



Wingbars

A Quarterly Publication of Birds Georgia

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**BIRDS
GEORGIA**

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Wingbars is the official newsletter of Birds Georgia and is published four 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 Birds Georgia.

*Golden-crowned Kinglet.
Photo by Gary Robinette.*

Flight of the Century: Birds Georgia Gears Up to Celebrate 100 Years in 2026

Birds Georgia is turning 100 years old in 2026. The organization that is today known as Birds Georgia was founded in 1926 as the Atlanta Bird Club. That makes us the oldest bird conservation group in Georgia!

The Centennial Celebration is still a year away, but planning has already begun for a year-long celebration of a century of building places where birds and people thrive. Our Centennial Planning Committee is already hard at work planning a year-long celebration, including special events, field trips, and more to commemorate 100 years.

We will also be featuring stories and key individuals from our organization's history, and we'll be sharing these on our blog, in our newsletters, and on social media. If you have stories, recollections, and photographs that you would like to share with us, we encourage you to send them via email (scans/pictures of old photos are totally fine), please email them to history@birdsgeorgia.org. Or, if you'd prefer to send hard copies, you can mail them to us at Birds Georgia, Attn: History Committee, 825 Warner Street, SW, Atlanta, GA 30310. We'd love your input as we seek to tell the story of 100 years of Birds Georgia.



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From the Executive Director

Looking to the Future and Giving Thanks



Jared Teutsch

This time of year, we find ourselves reflecting on the past year's successes and looking ahead to the future. Earlier this fall, we celebrated President Jimmy Carter's 100th birthday on October 1, 2024. Check out the photo and link to the article in this issue about the time that Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter participated in a Breeding Bird Survey with (then) Atlanta Audubon! And now, we're only a year away from our own 100th birthday in 2026. The organization that is today known as Birds Georgia was founded way back in 1926 as the Atlanta Bird Club. We've changed a lot over the years, but at our core we're still a bird-focused organization building places where birds and people thrive.

We've already begun planning for our Centennial Celebration in 2026, and we've got a fantastic panel of board members, staff, and volunteers who are researching our organizational history and planning for a fabulous year-long celebration of the oldest bird focused conservation organization in the state. We'd love to hear your stories and see photos that you may have from past years, and we encourage you to share them with us at history@birdsgeorgia.org or by mailing them to us at 825 Warner Street SW, Ste. B, Atlanta, GA 30310. We'll be sharing these memories, photos, and stories in our newsletters, on our blog, and on social media leading up to the big event in 2026 and adding them to our scrapbook and archive that will be housed at the Atlanta History Center.



Mark Oberle focuses his spotting scope on a red-tailed hawk, as Joel Volpi and Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter get a fix on the raptor.

You can read the full article from our September 1989 *Wingbars* newsletter about the time Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter took part in a Breeding Bird Survey with Mark Oberle and Joel Volpi on our blog at <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/news-feed/the-presidential-breeding-bird-survey>

As we move into the new year, we're thankful as always for the generous support of our members and donors. Birds Georgia has a dedicated staff that is working across the state to restore bird-friendly habitat, making the state safer for migrating birds, educating teachers and youth, offering free field trips, and more. We rely heavily on volunteers to amplify our efforts, from habitat restoration volunteers who pull privet and spread broomsedge bales to Project Safe Flight volunteers running early morning patrols to find birds that have collided with windows. And let's not forget our loyal and talented volunteer field trip leaders and Avian Advocate volunteers or those volunteers that answer the call to staff tables at festivals, plant sales, and other events across the state, spreading the good word about Birds Georgia. We don't say it often enough, but a million thanks to our hundreds of volunteers who donate so many hours to our organization each year and help us do more work across Georgia.

And we certainly cannot talk about volunteers without mentioning our Board of Directors and Advisors, who donate many hours of time and expertise to help keep the organization running smoothly and effectively.

We are so thankful for each and every one of our volunteers, and we're always on the lookout for new volunteers who are interested in sharing their time and talents with the organization. So if any of these volunteer slots sound appealing, please reach out to us. We'd be glad to welcome you to the flock!

We'll be thanking our volunteers in person at the Holiday Party and Annual Meeting on Sunday, December 8, at our home in the Trees Atlanta Kendeda TreeHouse. We hope to see you there so that we can thank you in person.

As always, we give thanks to you all during this time, and wish you a safe and happy holiday season.

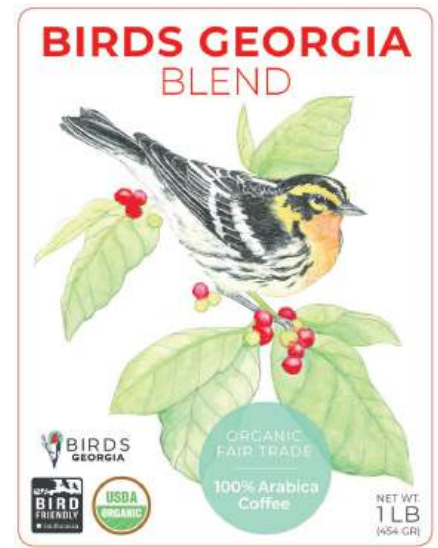
Keep Birding!

– Jared

Birds Georgia's Coffee Blend Is Now Certified Smithsonian Bird Friendly

Birds Georgia is delighted to launch our new, rebranded Birds Georgia Blend from Campesino Organic Coffee Company with this fabulous Blackburnian Warbler artwork created by Birds Georgia member Julia Weil. As an added bonus, the blend is not only certified organic and shade-grown, but it has also received Smithsonian Bird Friendly designation. It's a win-win for your tastebuds and for the birds!

Migratory species like the Blackburnian Warbler face many threats as they traverse the hemisphere. The biggest of those is habitat loss. One way you can help #BringBirdsBack is by purchasing shade-grown coffee. Our Birds Georgia blend is sourced from small organic farms in alignment with Smithsonian Bird Friendly program. This means the beans were grown in the shade of canopy trees, providing vital resources for birds and better conditions for the tree itself, and in a way that supports the larger ecosystem and the farmers that rely upon it. By purchasing this coffee, you are helping to create and preserve locations where both birds and people thrive. You can purchase this new blend in the Birds Georgia online store or directly from Campesino Organic Coffee. Either way, a portion of the coffee's sales will go to Birds Georgia.



Support Birds Georgia on Giving Tuesday

This Giving Tuesday, help us inspire the next generation of bird and conservation stewards. On December 3, we're raising funds to provide scholarships for schools and teachers to participate in our hands-on bird, STEM, and conservation education programs. These scholarships will make it possible for students and educators, regardless of financial resources, to explore the wonders of birds, engage in science-based learning, and discover ways to protect Georgia's birds. Join us in making a lasting impact this Giving Tuesday. Donate today at www.birdsgeorgia.org/donate.

One Year of Coastal Monitoring

By Sarah Manning, Coastal Conservation Coordinator

It's hard to believe that nearly a year has passed since I joined the team at Birds Georgia. In the last year, I've delighted in engaging with folks across the coastal counties and sharing Birds Georgia's mission of building places where birds and people thrive. I've had the unique opportunity to participate in monitoring efforts, recruit and engage volunteers, and attend community events, where I've met amazing people working diligently to conserve birds and their habitats across the state.

While I am not new to the Georgia coast, this past year led me to deepen my connection to the charismatic cohorts of birds that thrive here. As the ebb and flow of fall neotropical migrants turned to the constant chatter of wintering sparrows and shorebirds, the stream of spring migrants gave way to the boisterousness of the breeding season, the subdued late summer lull has given way to the ebb and flow of fall migration yet again. Along the way, I've gained a true sense of place that comes with prolonged time spent observing these small changes. Through all the seasons, Birds Georgia conducts bird monitoring to keep a pulse on select populations and responses to habitat restoration, and as a part of new and exciting partnerships and collaborations.



Four Piping Plovers on the beach at Cumberland Island. Photo by Sarah Manning.

This spring was my first full "season" of Project Safe Flight monitoring. We have coastal volunteers from Savannah to Saint Marys who regularly walk routes to search for birds that have collided with windows. We retrofitted windows at the Burton 4-H Center Campus on Tybee Island early this year, which will reduce or eliminate collisions for years to come. This spring, we located very few collisions on the coast, which is typical. However, this fall started off busy, with new species

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

On Alex Stach and Ella Seifert

By Steve Phenicie

(These are the 63rd and 64th in a series on Birds Georgia volunteers, board members, and staff. It's also the 10th anniversary of this column, which began in October 2014. Alex and Ella were recipients of this year's Birds Georgia Trailblazer Award, an honor reserved for new volunteers who have dived headfirst into the organization and advanced the cause of birding.)

ABOUT HIM

Wouldn't it be nifty to have a guide to all of the animals you might find in your neighborhood park? Alex Stach, a senior at Decatur High School, thought so, so he went about the task of creating one for Legacy Park near his home.

For a jaw-dropping look at what Alex has assembled, go to <https://georgianaturalist.com/legacypark>. He did the project for an independent study class, and many of the pictures he took himself in the park. Others he gathered from acquaintances and are representative but might have been taken elsewhere. Originally he had hoped to include birds as well as animals but abandoned that idea when it proved to be too ambitious. However, some of the common birds in the park, such as Canada Geese and Wood Ducks, are part of the guide.

Alex traces his interest in birds to a day when he was 11 years old, bored, and looking out the window. He saw a brown bird, wondered what it was, looked it up, and found out he was gazing at a Mourning Dove. Like many birders, he then got a field guide and some binoculars and went from there. Nowadays he says he is "most knowledgeable on birds, butterflies, odonates (if that word throws you, it means such things as dragonflies and damselflies), mammals, reptiles and amphibians, but I have a keen interest in all things animalia."

Alex has completed Birds Georgia's Urban Ecologist program and the Master Birder class, has taken trip leader training, and has been leading field trips since last year, guiding other teens and their parents in



Ella and Alex leading a teen bird walk for Birds Georgia. Ella is in front, with the Master Birder Nametag and Birds Georgia hat and Alex is in the maroon shirt standing next to her.

such places as Murphey Candler Park and Legacy Park. He has also participated in the Youth Birding Competition sponsored by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources since 2019, missing only the COVID year of 2020. This year he was on the team that finished in first place after they started on the coast and then hit Kennesaw Mountain at night. His teammates have varied through the years but have included young birding stalwarts such as Ewan Pritchard and Allan Muise.

In the summer of 2023 he attended a birding camp in Colorado via a scholarship awarded by the Georgia Ornithological Society. Typically he is now outside almost every day, learning what he can.

Alex is the middle son of Jason and Stephanie Stach, with an older brother named Evan and a younger one named Carter. He hopes to attend the University of Georgia to study wildlife biology and someday have a nature-related career.

ABOUT HER

For a football team, cupcakes are what you schedule for homecoming. For Ella Seifert, a sophomore at Kell High School in

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THANK YOU!

A Million Thanks...

... to **Jim Segars** for maintaining the Master Birder ListServ ... to **Patty Kappmeyer** for presenting on Birds and Nature in Gullah-Geechee Culture on behalf of Hilton Head Audubon Society ... to **Wink and Lynn Weinberg** for opening their home to Birds Georgia for a Swift Night Out ... to **Cafe Campesino** for hosting the Birds Georgia Birds and Beans Coffee Trip ... to our Coastal Project Safe Flight Volunteers in Savannah: **Rachel Green, Gracie Bliss, Kathryn Moore, Randy Tate, Jennifer Wilner, Jennifer and Brett Highland,** and **EcoAdvocates** on the Georgia Southern University Armstrong Campus ... and in Brunswick, **College of Coastal Georgia students and staff, Coastal Georgia Audubon members, Damien Scott, Jacob Owens (DNR), and Dr. Susan Muller** ... to **Jeff Potocsnak** for certifying another Wildlife Sanctuary in Camden County ... to **Melinda Langston** for spearheading the Wildlife Sanctuary efforts ... to **Casey Chaviano, Phillip Prichard, Ella Seifert, Anne McCallum, Alex Stach, Jay Davis, Becca Dill, Shannon Fair, Alicia Thompson, Robert McDonough, Steven Seligsohn, and Kevin O'Toole** for help with community engagement ... to Wildlife Sanctuary/Avian Advocates **Jeff Potocsnak, Melinda Langston, Lou Clymore, Jennifer Ruscilli, Sheryl Berg, and Kelly Plasket** ...to those who allowed us to use their properties for Chuck-will's-widow research: **the staff at Cumberland Island National Seashore, Dr. John Bremby, Mike Harrell and family at the Oxford Family Trust, Heather Brasell and the Gaskins Forest Education Center, Zach VanOtteren and the Kennedy Pond Conservancy, Ellen Miller, June White, Robert Meyer and Dr. Kate Richardson at Tall Timbers Research Station** ... to **Eli Krivutzka**, a volunteer conservation intern from Kennesaw Mountain High School ... to Project Safe Flight Georgia volunteers **Larry Klink, Nancy Kennell, Paul Miller, Adrienne**

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A Million Thanks...

(Continued from Page 4)

Miller, Karen Osborne, Rachel Green, Kelly Bryan, Mary Kimberly, Gavin MacDonald, Sharon Harp, Cheryl Hensley, Mike Brune, Mike Ayling, Maureen Carroll, Jacob Owens, Gracie Bliss, and Dr. Susan Muller

... to habitat volunteers who have helped with native plant installation, seed dispersal, invasive plant removal, woody debris management, and tabling at RiverLands Gateway Park, Panola Mountain State Park, Historic Lyon Farm, Cochran Shoals Unit of the CRNRA, and Campbellton Park:

Alisha Alford, Amy Ma, April Gadsby, Barbara A. De Castro, Barbara Marston, Brent Dimmel, Carol Wong, Chris Lambrecht, Christi C. Wiltse, Cindy Wolfe, Cynthia Fleck, Cynthia Patterson, Diane Hawkins-Cox, Donna Shapiro, Eli Krivutza, Ellen Miller, Esther Stokes, Gavin Allvine, Gregory Stein, Gwendolyn Alford, Jack Barbas, James Dang, James Stratton, Jared Poley, Jeff Kerlagon, John E. Mayes, Jon Auman, Katy Sparrow, Kelly Schuur, Kim L. Kenley, Laura Binford, Laura Breyfogle, Laura Carruth, Laura Stanford, Leena Shah, Linda Ball, Linton Eberhardt, Lisbet Ann Phillips, Lory Conte Hill, Margaret A. Stephen, Margaret Pendergrass, Marie Stanford, Maxine Watkins, Melanie Sherman, Melissa Roy, Nicholas Isom, Pat Prosser, Renee Tveraas, Roseanne Akindo, Sarah Cruz, Sarah E. Kelsey, Tanya Burnette, Teresa Mayes, Thomas McCoy-Bruce, Tina Mullen, Vivian Rios, and Yvonne Single.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: ELLA SEIFERT

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Cobb County, they're a way to raise money for animal organizations – some well-known and others not so much so.

Ella and a partner started their project, Cupcakes4Change, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, while in seventh grade. Ella read in a nature magazine about a girl who had started her own business, and she wanted to do something that would combine her interest in animals and baking. After navigating the legal aspects of setting up a nonprofit (with parental help), she and another girl decided to have monthly bake days and charge \$15 for a box of four fancy cupcakes.

Purchasers pick them up at a designated time and place. Each time, they feature a different made-from-scratch flavor, with the most recent batch being cinnamon roll. Because of the demands of school work, the other girl eventually had to drop out, but Ella found a new baking enthusiast pal, Faithe Westmoreland, and their schedule shifted to quarterly instead of monthly. Often people don't really want the cupcakes but are eager to support the girls, and in that case, the treats are given to a homeless shelter. Their baking sessions commandeer the kitchen for about 4½ hours on a Sunday afternoon.

Typically they raise from \$400 to \$700 per session but occasionally up to \$1,000 if donors particularly like the organization or animal that will benefit. The most recent beneficiary is Mostly Mutts Animal Rescue. Some other recipients have

been Vaquita CPR (which benefits a marine animal by this name), the International Rhino Foundation, Zoo Atlanta, and Kakapo Recovery (which advocates for a rare New Zealand bird). Birds Georgia has also been a recipient. They hope to keep the project going at least through high school, but when it comes to college ... well, we'll see.

You can find them via their website, and they are also on Facebook and Instagram (search Cupcakes4Change).

At the age of 13, Ella completed the Master Birder Program, becoming the youngest of the now more than 500 people to do so, and has participated in the Georgia Urban Ecologist program. After receiving training as field trip leader, she leads trips for teens in such places as Murphey Candler Park, Grant Park, and the Chattahoochee Nature Center. She has participated in the Department of Natural Resources' Youth Birding Competition for three or four years, always being on a team in the top three and being on No. 1 once.

Finally, thanks to her parents who get her there, she participates in bird banding at Panola Mountain State Park, which requires a very early start for the one-hour trip from her home in Kennesaw.

Ella is the daughter of Joel and Carly Seifert and has a younger brother, Benjamin. She still has a couple of years to think about college, but her dream school is Cornell University (although UGA and Clemson wouldn't be bad either).

Flocking Together for Georgia's Birds – Help Us Meet Our Goal by December 31

We're wrapping up our year with the goal of raising \$60,000 to support vital conservation, education, and community outreach efforts across the state. We're almost there, but we still need your support to cross the finish line. Your donations will directly contribute to habitat restoration, STEM-based educational initiatives, the certification of more wildlife sanctuaries, coastal bird monitoring, and expanding our statewide efforts for bird conservation. With your help, we're creating spaces where birds and people can thrive together.

Please make your gift before December 31 by visiting www.birdsgeorgia.org/donate. Thank you for flocking together with us to support Georgia's birds and the habitats they need to thrive.



Snowy Egrets. Photo by Franco Portmann, Audubon Photography Awards

Giving Wings to Educators across Georgia

By Melanie Furr, Director of Education

We're all probably familiar with the adage, "If you give a man a fish, he'll eat for a day, but if you teach him how to fish, he'll eat forever." At Birds Georgia, we know taking students birding during the course of a school day can make a big impact on them, but we believe we make an even more profound and lasting impact when we equip their teachers to guide them in bird study and observation throughout the school year. Since 2013, Birds Georgia's Taking Wing Professional Development has trained educators to incorporate birds into their teaching, using our own standards-based Learning About Birds curriculum (LAB). The objective of the program is to build environmental stewardship in Georgia by equipping teachers to effect meaningful outdoor learning and instill a conservation ethic in their students and the broader school community.

An immersive learning experience for K-12 teachers and informal educators, the program kicks off with a three-day summer workshop focused on bird (and plant) identification, adaptations, ecology, and conservation. Each participant receives a new pair of Vortex binoculars, a Sibley field guide, and a LAB notebook (including six units with educator and student guides and accompanying activities), as well as books, posters, and other classroom resources. We begin and end each day birding (while practicing using Merlin and eBird), escaping the midday heat doing hands-on activities in the classroom. One-day workshops in fall and spring extend the learning and give participants an opportunity to share teaching ideas. A particular highlight for teachers during the fall workshop, focused on migration, is visiting a bird banding station with Charlie Muise, where they have the opportunity to learn about bird research and see birds up close in the hand. As part of the program, teachers also receive access to the Taking Wing course on our Morgens Environmental Gateway, which serves as a repository for curriculum resources, activities, and idea sharing. Taking Wing is especially relevant for science teachers, but we've had teachers from many different disciplines participate, including math, language arts, art, compensatory education, and ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages), as well as media specialists. Regardless of what or where they teach, each participant commits to incorporating birds into his or her teaching during the course of the school year.

We have hosted the summer Taking Wing workshop in the North Georgia mountains at Unicoi or Amicalola State Park since 2013, and since becoming a statewide organization, we have also hosted the training on St. Simon's (Glynn County) and at Lake Oconee (Putnam County).

To date we have trained more than 175 teachers from at least 23 counties across Georgia. Teachers consistently report that the training is transformational both professionally and personally. They are



Birding at Unicoi State Park. Photo by Melanie Furr.

especially appreciative of the opportunity to, in the words of one participant, "get away from daily life and focus on my craft without the distractions daily life brings," and they are always excited about all of the classroom goodies they receive. On a recent post-program survey, one participant shared: "All that I learned during this workshop ties directly to my school's STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) initiative...native plants, conservation, etc. The knowledge I have gained and will bring to our school will be invaluable. I firmly believe that students care about and become passionate about the things we are passionate about. I cannot wait to help foster a love of birding and continue to help students become good stewards of our planet."

Hearing about the many ways participants share birds with their students when they return to their classrooms is always inspiring and affirming for the work we do. One first-grade teacher created a multi-discipline unit that involved doing research and writing on the needs of a local bird species, creating a public awareness video about bird collisions and Lights Out Georgia, and building bird models with Legos. Another teacher, in addition to diving into bird study with her gifted students, piqued interest in birds beyond her own classroom by playing common bird calls each day during her hall duty, arousing curiosity and questions from passing students. Several teachers have created after-school bird clubs or implemented weekly bird walks with their classes, while others have initiated campus projects to benefit birds like installing native plants or applying student artwork to large windows – the list goes on!

With each Taking Wing graduate reaching at least one class of (20) students, we have engaged approximately 3,500 students across the state, but we know from ongoing partnerships with teachers that they continue to engage classes year after year in meaningful bird- and conservation-focused learning, extending the impact exponentially. With generous support from family foundations and Birds Georgia members, we hope to continue to offer this unique and meaningful opportunity for educators, "taking wing" in all corners of the state.



A teacher shows off her journal after completing a LAB activity. Photo by Melanie Furr.



Teachers try to figure out what bird they saw using the Merlin app. Photo by Melanie Furr.

Celebrating the Launch of the Habitat Stewardship Program

By Heather Levy, Stewardship Coordinator

Birds Georgia is excited to announce the launch of a new conservation program called the Habitat Stewardship Program. An offshoot of our Wildlife Sanctuary Program, the Habitat Stewardship Program is geared toward larger public and private lands of 10 acres or larger. The goal of the program is to enable property stewards to make improvements to their lands for wildlife while offering educational materials, technical assistance, and connections to cost-share resources. The program is open to owners of properties in any state of conservation, from those who may be new to wildlife management or have recently acquired properties and need a lot of technical assistance to those who have been managing high-quality wildlife habitat for decades. The Stewardship Coordinator, Heather Levy, who manages the program, will work closely with enrollees by providing assistance and connecting them with local practitioners and funding opportunities.

The program rubric offers flexibility for landowners who may be in different regions and therefore managing different habitats and/or wildlife. The rubric also differentiates between



A pristine longleaf pine savanna from central Georgia enrolled in our Habitat Stewardship Program. Photo by Heather Levy.

those managing private lands and those managing public lands. There are three main categories: Habitat, Community Science, and Engagement/Education. Research and Monitoring is an optional category. Within each category are subcategories with minimum criteria that must be selected. For example, Best Management Practices, under the Habitat category, offers 17 potential options and requires that at least five be selected. Options include actions like implementing a non-native invasive species removal plan, retaining or creating standing dead trees (snags), and using prescribed fire. There is also space in the application to include photos or additional information. The specific criteria that applicants select can be actions they are already implementing or actions they plan to accomplish within a 12-month period. For example, if a landowner/steward has not yet applied a prescribed fire on their property, but plan to do so within the next year, he or she may select prescribed fire as a criterion and include in the adjacent text space that they are planning on doing so on 50 acres of longleaf pine habitat during the next growing season.

Program participants are eligible for a suite of benefits, including access to a digital library of technical assistance and cost-sharing resources, in-person and virtual property visits from the stewardship coordinator, and more. To ensure all areas of the state are covered and visited by local practitioners, the Stewardship Coordinator will connect any interested enrollees with their local Georgia Department of Natural Resources/Quail Forever Private Lands Program representative, Natural Resource Conservation Service office, county extension agent, and/or local conservation groups. These organizations will also have the most up-to-date information on current cost-share programs and can let landowners/stewards know if their property may be

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A Carolina bay enrolled as a pre-applicant in our Habitat Stewardship Program. Photo by Sarah Manning.

One Year of Coastal Monitoring *(Continued from Page 3)*

for the coastal collision team: Kentucky Warbler, Mourning Dove, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Northern Parula, and Red-eyed Vireo, on top of the most commonly-collected species, Common Yellowthroat. We are continuing to engage more partners, businesses, and campuses in our monitoring efforts and Lights Out initiative and hope to wrap up another successful glass retrofit by the end of the year.

In April, we began our pilot nightjar study using Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs). We recruited landowners through our newly-launched Habitat Stewardship Program to conduct research on their working lands. Fifteen units were placed across the state and recorded from May to July in order to detect if nightjars were present. The good news? Chuck-wills-widows were detected at 11 of the 15 sites, Common Nighthawks at four, and Eastern Whip-poor-wills at one site. We also collaborated with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Nightjar Survey Network to complete 18 driving nightjar routes across the state. Does this sound like fun? We look forward to expanding this work in 2025 and will be recruiting volunteers to help us survey the state.

This breeding season was quite the busy one for coastal birds. We monitored two small wading bird rookeries in Camden County. The sounds (and smells) are not easily forgotten. In early spring, the beautifully-plumed Great Egrets strutted and squawked their way through the courtship phase before finding a suitable site for their seemingly haphazard nest construction. Their eggs incubate for nearly a month before hatching and revealing near-helpless young that will not leave for another three weeks or so. By the time these birds fledge, they look nearly identical to their adult counterparts, save a rogue fluffy feather or two. One colony produced nine Great Blue Herons (which nest earlier and prefer to nest away from other wading birds) and the other, a mix of Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Green Herons, Little Blue Herons, night herons, and Western Cattle Egrets. The small colony was guarded by a handful of small alligators... so I did not attempt any close looks and risk meeting their mother. Additionally, we monitored eight nesting pairs of American Oystercatchers on Cumberland Island's ocean-facing shore. Since most Oystercatchers are fitted with field-readable bands, we can identify unique individuals and determine who



American Oystercatcher. Photo by Sarah Manning.

is nesting where (they're also highly territorial). Unfortunately, even with multiple attempts by each pair, all were lost to predators or other natural forces. On the bright side, many Wilson's Plover pairs and chicks were seen while we did these surveys, so it

seems that someone had a successful season.

Throughout all the seasons, we also monitor non-breeding Piping Plovers on Cumberland Island National Seashore, with the support of the National Park Service. Beginning in late summer 2023, I was tasked with surveying the migratory and wintering Piping Plovers there. This project has been ongoing for many decades, but after longtime volunteers retired from the responsibility, I (happily!) took over the task. Since

then, I have surveyed at least once a month, with the assistance of the park staff. While on surveys, we take note of how many Piping Plovers are seen, where they are, any leg bands they have, and any disturbances (e.g., boats, bicycles, predators, or dogs) that may be present. This is important because Cumberland Island is home to a wintering cohort of the federally endangered Great Lakes population, in addition to wintering members of the federally threatened Atlantic Coast population. The Great Lakes subspecies recently hit a milestone: there were a total of 81 unique breeding pairs across the region this summer (the most since their Endangered Species Act listing), which is one more than last year's record of 80 pairs. The recovery goal is to have at least 150 pairs for five consecutive years. During the 16 surveys since August 2023, we've seen 511 Piping Plovers on Cumberland Island. The most seen in a single survey was 67 individual Piping Plovers along the 17 miles of ocean-facing beach. Many of these birds were banded with unique color bands and flags, allowing us to know individual birds and track them over time. In the Great Lakes population, each and every bird is banded. Since the fall of 2023, I've documented 63 individuals by their unique bands; approximately 20 are from the Atlantic population, and the remainder are from the Great Lakes population. One of my all-time favorite birds is gabby: she is named for the colors of her bands (light green, light blue, Yellow). She is the oldest known female Piping Plover and is tied for oldest Piping Plover ever recorded (she hatched in 2009). This year, she successfully fledged two chicks at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore this summer as a 15-year-old! Another cool note? During Birds Georgia's May 2023 Michigan trip, Conservation Director Adam Betuel and participants were treated to the other side of gabby's life: views of gabby nesting at Sleeping Bear Dunes with the Great Lakes Recovery Team (how's that for full circle conservation?)

I've greatly enjoyed connecting with the birds (and people) on the coast for the past year and look forward to all that is to come.



American Oystercatcher. Photo by Sarah Manning.

Renew Your Membership at 2024 Rates for 2025

It's been more than a decade since Birds Georgia last increased its membership dues, and it's time for a small rate increase so that we can our work across Georgia building places where birds and people thrive. Your membership dues directly support our conservation, education, and community engagement work from the mountains to the coast and everywhere in between. Thank you for your continued support.

Beginning in 2025, you'll notice a slight increase in cost for our individual and family membership levels. However, you can lock in your current 2024 rate for 2025 if you renew between now and December 29, 2024. Renew your 2025 membership today for the 2024 rates at www.birdsgeorgia.org/joinrenew.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS UPCOMING 2025 ANNUAL DUES

Membership Level	2024	2025
Individual	\$35	\$40
Family	\$50	\$60
Junior	\$12	\$15
Student	\$20	\$25



Habitat Stewardship Program *(Continued from Page 7)*

eligible for funding opportunities. In addition, enrollees will receive a one-year Birds Georgia membership. Membership perks include a subscription to our Private Lands Newsletter, discounts on field trips and programs, and more. Those interested may also opt in to have their properties for available engagement and research opportunities as they become available, such as our current nightjar habitat use program. Enrollees will receive a Birds Georgia Habitat Steward sign or certificate.

To enroll in the program, applicants should review the rubric, fill out the application, and pay the one-time application fee, which is \$150 for private landowners and \$250 for publicly owned lands. Any public or private land in any part of the state is eligible to enroll. Annual monitoring reports are due near the one-year mark of the original application to provide updates to the Stewardship Coordinator. Instructions on how to apply, the rubric, benefits, and link to the application may be found on our website, under the Conservation tab.

While we were developing the program, we had applicants pre-enroll to provide updates on the status and launch of the program. We were excited to receive more than 35 pre-applications, and their full applications are beginning to trickle in. Heather Levy is thrilled to be managing this program and offering technical assistance to landowners and land stewards for the benefit of healthy habitats and wildlife. We want to sincerely thank those who have already applied and encourage you to share the program with other landowners and stewards who might be interested. If you have any questions about the program, please do not hesitate to contact Heather via email at Heather.Levy@birdsgeorgia.org.



An upland pine habitat being restored through prescribed burning and thinning from a property enrolled as a pre-applicant in our Habitat Stewardship Program. Photo by Sarah Manning.



Travel with Birds Georgia in 2025

Join Birds Georgia staff and members on one of our small-group birding tours to deepen your appreciation of nature and bird conservation locally and farther afield. Limited spaces remain in the following trips:

- **Central Florida Birding Weekend, January 17 to 20, 2025**
- **Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, January 24 to 26, 2025**
- **Southern Africa: Towering Falls and Desert Dunes, August 17 to September 2, 2025** (two spots remain)

Additional trips will be announced in 2026. Learn more and register at <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/travel.html>

Save the Date for Georgia Bird Fest 2025



Holiday Raffle: Two-Night Stay in The Lodge at Little St. Simons Island

Donated by Little St. Simons Island | Raffle Tickets: \$20 each or 6 for \$110



Birds Georgia will be raffling off a two-night stay for two in Lodge at Little St. Simons Island. Photo used with permission of Little St. Simons Island.

Little St. Simons Island has graciously donated a two-night stay for two at The Lodge on Little St. Simons Island for our 2024 Holiday Party Raffle. Stays are all-inclusive, and include accommodations, boat transfers to and from the island, three prepared meals daily, soft drinks, and all activities, including naturalist led excursions, and use of all recreational equipment. The winner will be selected at our Holiday Party and Annual Meeting on Sunday, December 8, at 3:00 PM, at Birds Georgia's Trees Atlanta Kendeda TreeHouse. You do not need to be present to win. The trip must be used by December 15, 2025.

To learn more or purchase raffle tickets, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/upcoming-events.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER

Field Trip: Piedmont Park | Leader: Becca Dill
Saturday, November 2, at 8:30 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips.

Field Trip: Legacy Park – Beginner-focused Field Trip | Leader: Josh Jackson
Sunday, November 3, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips.

Field Trip: Chattahoochee Nature Center | Leader: Dottie Head and Alicia Thompson
Sunday, November 10, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips.



Golden-crowned Kinglet.
Photo by Paul Kusmin.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER *(Continued from previous page)*

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum
Wednesday, November 13, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Volunteer Event: Muhly Grass Planting on Jekyll Island
Friday, November 15, at 9:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/volunteer.html>

Optional Bird Walk Before Jekyll Island Saturday Planting Event
Saturday, November 16, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/volunteer.html>

Volunteer Event: Muhly Grass Planting on Jekyll Island (Day Two)
Saturday, November 16, at 9:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/volunteer.html>

Field Trip: Murphey Candler Park | Leader: Kevin O'Toole
Saturday, November 23, at 8:30 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips.

Field Trip: Dunwoody Nature Center | Leader: Shannon Fair
Saturday, November 23, at 8:30 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips.



Habitat Restoration Volunteer Workdays:

Muhly Grass Planting on Jekyll Island

Day 1
Friday, November 15
Saturday, November 16

Day 2
Friday, November 15
Saturday, November 16

9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Learn more & Register
www.birdsgeorgia.org/volunteer



DECEMBER

Field Trip: Legacy Park – Beginner-focused Field Trip | Leader: Josh Jackson
Sunday, December 1, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips.

Field Trip: Piedmont Park | Leader: Rob McDonough
Saturday, December 8, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips.

Sunday, December 8, at 3:00 PM
Birds Georgia Holiday Party and Annual Meeting

See back cover for full details

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum
Wednesday, December 11, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Chattahoochee Nature Center | Leader: Dottie Head and Alicia Thompson
Sunday, December 15, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips.



Golden-crowned Kinglet.
Photo by Gregory Seitz.

JANUARY

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum
Wednesday, January 8, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Chattahoochee Nature Center | Leader: Dottie Head and Alicia Thompson
Sunday, January 12, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit www.birdsgeorgia.org/field-trips.



BIRDS GEORGIA

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678.973.2437

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**Birds Georgia Holiday Party and Annual Meeting at
Birds Georgia Office at Trees Atlanta Kendeda TreeHouse,
825 Warner St. SW, Atlanta, GA 30310
Sunday, December 8, at 3:00 PM**

Free to attend, but registration is requested so we can plan our catering order.

Join Birds Georgia for our Holiday Party and Annual Meeting on Sunday, December 8, from 3:00 to 5:00 PM at Birds Georgia's home at the Trees Atlanta Kendeda TreeHouse and help us celebrate our many successes in 2024 building places where birds and people thrive. We'll also hold a short annual meeting, where we will hear from Jared Teutsch, executive director, introduce our newly installed board of directors, welcome new staff, and bid a fond farewell to our outgoing board members.

We'll be giving away door prizes, and the event will culminate in our raffle drawing for a two-night stay for two at The Lodge at Little St. Simons Island. You do not have to be present to win. We'll also have our store set up, with a variety of T-shirts, coffee, chocolate, and other items for the birder on your holiday shopping list.

Birds Georgia will provide a variety of appetizers and beverages. Please join us as we celebrate another successful year for Georgia birds. Sign up for the holiday party or purchase raffle tickets at www.birdsgeorgia.org/upcoming-events.



YOU'RE INVITED!

**BIRDS GEORGIA'S
HOLIDAY PARTY AND
ANNUAL MEETING
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024**



3:00 PM to 5:00 PM
Birds Georgia at Trees Atlanta
825 Warner St. SW
Atlanta, GA 30310

For more information and registration at
www.birdsgeorgia.org/upcoming-events