

BIRDS GEORGIA

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Thank you for flying with us in 2023 as we worked to build places where birds and people thrive. It was a fantastic and eventful year. With our eyes on the future of the organization, we rebranded to Birds Georgia after a rigorous and thought-provoking assessment process in which so many of you participated.

Overall, it was a great year for the organization as we built on our successful programs, added additional organizational capacity, and, most gratifying of all, engaged with one another while sharing the joy and wonder of birds with brand new audiences across Georgia. We spread our wings in a dynamic new office space near Atlanta's Westside BeltLine. We restored habitats from the mountains to the coast and in between. We leveraged a historic bequest gift from the Geltner Family to build capacity for the future, and, through a generous, milestone gift from the Morgens West Foundation, we were able to launch the Morgens Environmental Education Gateway, a platform that enables us to connect anyone across the state and around the world. We reached 17,128 people through our signature events, including Georgia Bird Fest and Georgia Grows Native for Birds month-long festivities. Birds Georgia ended 2023 with over 2,400 members, a top achievement for our flock.

Looking ahead to 2024, we will work to build on our past success and innovate with new initiatives. For the first time ever this spring, Birds Georgia will host the Georgia Bird Fest Summit in Athens gathering leaders across bird conservation, education, and community engagement to network and deepen our knowledge and expertise.

We will begin planning for our organization's Centennial anniversary in 2026. We are eager to showcase our progress since 1926, when our organization was founded as the Atlanta Bird Club, and to envision our next 100 years creating places where birds and people thrive.

We invite you to join our growing flock to use the joy of birds as a catalyst for conservation and community. I'm looking forward to an extraordinary 2024 as Birds Georgia!

Birds, y'all!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Goncher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marc Goncher
Chair, Board of Directors



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Indigo Bunting, by Tamima Itani

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The board and staff of Birds Georgia extend their appreciation to the following members, volunteers, community leaders, and friends who made contributions of \$250 and above in 2023.

\$10,000+

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Every attempt has been made to include all donors in each category and to correctly identify them. If you believe there has been an error, please contact us at lory.hill@birdsgeorgia.org so that we may correct our records.

Protecting Georgia's Birds from Building Collisions



In 2023, Birds Georgia advanced and expanded our Project Safe Flight monitoring efforts to reduce bird-building collisions across the state. We established new monitoring routes in Savannah and Brunswick and added to our robust network of coastal partners. Staff presented educational programs to both coastal Audubon chapters, regional DarkSky International chapters, building owners and managers, architects, and the general public. The Burton 4-H Center on Tybee Island was retrofitted with Feather Friendly film to prevent bird collisions. In addition to being safer for migrating birds, these buildings will serve as an educational tool for the thousands of visitors that the site hosts annually. Finally, we made tremendous advances in analyzing our program data thanks to a partnership with National Audubon and KPMG. We received a thorough analysis of our monitoring data, which revealed that downward swings in temperature coupled with increases in atmospheric pressure correlated positively with increased bird-building collisions. The analysis also revealed that bird collisions increased significantly when daily cloud coverage is between 2,600 and 5,000 feet high. Through our partnership with Colorado State University, we obtained maps of Georgia that illustrate where migratory birds are stopping across our state, the predictors for why they stopped here, and information on how this can lead to enhanced conservation efforts. All of this data will be used to advance our collision reduction efforts.

19,184 NATIVE PLANTS
added to landscapes
across Georgia

MORE THAN 200 ACRES OF HABITAT
under active management of the
Birds Georgia restoration team
at our focal restoration sites

**100+ VOLUNTEER
MONITORS**
for conservation programs

Habitat Restoration Team Adds Prescribed Fire to Arsenal

Birds Georgia has a new tool in their toolbox. Recently, members of the Birds Georgia conservation team—consisting of Sebastian Hagan, Sarah Tolve, and Logan Jones—underwent comprehensive fire training led by the IBT (Interagency Burn Team) at Hard Labor Creek State Park. These three now join Program Habitat Manager Gabe Andrle as red card certified staff members who can be active in prescribed burning. The recent training not only strengthened staff expertise but also solidified Birds Georgia's desire to actively engage in prescribed fires in partnership with IBT. Our goal is to align Birds Georgia's conservation efforts with burning whenever feasible, recognizing the ecological benefits it brings to our landscapes. Fire has already been a tool used for our grassland work at Panola Mountain State Park and on Jekyll Island.



Logan Jones 2024 Birds Georgia Panola Burn

EDUCATION

21 TAKING WING TEACHERS trained from eight counties, including Fulton, Cobb, Gwinnett, Carroll, Clarke, White, Chatham, and Camden

42 GEORGIA URBAN ECOLOGISTS STUDENTS enrolled from cohorts in Atlanta, Athens, and Brunswick

84 MASTER BIRDERS

1,800+ YOUTH AND ADULTS reached through education programs

1,678 WEBINAR PARTICIPANTS

Morgens Environmental Education Gateway

The Morgens Environmental Education Gateway launched this fall, offering a variety of free content for people to learn about birds and conservation while also providing Birds Georgia program participants with enhanced learning experiences and opportunities. We hosted the online learning portion of our popular Master Birder program on the Gateway for 42 Master Birder participants in metro Atlanta and the Savannah area, making all of the course materials readily available on one platform. The 21 teachers who participated in our immersive Taking Wing professional development workshops on the coast and in the north Georgia mountains during the school year also benefited from having ready access to workshop materials and additional resources through the Gateway, including Birds Georgia's K-12 Learning About Birds curriculum.

Programs Expanding by Location and Partners

Birds Georgia's Georgia Urban Ecologists program launched in the Brunswick area, expanding this popular hands-on program for teens, also currently offered in Atlanta and Athens. Each month during the school year, students gather to learn and explore alongside conservation professionals, having fun outside with peers while developing career pathways. We were excited to welcome new partners to the program, including Manomet, One Hundred Miles, College of Coastal Georgia, UGA Marine Extension, and others.

We continued our 9+ year partnership with Shepherd Center, offering monthly virtual and in-person programming centered on birds, including field trips on the Atlanta BeltLine and spring and fall clinics at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. This partnership enables people facing life-altering injury or illness to experience the joys of birding and the mental well-being it can provide.



Tasha Messer gets a close look at a Northern Cardinal at the Jekyll Island Banding Station during Taking Wing. Spring Birding Clinic with the Shepherd Center

Empowering Youth Leadership

In 2023, Birds Georgia made significant strides in fostering youth leadership and engagement within the community. Recognizing the pivotal role of young adults in shaping the future, we expanded our Conservation Career Series program to introduce the Teen Trip initiative. This initiative aimed to provide teenagers with opportunities to connect with nature through bird watching and forge friendships with peers who share similar interests. As a result, we successfully graduated two teenage bird enthusiasts as Teen Trip Leaders, empowering them to lead bird walks with their peers and guardians.

In 2024, Teen Trip Leaders will take charge of conducting Bird Fest field trips, offering a safe and comfortable environment for teenagers to explore the wonders of birds. Additionally, we proactively engaged with student groups from various colleges to understand how Birds Georgia can support their efforts in promoting birding on campus. Through these meetings, we discovered that several campus groups are already striving to introduce birding to their fellow students. Looking ahead, Birds Georgia is committed to encouraging and providing safe spaces for their curiosity to flourish, thereby nurturing the next generation of conservation leaders.



Wood Stork, by Jeffrey Karnes



Bird Fest Warbler Weekend, by Jency Shell

Expanding Horizons

Birds Georgia's community engagement team undertook a comprehensive assessment of community needs, focusing on identifying gaps in our coverage of underrepresented demographics. Through this process, we successfully identified new community partners who would assist us in our mission of introducing more individuals to the wonders of bird watching.

By forging partnerships with refugee groups and mental health facilities, Birds Georgia utilized bird watching as a powerful tool to introduce new perspectives on the outdoors. It was truly heartening to witness the therapeutic and adaptive benefits that peaceful recreation in our natural spaces can have on rehabilitation and acclimation to new environments. Through these initiatives, Birds Georgia continues to expand its reach and impact, ensuring that bird watching remains accessible and inclusive to all members of our community.

658 STUDENTS REACHED through Conservation Careers Series, and youth event partners Amphibian Foundation and Finding the Flint

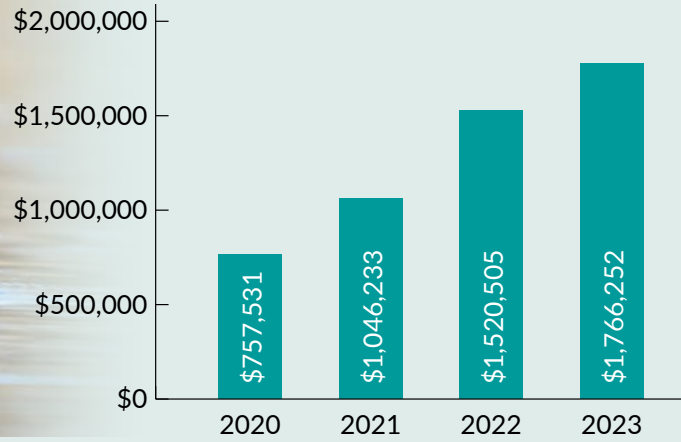
29 WEBINARS, including **17 FREE WEBINARS**, engaging **2,336 WEBINAR PARTICIPANTS**

164 FREE FIELD TRIPS with **1,504 PARTICIPANTS**

1,731 HOURS reported by **103 VOLUNTEERS**

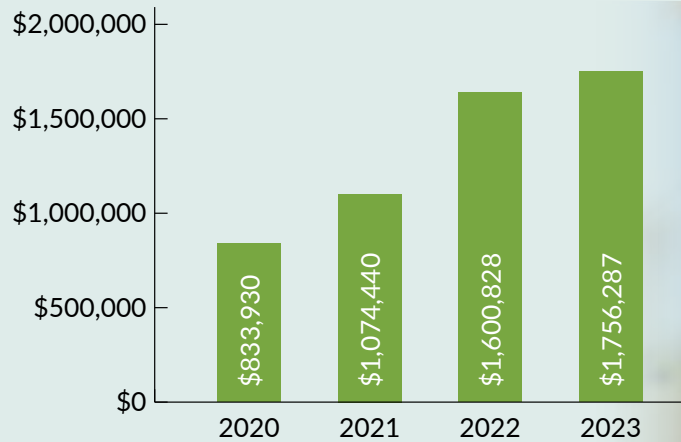
FINANCIALS

TOTAL REVENUE



Ring-necked Duck, by Mick Thompson

TOTAL EXPENSES



Red-shouldered Hawk, Marty Heath



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