



PRESS RELEASE

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Media Note: Photos to accompany this article and a MS Word version of this press release are available for download at <https://ow.ly/T8yj50Qhmcb>

BIRDS GEORGIA RECEIVES THREE GRANTS FOR CONSERVATION AND ENGAGEMENT WORK

(ATLANTA, GA) January 14, 2025 – Birds Georgia was recently awarded three grants to fund conservation and engagement work across the state. The first is a grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation that focuses on invasive plant species removal; the second is a grant from the Turner Foundation to provide operational support for Birds Georgia’s conservation initiatives; and the third is an Audubon in Action grant to fund Birds For All programming.

“Birds Georgia was thrilled to receive these three grants to support our conservation and engagement work,” says Jared Teutsch, Executive Director of Birds Georgia. “This funding will help us fulfill our mission of building places where birds and people thrive by expanding our conservation capacity across the state and enabling us to reach additional audiences with information and programming about birds and native plants.”

The R.K. Mellon Foundation Grant is being termed the “Fearsome Five” as it targets five non-native invasive plant species, Chinese Privet, Nandina (sometimes called heavenly bamboo), English Ivy, bahia grass, and autumn fern, that negatively impact migratory bird species. Invasive plant species are another stressor affecting migratory birds during their strenuous journeys each spring and fall. Using a map of migratory bird stopover hotspots, Birds Georgia has identified high priority areas and will be hosting bio-blitzes in these areas to detect these invasive species. Birds Georgia will partner with the Georgia Native Plant Society and local Audubon chapters to develop outreach materials, produce educational videos, and host workshops, field trips, and webinars on how to identify and treat the Fearsome Five.

The Turner Foundation Grant will provide operational support to Birds Georgia's conservation initiatives, including tackling habitat degradation and loss, a leading threat to bird populations in Georgia and across the nation. Birds Georgia will work to create robust, native ecosystems through habitat restoration projects and engaging communities in conservation. Key current projects include riparian restoration along the South and Chattahoochee Rivers and native maritime vegetation work on Jekyll Island.

These projects involve removing non-native invasive species, planting native flora, and creating opportunities for community engagement through volunteer events and educational programs. Such initiatives serve as educational touchpoints for the public while also addressing ecological challenges like habitat fragmentation and the decline of pollinators and native wildlife. A priority for Birds Georgia is the protection of grassland birds, which are particularly vulnerable due to urbanization and habitat loss/conversion. In Georgia, nearly a quarter of all grassland bird species, including the American Kestrel, Northern Bobwhite, and Eastern Meadowlark are now of serious conservation concern. Metro Atlanta's rapid development and population growth, along with the connected land use changes, has exacerbated this issue, threatening critical open spaces around the metro area. Habitat restoration initiatives address this need by expanding and enhancing grassland habitats while educating communities about the importance of conserving these spaces.

Finally, the Audubon in Action Grant will support the work of Birds Georgia's Birds For All programming. Birds Georgia will work to grow a diverse community of bird lovers, and individuals working together to improve the world for birds and people. Our efforts include collaborating with both existing and new organizations to share and lead mindful birding practices, bilingual birding activities, field trips specifically designed for individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities, and community-led field walks to foster local engagement with nature that is inclusive and welcoming. Additionally, we aim to expand our Teens and Feathers program to include more teen leaders and active participants, empowering young people to take an active role in conservation.

About Birds Georgia: *Birds Georgia is building places where birds and people thrive. We create bird-friendly communities through conservation, education, and community engagement. Founded in 1926 as the Atlanta Bird Club, the organization became a partner of National Audubon in 1973, and continues as an independent partner of National Audubon Society. Learn more at <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/>.*

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