

# Wingbars

A Quarterly Publication of Georgia Audubon

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GEORGIA  
AUDUBON

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Wingbars is the official newsletter of Georgia Audubon 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 Georgia Audubon.

Royal Terns by Mary Catherine Miguez,  
Audubon Photography Awards.

## Coming Soon: Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month

This September Georgia Audubon will celebrate the sixth annual Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month, a celebration of Georgia's native plants and the key role they play for birds and other wildlife. One of the biggest threats to birds in Georgia is habitat loss. As urbanization increases and natural habitats disappear, native plants can go a long way to restoring the habitat birds need. Fortunately, we can provide birds with high-quality resources simply



Brown Thrasher on black elderberry. Photo by Will Stuart.

through thoughtful landscaping utilizing native plants. This year, we are delighted to partner with the Georgia Native Plant Society to bring an amazing lineup of events to help you transform your landscape with native plants for birds and other wildlife.

Join fellow plant and bird enthusiasts on Saturday, September 9, for a Round Robin on Transforming Your Greenspace. Hear from experts from Georgia Audubon, the Georgia Native Plant Society, and Trees Atlanta to learn how to build a wildlife sanctuary in your own landscape, including propagating plants, controlling invasive plants, and building and managing native landscapes for birds and other pollinators. Each of these three organizations also offers habitat certifications and their presentations will cover specifics on how to become certified. We'll have exhibitors, tours of the newly certified garden at Trees Atlanta, and an optional early morning bird walk prior to the event. Gabe Andrle, Georgia Audubon's habitat program manager, will also host an optional native plant and bird tour at nearby Lionel Hampton Park after the event. Join us!

## What's in a Name?

At Georgia Audubon, we believe that just as bird diversity strengthens ecosystems, the diversity of human experiences, traditions, and viewpoints strengthens our conservation, education, and community engagement efforts. Through our work building places where birds and people thrive, Georgia Audubon is committed to building a representative, equitable, and inclusive organization for our members, staff, partners, board, and program participants.

Over the past few years, some troublesome revelations about our namesake, John James Audubon, have been brought to light. Recently, several chapters have announced plans to move away from the Audubon name. In March 2023, National

(Continued on Page 3)

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### STAFF

**Jared Teutsch**  
Executive Director

[jared.teutsch@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:jared.teutsch@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Sheridan Alford**

Director of Community Engagement  
[sheridan.alford@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:sheridan.alford@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Gabe Andrie**

Habitat Conservation Program Manager  
[gabe.andrie@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:gabe.andrie@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Adam Betuel**

Director of Conservation  
[adam.betuel@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:adam.betuel@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Lauren Bowman Clontz**

Coastal Conservation Coordinator  
[lauren.clontz@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:lauren.clontz@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Beverly Fooks**

Operations Associate  
[beverly.fooks@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:beverly.fooks@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Melanie Furr**

Director of Education  
[melanie.furr@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:melanie.furr@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Sebastian Hagan**

Habitat Program Coordinator  
[sebastian.hagan@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:sebastian.hagan@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Dottie Head**

Director of Communications  
*Wingbars* Editor  
[dottie.head@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:dottie.head@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Lory Conte Hill**

Director of Development  
[lory.hill@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:lory.hill@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Catie E. Iber**

Director of Finance and Administration  
[catie.iber@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:catie.iber@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Logan Jones**

Habitat Program Specialist  
[logan.jones@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:logan.jones@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Alex LoCastro**

Conservation Program Coordinator  
[alex.locastro@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:alex.locastro@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Melissa Paduani**

Education Program Manager  
[melissa.paduani@georgiaaudubon.org](mailto:melissa.paduani@georgiaaudubon.org)

**Mim Eisenberg**

*Wingbars* Proofreader  
[mimiseisenberg@att.net](mailto:mimiseisenberg@att.net)

From the Executive Director

# Building Habitat for Birds and People, too

Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month is just around the corner, and with it comes an exciting opportunity to celebrate the importance of native plants in our gardens, greenspace, and wild places. It's a series of events designed to show how you can build a Georgia Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary in your backyard or influence your community to plant more native plants. Through our expansive habitat restoration efforts and the Wildlife Sanctuary Program, Georgia Audubon has been busy creating high-quality habitat for birds and for people, too!

This year we want to celebrate the success of growing native by encouraging you all to visit local native plant nurseries and partners who sell native plants. Whether joining in on the tours of the Georgia Native Plant Society, visiting the Chattahoochee Nature Center or many other partners across the state, now is the time to celebrate the value and climate resilience of native plants.

We hope to see you at one of the many in-person and virtual events this September as we celebrate the connection between people and birds. Connecting and reconnecting people to nature through birds is as fundamental as breathing or drinking. The way forward is to build a more inclusive and resilient future with our tapestry of community.

We are busier than ever connecting people to birds so that we all can discover the wonder of birds right outside our windows, in our yards, and around our community greenspace. After all, everyone is a birder; they just may not have had the opportunity yet.

Now more than ever, we are bringing more people back into nature, enhancing their health, well-being, and community impact while increasing representation and access for all communities to appreciate and enjoy nature.

As always, we value your input, insight, and impact as we work to build places where birds and people thrive from the mountains to the coast and everywhere in between. Keep planting your native plants!

Cheers, Jared



Jared Teutsch



American Goldfinch on a purple coneflower. Photo by Will Stuart.

## GEORGIA BIRDS NEED YOU!

Help us share the wonder and joy of nature with even more individuals and communities across Georgia. Your gifts are used across the state to restore bird-friendly habitat, educate youth and adults, monitor bird populations, and inspire a love of nature through birds.

Make a special donation today: [www.georgiaaudubon.org/donate](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/donate)

## Now Hiring: Development Coordinator

Georgia Audubon seeks an energetic Development Coordinator to expand our reach in meaningful, tangible ways. This new role will grow Georgia Audubon's philanthropic partnerships with members, foundations, government agencies, and corporations. If you have a love of nature and birds, and past experiences building community across a diverse audience, we encourage you to apply today at <https://www.georgiaaudubon.org/job-opportunities>

## What's in a Name? (Continued from Page 1)

Audubon announced their intent to retain the Audubon name. These conversations have prompted discussions among Georgia Audubon's board, staff, members, and stakeholders about what the "Audubon" name means to our work and mission and whether "Audubon" is the best name for our organization moving forward.

### Our Process

In May 2023, Georgia Audubon's Board of Directors empaneled a committee, consisting of board members and staff to develop a plan for a process to seek input on whether to change the organization's name, for review and approval by the full Board at the August 2023 Board meeting. The Board directed that the process be inclusive and move with haste. The goal is to help our organization gain a deeper understanding about the history of John

James Audubon and our organization's historical association with the "Audubon" name for the last fifty of its nearly 100 years of existence. The committee may also seek to have members and stakeholders consider how the name affects our organization today, and implications for our work across our bird-oriented network.

Over the next several weeks, please look for additional information via email and on our website about our evaluation and engagement process as well as resources, programs, and links that empower you to explore the issue for yourself. The process may also include an important survey and in-person or virtual listening sessions as a way for you to share your thoughts. Please watch your email for the latest updates and opportunities to share your thoughts on this important issue.

### Webinar: Audubon's American History, with Gregory Nobles Thursday, August 17, at 7:00 PM | Registration: FREE

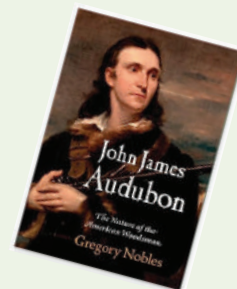
Learn more or register at <https://www.georgiaaudubon.org/upcoming-events.html>

In addition to being a pioneering naturalist and brilliant bird artist, John James Audubon was a lively teller of tales. In *Ornithological Biography*, his five-volume, 3,000-page companion to *The Birds of America*, Audubon interspersed dozens of stories about the American people, ranging from their environmental habits to their social behaviors to their race relations. While some of these stories are more true than others, together they give us a fascinating view of the ways Audubon understood his adopted country. They also invite us to look at Audubon himself as a writer of both myth and history.

However, there is another side to John James Audubon that has emerged recently through historical research and popular discourse. Audubon was a man who owned, purchased, and sold enslaved people. He also wrote about returning escaped enslaved people to their owners and of his strong opposition to the growing abolitionist movement.

Join us for an enlightening presentation by Gregory Nobles, author of the book *John James Audubon: The Nature of an American Woodsman*, as he shares stories of Audubon's past to discuss how we understand his portrayal of the past from our own perspective of the present.

**Gregory Nobles** is Professor Emeritus of History at Georgia Tech and the author of *John James Audubon: The Nature of the American Woodsman* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017). In 2020, he published an essay about Audubon's slaveholding in *Audubon* magazine, and in 2022 he served as historical consultant to the National Audubon Society's study of the possible name change. He divides his time between Atlanta, where he is a member of Georgia Audubon, and Northport, MI, where he is a member of Michigan Audubon.



## Fall Conservation Careers Events

Through a grant from National Audubon, Georgia Audubon is offering a Conservation Careers Series. The series is free and open to all, but it is specifically designed for high school students and young adults interested in exploring different career and academic paths in conservation, including higher education and apprenticeships, as well as careers in nonprofits, private businesses, and government roles.

The Conservation Careers Series features a diversity of conservation professionals sharing the paths they took to get to their positions, what a typical work day looks like, and answers questions about their careers and career paths. The goal of this series is to pique the interest of students in environmental-focused careers and provide students with continued opportunities to get involved in developmental programs toward these positions. This virtual program is for everyone, and you can join as a class, as a teacher, a student, a parent, or a curious mind!

You can learn more or register for upcoming fall sessions at <https://www.georgiaaudubon.org/conservation-career-resources.html>.

To view past episodes, visit Georgia Audubon's YouTube Channel.

Date	Speaker	Title
8/17	Osaze Akil Stigler	Urban Planner and Artist
8/22	Samantha DeJarnett	Owner, Always Be Birdin' LLC
9/21	Brian Allen	Georgia Aquarium Educator
9/26	John Mackey	Construction Manager
10/19	Crystal Mandica	Director of Education, Amphibian Foundation
10/24	Anamarie Shreeves	West Atlanta Watershed Alliance
11/16	Ariel Moon	National Museum of African American History and Culture

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## On Kelly Plasket

By Steve Phenicie

(This is the 58th in a series on Georgia Audubon volunteers, board members, and staff.)

Some people are said to be a Jack of all trades but a master of none. Kelly Plasket is more or less the opposite – she’s been a Cobb County Master Gardener since 2017, a Georgia Master Naturalist since 2019, and a Georgia Audubon Master Birder since 2020. The three programs tie together, she says. So far she hasn’t found anything else she wants to be a master of, however.

She became an Avian Advocate for Georgia Audubon’s Backyard Sanctuary Program shortly after becoming a Master Birder. Avian Advocates offer homeowners advice on how they can improve their yards to make them more friendly to birds and other wildlife. This program slowed a bit during the pandemic, but interest has picked up. Certifiers are out looking at yards from March to November, with a shutdown during the non-growing season, when things are dormant. Urging people to plant native plants is at the heart of her advice.

Other volunteer work includes being a docent at Smith-Gilbert Gardens in Kennesaw, where she often gives tours for home school groups. She also monitors five bluebird boxes there once a week from March to August to gather information that eventually ends up in the hands of ornithological higher-ups at Cornell University. For example, if a chickadee chooses to occupy a bluebird box, which one did this year, the Cornell VIPs are going to know about it, thanks to Kelly’s diligence.

Kelly also participates in the Great Backyard Bird Count as well as the local Christmas Bird Count in Marietta.

She’s proud of what she has been able to do with her own 1.4 acres, calling it “very safe for wildlife.” When she signed up for the Master Naturalist class, she surveyed her own property and found out she had a lot of things she didn’t know she had. Despite deer being a problem, she has installed seven raised beds for vegetables and herbs. Her advice to other would-be birding enthusiasts: “Start with birds in your yard and work from there.”

Still being a relatively new birder, she hasn’t done a lot of out-of-state birding but has taken trips to Arizona and Hilton Head, S.C. “The plan is to try to get that life list up there,” she says.

Kelly has been a resident of metro Atlanta for 44 years, coming here from St. Louis shortly after high school because her sister lived here. She attended Georgia State University, worked as a real estate legal assistant and later did contract work for the same law office. She became a stay-at-home mom and also did a stint as a pre-school teacher. She and her husband, Carl, who is an engineer for Lockheed, live in Kennesaw and have a son, Alex, and a daughter-in-law, Ashley, who also live in Kennesaw, and another son, Max, who lives in Atlanta.



Kelly Plasket

# THANK YOU!

## A Million Thanks...

... to **Esther Stokes** for her incredible development support during our staff transition ... to **Sarah Carline** for her work creating roadside routes for nightjar survey volunteers ... to those who have helped with the habitat projects at Island Ford and RiverLands Park: **Winkler Weinberg, Jane St Clair, Roland Alston, David Morris, Anthony Carignano, Paloma Carignano, Sarah Morris, Luis Aguirre, Mariela Alvarez, JaQuinton Braswell, Ray Steed, Cynthia Patterson, Irina Alperovich, Eta Nagle, Sue Gilbert, Laila Berland, Anastasia Klopfenstein, Andrew Brand, Brent Smith, Byron Hernandez Ruiz, Angela Oate, Beverly Curtis, Daisy Keski, Chris Boyle, Derek Criswell, Michael Wood, Marius Moore, Ben McCue, Crishana Echols, Kevin Morrison, Sarah Polynice, Sergio Garcia, Lainey Sibble, Tricia Steele, Malaika Williams, Leah Norman, Pranjal Patel, Harman Sidhu, Santana Heard, Chris Bryan, Anthony Amos, Tripti Bishnoi, Sheila Carson, Steve Cheatham, Annie Coaloa, James Copeland, Sally de Lange, Marie deVenoge, Pam Eagar, Kelli Edwards, Jennifer Gerndt, Marge Gildner, Carroll Griffin, Marilyn Gudenas, Michael Hagearty, Jacqueline Harmon, Mike Harmon, Kathy Havey, Mike Havey, Renee Immel, Emily Johncox, Shawn Johnson, ebony Jones, Judy Killeen, Andrea Lewis, Gayle McAllister, Sheri Meyer Emigh, Jon Moor, James Moore, Erin Neal, Jim Pierce, Andy Renner, Jennifer Rosenfeld, Bob St. Jean, Beth St. Jean, Jeanne Steed, Jim Stokes, Esther Stokes, Amy Warnock, Arata Watanabe, Kat Wichrowska, Christine Williams, Charles Wilmer, and Karen Wilmer ... to Project Safe Flight Georgia volunteers **Randy Tate, Cat Oswald, Lisa Rose, Paul Miller, Adrienne Miller, Kelly Bryan, Maureen Carroll, Cherly Hensley, Mary Kimberly, Gavin MacDonald, Ashley Boone, Nancy Kennell, Wes Hatch, Amy Cottrell, Wendell Eric Phinazee, Adele Stewart, David McMath, Sylvie Blanton,****

## A Million Thanks...

(Continued from Page 4)

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# Georgia Urban Ecologists Coming Soon to a Location Near You

Georgia Urban Ecologists is our youth program geared for students grades 8 through 12 (highly motivated 7th graders are welcome, too). From September to May, students meet one Saturday a month to discover Georgia's diverse ecology in both natural and urban spaces. Perfect for students interested in science and conservation careers, or those who just enjoy being outside in nature, the Georgia Urban Ecologists program provides students with opportunities to learn alongside experts in the field, participate in hands-on experiences, and establish a network of environmental professionals while having fun with their peers.

For the 2023-2024 school year, Georgia Audubon is excited to offer this program in Atlanta, Athens-Clarke County and, newly launching this fall, a coastal cohort in Brunswick. Stay tuned for more details and registration coming in August.



Photo by Melanie Furr.

## Georgia Audubon Welcomes New Staff Member

Georgia Audubon is pleased to welcome Logan Jones to the staff as our new habitat program specialist. Logan joins our habitat restoration team and will be working to create bird-friendly habitat across Georgia as part of our many habitat restoration projects.

Logan holds a bachelor's degree in Wildlife Ecology and Management from Auburn University, where he immersed himself in study of the environment and its intricate ecosystems. He says his academic journey equipped him with a solid understanding of wildlife conservation principles and a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of all living beings.

Logan worked as a field technician in the Auburn University Forestry labs, where he conducted various activities, including bird surveys, plant identification, prescribed fire management, and removal of invasive species. Logan says that these hands-on experiences allowed him to witness the wonders of nature up close and reinforced his commitment to protecting our avian friends and their habitats.

Logan is a self-proclaimed lover of the great outdoors, and he enjoys exploring the beauty of nature through birding, hiking, and kayaking. He also has a deep appreciation for music and was a former member of the Auburn University Marching and Basketball Pep Bands.

Logan looks forward to connecting with our members and partners to share experiences and continue the important work of Georgia Audubon.



Logan Jones

# Bird Profile: The American Oystercatcher

By Steve Phenicie

No, this bird didn't raid the produce section at Kroger or Publix. But with a red-orange bill that resembles a carrot stick, the American Oystercatcher looks as if it could have. Its plumage also stands out, with the head and breast black, and the back, wings, and tail grayish-black or brown. The underparts are white, as are feathers on the inner part of the wing, which become visible during flight.

Because this is a bird of the saltwater shore, you won't find oystercatchers in Atlanta, but their range extends south from New England and California throughout much of the Americas. In Georgia you're most likely to observe them on the barrier islands: Tybee, St. Catherines, Jekyll, Sea, St. Simons, Wolf, and Cumberland.

The bird was once known as the "sea pie," but it was renamed in 1731 when English naturalist Mark Catesby observed one eating oysters. Its diet also includes mussels, clams, marine worms, sand crabs, limpets, sea urchins, jellyfish, and other small creatures.

The oystercatcher often forages by walking in shallow water along the shore, searching for food by sight. The birds have two methods of opening the shells of bivalves. In one, finding a mussel with its shell slightly open, the oystercatcher quickly jabs its bill into the opening, cutting the muscles and then cleaning out the contents. However, if the bird doesn't completely sever this muscle and the shell clamps down on the bill, the oystercatcher could be in trouble. A well-anchored bivalve may be able to hold the bird in place until the tide comes in, causing it to drown. In the other foraging method, the bird simply hammers on the shell to break it open.

For a nest, the oystercatcher pair scrapes out a depression in the sand and lines it with two to four dark-spotted, grayish eggs, which are incubated by both parents for 27 days. The young are ready to leave the nest soon after hatching.

Oystercatcher populations can vary highly from year to year in response to food supplies, and their restricted habitat means the birds are never particularly numerous. Partners In Flight estimates the global breeding population at 74,000. During the early 2000s, the U.S. breeding population was estimated at 11,000. Oystercatchers are



American Oystercatcher with chick. Photo by John Heidecker, Audubon Photography Awards.

sensitive to human disturbance and to loss, degradation, or development of their beach habitat. The young are vulnerable to attack by many predators, including gulls. Storms and high tides can swamp eggs or nestlings. But one benefit of human activity has been the appearance of sand islands made from dredging spoils. These are usually isolated from mammalian predators and often fairly high above the water, creating safe nesting habitat.

Some cool facts about oystercatchers:

- Tracking studies show that oystercatchers make tremendously variable movements after the breeding season. Young birds do not follow their parents to wintering locations; in fact, young from the same nest may even migrate in completely different directions in autumn. Adults are also idiosyncratic in their movements, with some staying on the breeding territory year-round, others moving hundreds of miles away.
- American Oystercatchers are the only birds in their environment with the ability to open large mollusks (except for large gulls that drop clams onto pavement).
- The closely related Black Oystercatcher of the Pacific Coast often hybridizes with American Oystercatchers in Southern California, where the two species' ranges meet.
- The oldest American Oystercatcher was at least 23 years, 10 months old. It had been banded as an adult in Virginia in 1989 and was found in Florida in 2012.

## Early Birds Resume Meetings in August

After a summer hiatus, the Early Birds will meet Sunday, August 27, to discuss *The Elvis Bird: A Benjamin Miles Mystery*, by David Woolbright, who will join us on Zoom. *The Elvis Bird's* setting is the Okefenokee Swamp. Miles is an ornithologist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and a passionate searcher for the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker. Throwing in murder, romance, and a lot of south Georgia, Dr. Woolbright has written a fast-paced, well researched novel that will appeal to mystery lovers and birders alike. The book is available on Amazon in print and digital form or from Barnes and Noble. Please join us by registering on the Georgia Audubon Early Birds web page at [www.georgiaaudubon.org/early-birds-book-club](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/early-birds-book-club).

In September, the Early Birds will read *Flight Paths: Passionate Pioneering Scientists*, by Rebecca Hesiman. The September meeting will take place in person at 2:00 PM on Sunday, September 24, at Manuel's Tavern before the Georgia Audubon meeting there.

The October 22 meeting will be held at 2:00 PM via Zoom webinar. We will read *Slow Birding: The Art and Science of Enjoying the Birds in Your Own Backyard*, by Joan Strassman.

The Early Birds is a low-commitment book club that welcomes all who enjoy reading about birds, birding, and birders. You are welcome to join us even if you've not read the book.



# Travel with Georgia Audubon in 2024

Georgia Audubon offers small-group travel hosted by Georgia Audubon staff and in the company of other bird and nature enthusiasts to regional, domestic, and international destinations.

Registration is currently open:

- California Dreamin': From Condors to Gnatcatchers and Everything in Between: — January 4 to 11, 2023 (two spots remain)
- Harpy Eagles and the Best of Panama with the Canopy Family — May 29 to June 8, 2024
- Montana: Where the Mountains Meet the Plains — June 2 to 8, 2024 (with optional Cassia Crossbill extension, June 8 to 10, 2024)
- Colombia — July 24 to August 7, 2024 (full; wait list available)

For more information and full itineraries, please visit the Georgia Audubon Travel Program webpage at [www.georgiaaudubon.org/travel](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/travel). Additional details about future travel opportunities, including dates and itineraries, will be released in an upcoming issue of our bi-monthly e-newsletter, *BirdBuzz*. You can sign up to receive *BirdBuzz* at [www.georgiaaudubon.org/newsletters](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/newsletters).



REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

GEORGIAAUDUBON.ORG/TRAVEL

**2024 Trips**

- California - January 4 to 11 (two spots remain)
- Panama - May 29 to June 8
- Montana - June 2 to 8 (with optional Cassia Crossbill extension)
- Colombia - July 24 to Aug. 7 (full, wait list available)

The graphic features the Georgia Audubon logo, a teal background with a white map outline, and four circular images of birds: a red-headed blackbird, a blue jay, a grebe, and a long-billed curlew.

## Education Roundup

By Melissa Paduana, Education Program Manager

Summertime allows us to reflect on our mid-year progress, reorient ourselves, and hone in on our goals for the remainder of the year. With fall and winter on the horizon, the education team is busy behind the scenes reimagining and redeveloping our flagship programs to roll out onto our new digital-learning platform, the Morgens Environmental Education Gateway. You might have already read about this platform in previous newsletters, and now it has (and continues!) to come to life.

Our annual professional development workshop for teachers, Taking Wing, was held in Brunswick and Helen this past June. These 21 teachers were some of the first members to utilize the Gateway, where they can readily access our Learning About Birds (LAB) curriculum, share resources, and stay in touch with one another year round. By keeping these teachers connected, the Gateway allows them to continue fostering their bird knowledge and stay up to date on new education resources as they become available.



The coastal cohort of Taking Wing teachers birding at Altamaha WMA. Photo by Melissa Paduani.

This fall, one of our most popular programs, Master Birder, will make its Gateway debut. The Morgens Environmental Education Gateway will streamline participants' learning experience by providing on-demand content, including course materials, evaluations, and Zoom links all in one place. Participants will also have the opportunity to stay connected with each other and their instructors.

In addition to the resources available to our program participants, all Georgia Audubon members will have free, on-demand access to some of our most popular webinars, such as Intro to eBird and Common Birds of Georgia. Our Learning About Birds (LAB) curriculum, consisting of six educational units with both teacher and student guides, will also be available for free download. Stay tuned for these offerings and more coming soon!



Surrounded by swallows and swifts at Unicoi State Park. Photo by Melissa Paduani.

# There's a New Kid in Town: Merlin

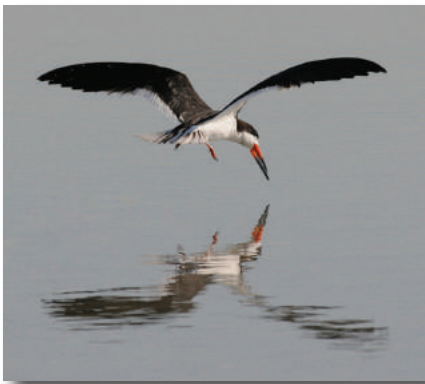
By Georgann Schmalz

It was a Northern Parula. Definitely a Northern Parula. I knew some birds' voices pretty well in 1960s and '70s, the songs and chip notes of robins, crows, blue jays, cardinals. But what I didn't realize was how important, if not magical and awesome, those songs were. This little warbler, just him, caught my ear in the midst of a cacophony of other spring migrants that were singing loudly. Wow, I thought, these birds are all yelling their IDs to me without my seeing them. I tuned in to another song and the next and the next. Over time it became my compelling behavior, enough to enable me to share the birding by ear process for more than 45 years. I began to understand that 90% of birding is half listening (sorry, Yogi Berra).

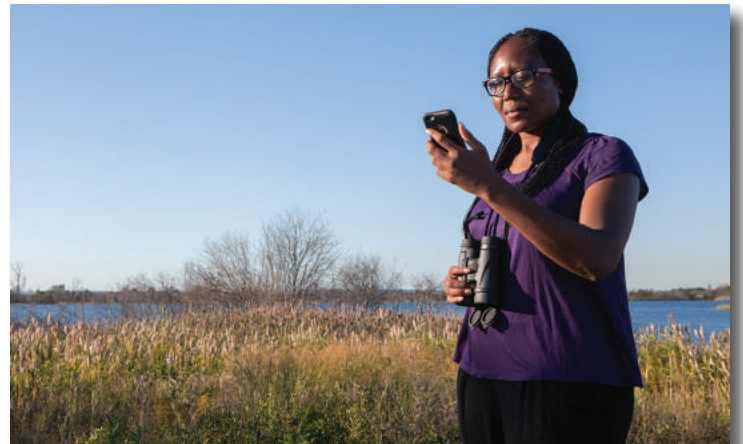
Historically, in-the-field techniques have changed, albeit slowly in those 45 years. How often have we imagined a convenient way to isolate songs, play them back for study, dissect them with their song characteristics? I remember returning home after many field trips and immediately listening to the LP records by Donald J. Borror, searching for the songs I had heard hours before. The vinyl evolved into plastic reel-to-reel tapes and cassettes. As cumbersome as they were, at least we could take cassettes players into the field with us! And then came the holy CDs. Digital recordings at our fingertips, no rewinding tapes, no waste of time. In 1999, we had the Blackberry 10 devices, which then begat iOS and Android platforms. By this time, we were all thinking that what we really needed was a handheld device that had not only songs, but also photos, range maps, and descriptions. In other words, an app field guide with instant information and gratification on a handheld device with speakers and microphones, and just throw in a camera and phone for the heck of it.

Enter the new kid in town – the Merlin app from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Originally known for its visual identification of birds, it became in 2022 an aid to audio recognition off songs and chips.

Merlin identifies bird sounds using computer learning technology to recognize species based on spectrograms or sonograms – visual representations of sounds. For Merlin to learn to recognize a species by sound, it uses audio recordings from the Macaulay Library that include a variety of sounds for each species to “train” Merlin’s “ears.” Sound ID is currently available for more than 1,000 species and will be expanded in the future to include species worldwide. To do that, the Cornell Lab team needs a



Black Skimmer. Photo by Meryl Lorenzo. Audubon Photography Awards



Merlin's sound ID feature is a great tool, but it's not perfect.  
Photo by Camilla Cerea.

minimum of 150 sound recordings for each species. You can help to add new species to Merlin by recording the birds and uploading them with your eBird checklists.

The other day, I wanted to see just how Merlin was doing, ear to ear. I chose an early morning location with many birds singing. During the three-minute test, I identified every bird that Merlin did, but I heard a few more birds than it did. I'm not saying that I'm better than Merlin, but there are a few things to be cautious about:

1. As far as a learning technique, Merlin is simply amazing. It not only alerts you to songs, but also highlights them in yellow each time they are sung, again and again and again. Such patience! If you are a beginning birder, I suggest that you listen to each song's pitch, rhythm, melody, and tempo so that you can not only learn the song but also remember it.
2. Merlin is a great birding companion that suggests which species are most likely, but it relies on you to confirm its accuracy. Confirmation is the key word here. Merlin makes mistakes, just as we do. Merlin's lack of identification or misidentification can occur due to your device's microphones, songs that are too faint, or one of the song conundrums such as dialects, subsongs, plastic songs, or mimicry.
3. Species should not be listed to eBird if only identified by Merlin. Even if it's a common bird, but especially if it has suggested a species that is rare, out of season or out of range. The same rules apply for Merlin's unlikely birds as they do for us: visual confirmation or recording of the song is often required.

For many years I've helped (I hope) beginning birders to learn bird songs. Yet, I'm constantly incorporating new methods, ideas, and skills into my latest recommended techniques. And now, I find myself telling friends and even complete strangers about Merlin. Their world will never be the same again!

For more information on using Merlin, visit <http://support.ebird.org>, Help Center, Merlin Bird ID. (<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/> <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>)



# UPCOMING EVENTS



## Georgia Audubon Master Birder Program Registration Now Open for Fall Program Cost: \$450

Registration is now open for our popular Master Birder Program. The fall session begins in October and runs through into November, with virtual sessions hosted in the new Morgens Environmental Education Gateway on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and field trips on Saturday or Sunday each week. This year, we will be hosting three fall Master Birder cohorts, two in the Atlanta area, and a third for those in the Hilton Head Island/Savannah area, in collaboration with Hilton Head Audubon and Ogeechee Audubon.

Course content includes classification and identification of birds, birding equipment, bird songs and calls, attracting birds, and backyard wildlife habitat, anatomy and physiology, bird ecology, bird behavior, flight and migration, and bird conservation. Upon graduation, Master Birders are encouraged to complete annual volunteer service for Georgia Audubon or their local Audubon chapter to receive added membership benefits, such as early registration opportunities and discounted event fees.

The course will fill quickly, so please register soon. To learn more or register, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/master-birder-program](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/master-birder-program).



## AUGUST

### Field Trip: Legacy Park – Beginner Focused | Leader: Josh Jackson Sunday, August 6, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

### Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum Wednesday, August 9, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

### Field Trip: Exploring Fernbank Forest | Leader: TBD Saturday, August 12, at 9:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

### Field Trip: Dunwoody Nature Center | Leader: Shannon Fair Saturday, August 26, at 8:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

### Virtual Event: Early Birds Book Club August Meeting Sunday, August 27

2:00 to 3:30 PM via Zoom

To learn more or sign up visit, <https://www.georgiaaudubon.org/early-birds-book-club.html>



*Common Yellowthroat. Photo by Gary Robinette.  
Audubon Photography Awards.*

## SEPTEMBER

### Field Trip: Bluebirds and Friends at Big Haynes Creek Nature Center | Leader: Jack Bruce Saturday, September 9, at 9:00 AM

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

### Volunteer Event: Island Ford CRNRA Pollinator Garden Workday Monday, September 11, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Island Ford Unit of the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area (CRNRA) 8800 Roberts Drive, Sandy Springs, GA 30350

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

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## SEPTEMBER *(Continued from Page 9)*

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

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

### **Webinar: Building Better Backyards for Birds, with Richard Hall** **Thursday, September 14** **7:00 to 8:30 PM**

**Cost:** Free for Georgia Audubon members / \$10 for non-members

Watching birds in our backyards brings us cheer and a sense of connection to nature, and as the human footprint on the landscape increases, our backyards may become vital habitats for declining species. This talk will provide lessons learned from a decade of converting a small, heavily-invaded, in-town yard into a pocket nature reserve, highlight native plants and other landscape features that attract wildlife, and showcase the surprising diversity of birds that have shown up since. Born in England, Hall developed a lifelong fascination with birds from a young age. His enthusiasm for the natural world led him to pursue a career in ecology. He has been on the faculty of the Odum School of Ecology and the Department of Infectious Diseases at UGA since 2009, where his research focuses on changing patterns of animal movement and wildlife diseases, and he serves on the board of Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

To learn more or register, visit <https://www.georgiaaudubon.org/georgia-grows-native-for-birds-month>

### **Field Trip: Chattahoochee Nature Center | Leaders: Dottie Head and Abby Cox** **Sunday, September 17, at 8:00 AM**

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips)

### **Field Trip: Legacy Park – Beginner Focused | Leader: Josh Jackson** **Sunday, September 18, at 8:00 AM**

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

### **Plant ID Workshop, with Gabe Andrie** **Tuesday, September 19, from 5:30 to 7:00 PM** **Location: Henderson Park, Tucker**

**Cost:** \$20 for Georgia Audubon members / \$30 for non-members

Join Georgia Audubon's Habitat Program Manager, Gabe Andrie, for a beginner plant identification workshop, where you will learn how to identify some of the most common native and non-native plant species of the metro Atlanta area. No experience is necessary. You will leave equipped with the basics for starting to understand what plants shape the many amazing ecosystems that birds rely on for survival. Register at [www.georgiaaudubon.org/georgia-grows-native-for-birds-month](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/georgia-grows-native-for-birds-month).

### **Volunteer Workday at Campbellton Park** **Thursday, September 21, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM** **Campbellton Park, South Fulton**

Georgia Audubon is working with the Trust for Public Land to remove invasive species and restore native bird habitat at the Chattahoochee RiverLands Camp+Paddle Trail Site near Chattahoochee Hills, GA, and we invite you to join us. Work will be supervised by Georgia Audubon, and we need your help.

Connect with the Georgia Audubon staff to learn the importance of native plants and habitats for birds and other wildlife while helping to remove non-native weeds and other undesirable species from the garden space.

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

### **Webinar: Gardening for Bats, with Roseanne Guerra** **Thursday, September 21, at 7:00 PM**

**Cost:** Free for Georgia Audubon members / \$10 for non-members

Via Zoom Webinar

If you missed the June presentation at Manuel's of this popular program, we've decided to offer it again as a webinar. Bats are weird and wonderful. Did you know that there are more important things than bat boxes if you want to attract bats to your yard? How many species are found in Georgia? While some Georgia bat species are being decimated by an introduced fungus that causes "white nose syndrome," the Georgia DNR is fighting to prevent the extinction of our bats. Find out how you can help. Rose is a liaison for the GA Bat Working Group. *(Continued on Page 11)*



*Blackburnian Warbler.  
Photo by Tom Wilson.*



*Volunteers from Cox Enterprises at a recent workday at Campbellton Park. Photo by Gabe Andrie.*

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## SEPTEMBER *(Continued from Page 10)*

**About the presenter:** Rose is a New Orleans native who moved to the Atlanta area in 1988 with a freshly-minted computer science degree, but her true passion has always been nature and wildlife. Rose's wildlife and education experience includes animal rehabilitation, performing in Zoo Atlanta's free-flighted bird show, and leading many bird walks, garden club/master gardener programs, school field trips, canoe trips, and scout programs. She is a frequent Georgia Audubon field trip and program leader, and she also leads trips for the Dunwoody Nature Center, the City of Sandy Springs, the Chattahoochee Nature Center, and others.

To learn more or register, visit <https://www.georgiaaudubon.org/georgia-grows-native-for-birds-month>

**Field Trip: Black Shoals Park | Leader: Jack Bruce**

**Saturday, September 23, at 8:00 AM**

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

**Field Trip: Cascade Springs Nature Preserve | Leader: Becca Dill**

**Saturday, September 23, at 8:00 AM**

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

**Georgia Audubon at Manuel's Tavern: My Biggest Year Yet, with Patrick Maurice**

**Sunday, September 24, at 3:30 PM**

**Manuel's Tavern, 602 N. Highland Ave. NE, Atlanta, GA 30307**

**FREE** to attend but registration is requested

Register at <https://www.georgiaaudubon.org/upcoming-events>

Join Georgia Birder Patrick Maurice as he shares photos from his travels and the birds he saw along the way in the United States, Ecuador, and Mexico during his 2022 Big Year.

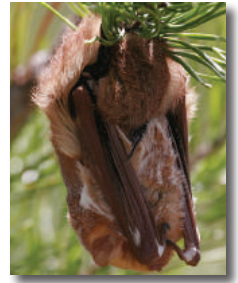
Patrick Maurice is a birder and nature photographer from Atlanta. He graduated from the University of Georgia in the spring of 2021 with a bachelor's degree in Wildlife Science. Patrick has been birding for as long as he can remember and has been carrying a camera with him for more than a decade. While he is primarily a bird photographer, he also enjoys photographing nature and landscapes. Patrick also loves to travel and has a goal of visiting every continent – he's already been to four of them! Patrick is currently working as a guide with Natural Habitat Adventures in US national parks and also guides for birding festivals, such as the Biggest Week, Georgia Birdfest, and the Southeast Arizona Birding Festival.

**Early Birds Book Club September Meeting**

**Sunday, September 25, at 2:00 PM**

**Manuel's Tavern, 602 N. Highland Ave. NE, Atlanta, GA 30307**

To learn more, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).



*Eastern red bat.*  
Photo by Dan Vickers.



*Patrick Maurice*

## OCTOBER

**Field Trip: Legacy Park – Beginner Focused | Leader: Josh Jackson**

**Sunday, October 8, at 8:00 AM**

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

**Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum**

**Wednesday, October 11, at 8:00 AM**

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

**Field Trip: Morgan Falls Overlook Park | Leader: Roseanne Guerra**

**Saturday, October 14, at 8:00 AM**

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

**Field Trip: Exploring Fernbank Forest | Leader: TBD**

**Saturday, October 14, at 9:00 AM**

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips).

**Field Trip: Chattahoochee Nature Center | Leaders: Dottie Head and Abby Cox**

**Sunday, October 22, at 8:00 AM**

To learn more or sign up, visit [www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trip](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trip)



*Common Yellowthroat.*  
Audubon Photography Awards.



**GEORGIA AUDUBON**

825 Warner St. SW, Ste. B · Atlanta, GA 30310  
678.973.2437

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# Georgia Grows Native for Birds Symposium: Transforming Your Greenspace

**Saturday, September 9 | 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM**

**Georgia Audubon at Trees Atlanta Kendeda Tree House  
825 Warner Street, SW, Atlanta, GA 30310**

**Tickets: \$40 for Georgia Audubon and GNPS members / \$50 for non-members  
Lunch included**

Join fellow plant and bird enthusiasts on Saturday, September 9 on Transforming Your Greenspace. Hear from experts from Georgia Audubon, the Georgia Native Plant Society, and Trees Atlanta to learn how to build a wildlife sanctuary in your own landscape. Each of these three organizations also offers habitat certifications, and they will cover specifics as part of their presentation.

**Stay tuned for additional information.**

[www.georgiaaudubon.org/georgia-grows-native-for-birds-month](http://www.georgiaaudubon.org/georgia-grows-native-for-birds-month)

