Kane will give the keynote address at the Atlanta Bird Fest 2020 Closing Celebration.

## Birding to Change the World

Saturday, May 17, 3:00 to 6:00 PM • The Reel Room at SweetWater Brewing Company, 195 Ottley Drive, Atlanta, GA 30324  
\$25/person for Atlanta Audubon members \$30/person for non-members

Join Atlanta Audubon on Sunday, May 17, at SweetWater Brewing Company as we celebrate the conclusion of Atlanta Bird Fest 2020. We will celebrate our Atlanta Bird Fest participants and volunteers, brag about best birds seen during the past month of events, and enjoy the fellowship of fellow nature and bird enthusiasts. Tasty brews will be provided from SweetWater Brewing Company (ages 21+), including a special cask brewed just for Atlanta Audubon.

This year, for our featured keynote speaker, we are excited to welcome the University of Vermont's Dr. Trish O'Kane, a former social justice investigative journalist and creator of the "Birding to Change the World" program. This program harnesses the power of passionate, knowledgeable, and energetic students to help solve community and global problems, all through the lens of birds.

Learn more or register at [www.atlantaudubon.org/abf-events](http://www.atlantaudubon.org/abf-events).



# FIELD TRIPS

are open to the public and free (unless otherwise noted). We welcome everyone from beginners to advanced birders. No registration is necessary except where indicated below. The only fees that apply are parking fees at some venues such as state and national parks. Any applicable fees will be listed in the field trip description on the website.

**NOTE:** Please check our website for additional trips that may be added after *Wingbars* goes to press.

**Saturday, April 1, 2020**

**Piedmont Park (Fulton County)**

**8:00 AM**

Leader: Jason Ward

Cell contact morning of the walk: 404.759.7770

GPS: 33.784056, -84.378500

**Wednesday, April 8, 2020**

**Reynolds Nature Preserve (Clayton County)**

**8:00 AM**

Leader: Anne McCallum

Cell contact morning of the walk: 678.642.7148

GPS: 33.601464, -84.346874

**Thursday, April 9, 2020**

**Murphey Candler Park (DeKalb County)**

**8:00 AM**

Leader: Mary Kimberly

Cell contact morning of the walk: 404.308.6279

GPS: 33.909449, -84.325794

**Saturday, April 11, 2020**

**Morgan Falls Overlook Park**

**8:00 AM**

Leader: Roseanne Guerra

Cell contact morning of the walk: 678.358.4916

GPS: 33.970437, -84.379238

**Thursday, April 22, 2020**

**Murphey Candler Park (DeKalb County)**

**8:00 AM**

Leader: Mary Kimberly

Cell contact morning of the walk: 404.308.6279

GPS: 33.909449, -84.325794

**Saturday, April 25, 2020**

**Stone Mountain (DeKalb County)**

**8:00 AM**

Leader: Chris Showalter, Fernbank Science Center

For more information, e-mail: [Chris.showalter@fernbank.edu](mailto:Chris.showalter@fernbank.edu)

GPS: 33.7931, -84.1465

*If you would like to lead a field trip, contribute ideas for places to go, or give feedback about leaders, trips, or the field trip directions, please e-mail Lillie Kline, field trip coordinator, at [lillie@atlantaudubon.org](mailto:lillie@atlantaudubon.org).*

*Details about trips, including driving directions, can be found on our website: [www.atlantaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.atlantaudubon.org/field-trips). As always, we encourage field trip participants to check the Atlanta Audubon Field Trips web page before any of these trips to check for updates, changes, typo corrections, etc., and for the most up-to-date information. Also, frequently trips are added after the newsletter deadline has passed.*

## Become a Better Birder: Learn About Plants!

*By Gabe Andrie, Habitat Conservation Coordinator*

The more ways we push ourselves to experience the natural world, the more connections we make, allowing us to facilitate, within ourselves, a stronger understanding of the captivating and complex relationships happening in nature, all around us.

Growing up, my fascination for the natural world was catalyzed by an interest in reptiles and amphibians, the scaly and slimy vertebrates that we more commonly call herps. During every walk in the park or family vacation, my eyes would be fixed to the ground, searching for the familiar shape of a lizard or frog. This perspective on the world pushed me to learn the behaviors and habits of these creatures, which planted a seed of curiosity about the unique habitats and weather conditions to which many of these ectothermic creatures were tied. To most, a rainy February night is a miserable time to be outdoors; however, my desire to learn about amphibians pushed me to embrace these conditions, as this is one of the best times to see certain amphibian species taking advantage of unique environmental conditions to reproduce. Without this experience in the natural world, I would never have realized that those damp February nights are also some of the best times to spot Eastern Screech Owls and Barred Owls capitalizing on the large movement of amphibian biomass through the landscape. I also would not have discovered that this is a great time to observe beaver activity in an urban ecosystem or that larval southern two-lined salamanders will feed on earthworms that are larger than themselves.

In a similar light, my interest in birds began to grow and I started looking up instead of staring at the ground all of the time, catapulting my ecological understanding to a new level. As I learned to identify different species, not only by sight but also by ear, I immediately started to see patterns. Certain species were more active at different times of day, in different weather conditions, and in different habitats. The bird calls I would hear outside my window each morning suddenly told me a different and more detailed story about what was happening around me.



*American Goldfinch on purple coneflower, by Dan Vickers.*

More and more questions began to pop up in my head: Why is that squeaky toy sounding bird (Brown-headed Nuthatch) whizzing around the tops of pine trees? Why do I almost always hear the Brown Thrasher thrashing around in a dense thicket before I see it? Why are there so many woodpeckers at the park, but not in my backyard? All of these questions were things I had never considered before I began to look up and pay attention to birds.

In answering my bird-related questions, I found another recurring variable—plants. Brown-headed Nuthatches, especially during the winter, rely on pine seeds as a main food source, Brown Thrashers forage for insects among the insect-rich leaf litter produced by our native plants, and woodpeckers need a high density of dead trees and limbs to forage and nest. Plants, as primary producers at the bottom of the food chain, are critical to the survival and function of animals and the ecosystems in which they live. By learning about plants and paying attention to how other organisms interact with them, one can enter an endless journey of inquiry and growth.

Plants can be intimidating because there is a lot to learn, but getting started is easy. Get a plant guide or download iNaturalist on your cell phone. Put down your binoculars, go outside, and begin to identify the plants in your backyard. There are endless resources online and communities around the world that can help you begin to become familiar with identifying plants. Even if you have trouble with ID, begin to notice patterns to which plants, birds, and insects are drawn. Note plant growing conditions, soil type, sun-shade preference, topography, and water content of the soil. Plants not only provide fruits and seeds for birds to eat, but they also are hosts to many insects, which birds need to raise their young and to stay healthy themselves. Native plants, in particular, are extremely valuable in our landscapes because they host and support insects that non-native plants cannot.

By learning plants and asking questions, you will not only become a better birder, but you will become a better naturalist. You will have a stronger understanding of the complexities that make up the ecological world that is constantly changing around us. Reflecting on my journey, I wish I would have been paying attention to plants much earlier, but it is never too late to start!



## ATLANTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

4055 Roswell Road ♦ Atlanta, GA 30342  
678.973.2437

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# April Monthly Meeting

**Feathers and Flames: The Relationships between Birds and Fire in Georgia, with Malcolm Hodges**

**Sunday, April 26, 2020, 3:30 to 5:30 PM • Manuel's Tavern**

Many habitats in the Southeast depend on fire, so many of our native birds have adapted to it. At our April monthly meeting, we look at some of the ways our birds cope with and even rely on fire to survive.

About the presenter: **Malcolm Hodges** grew up in coastal Mississippi and has a B.A. in Biology from Rice University and a Master's in Zoology from Mississippi State. He has worked for The Nature Conservancy in Georgia as an ecologist and land manager since 1992. His current interests are conservation management of threatened biota in the Southeastern U.S., lichen systematics, distribution and conservation in the Southeast, and just about anything to do with birds. He lives on a small farm in Riverdale, Georgia, with his partner, Keith Poole, their dog, and too many chickens.



*Malcolm Hodges*

## Early Birds Book Club April Meeting

The Early Birds Book Club celebrated two years of reading and discussion of books related to birds, birding, and birders at the February Monthly Meeting. The list of books we've read is available on the Atlanta Audubon website if you would like to see what the group has read. For our April book, we have chosen *Feathers*, by Thor Hanson. The book is an exploration of feathers as evolutionary artifacts, structural marvels, and attractive adornments. We will not meet in May, as there is no Monthly Meeting due to the Atlanta Bird Fest 2020 Closing Celebration on May 17. Our June selection is *Summer World: A Season of Bounty*, by Bernd Heinrich.

The Early Birds is a drop-in book club that meets before the Atlanta Audubon Monthly Meeting at Manuel's Tavern, from 2:00 to 3:30 PM. There is no commitment other than to enjoy reading and sharing books about birds and birding. Feel free to join us even if you have not read the book! The group will not meet on months when there is not an Atlanta Audubon Monthly Meeting. If you wish to join the Early Bird's e-mail list for announcements and reminder notices, please e-mail Mary Nevil at [Mbnevil@gmail.com](mailto:Mbnevil@gmail.com).

Manuel's Tavern is located at 602 N. Highland Avenue, N.E., Atlanta, GA 30307. Our monthly meetings are free and open to the public. Free parking is readily available to the south of the building. Food and drink are available for purchase.