

Wingbars



**GEORGIA
AUDUBON**

A Quarterly Publication of Georgia Audubon

FEBRUARY 2021

Georgia Audubon Focal Species for 2021-2022: The Ruby-throated Hummingbird

By Adam Betuel, Director of Conservation

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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.

*Cover photo: Pine Siskin
by Joanie Christian*

The last year has been an odd one for bird lovers. Many of us paid more attention to our bird feeders and spent hours exploring local patches instead of birding hotspots further afield. Others, like me, whiled away the hours watching bird cam footage, occasionally picking out one of “our birds” on its wintering grounds. But the pandemic also posed many challenges—our birdwatching community was ripped apart; field trips, meetings, festivals, and travel were cancelled. As we began to better understand the pandemic, some birding afield resumed, but always six feet apart and behind masks. Our extended time at home gave us time to fully observe our immediate surroundings and has given us a new appreciation for the importance of our yards and local greenspaces for bird health.



*Ruby-throated Hummingbird,
by Robert Johnson.*

One of the birds we all love seeing in our landscapes is the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Georgia’s only breeding hummingbird. Georgians love these birds passionately, and many people first came to notice birds through these tiny flyers. Weighing only three to four grams, hummingbirds dazzle us with their speed and agility. Their ability to double their body mass before making a mind-blowing nonstop journey across the Gulf of Mexico twice each year never fails to inspire awe. They are faithful to and fierce defenders of their homes, never shying away from chasing others from their favorite feeder or jewelweed patch. Depending on the moment, they can be subdued and camouflaged or literally the most striking shades of green and red. Simply put, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are amazing. They excite bird lovers from novice to pro and from homebodies to hemispheric travelers. They can be enjoyed endlessly at a feeder or in the remote wilderness areas of our state. They inspire joy, happiness, and amazement. These are some of the reasons we chose the Ruby-throated Hummingbird as our focal species for 2021 and 2022.

While it is true that Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are not threatened or overly imperiled, these tiny birds inspire many people, provide great opportunities for Georgia Audubon to highlight many of our conservation goals,
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From the Executive Director

A New Era of Building Places Where Birds and All People Thrive

Reflecting back on 2020 is kind of like looking over the rattered remains of roadkill that Turkey Vultures have picked over. But it doesn't tell us the real story. When I look back on our work I see resilient, strong, impactful, steady, flexible, compassionate, and history-making. I see a new strategic plan and new faces that will lead us into a bigger, bolder future. That future is now.

The new year ushers in a new era for Georgia Audubon, one that brings a call to action to build a conservation-minded Georgia where birds prosper, habitats flourish, and communities across the state are fully engaged. Of course, climate change looms large as our overwhelming challenge facing birds and people throughout Georgia. The mass decline of birds is a warning about the health of our ecosystems and an opportunity for Georgia Audubon to lead statewide conservation, education, and community engagement programs by collaborating with individuals and organizations to solve these challenges.

One key strategy Georgia Audubon is undertaking through those collaborations is habitat preservation, restoration and connectivity. I'm pleased to share with you the exciting promotion of Gabe Andrle as our new Habitat Program Manager. Gabe will continue to work with Adam Betuel but will focus his efforts on habitat restoration as Georgia Audubon continues to lead restoration efforts, weaving a tapestry of connected habitats throughout metro Atlanta and supporting restoration efforts of our partners statewide.

Zaria Dyer joins the Georgia Audubon staff as our conservation program associate. Zaria will guide our flagship Wildlife Sanctuary Program. She will continue the thread of building a resilient network of certified wildlife sanctuaries throughout the metro area to counter the loss of wildlife habitat to urbanization and to provide additional habitat for the hundreds of birds and other species threatened by climate change. Zaria will also spearhead our native plant sales, helping increase native plants across Georgia.

We know that things will eventually return to normal, hopefully by late spring, but only time will tell. In the meantime, be safe and keep birding!



Jared Teutsch



(L to R) Zaria Dyer, Gabe Andrle, David Lloyd Davis, and Darryl Haddock pose for a photo opp at Cascade Nature Preserve.

Empowering Students to Drive Change: Georgia Audubon and Georgia Tech Join Forces to Prevent Bird Strikes and Build Habitat

By Dottie Head, Director of Communications

Students at the Georgia Institute of Technology are creating a conservation legacy on the university's Atlanta campus. Through a partnership forged between Georgia Audubon and Georgia Tech, students, professors, and staff are working collectively to ensure the campus is a safe and welcoming place for resident and migratory birds.

The partnership began in 2017 when Adam Betuel, Georgia Audubon's director of conservation, connected with Emily Weigel, Ph.D., an academic professional in the School of Biological Sciences. Dr. Weigel, who also serves as director of internships, was able to connect Georgia Audubon with the Georgia Tech intern program, resulting in a series of interns who have been helping with Project Safe Flight ever since.

"The interns have been a tremendous help with all aspects of Project Safe Flight, including managing the database, identifying birds killed by collisions, and coordinating student volunteer teams to monitor and patrol buildings on the Georgia Tech campus," says Betuel.

Soon after, Georgia Audubon became involved with the Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design on the Georgia Tech campus through a chance introduction. "We were attending the annual Summer Solstice event at Southface Institute, when Linda DiSantis introduced us to the building architects," says Betuel. "As they were telling us about this amazing sustainable building, I commented on how it would be a shame if it was a threat to birds." This casual meeting sparked additional conversations and ultimately resulted in the inclusion of special bird-friendly glass in the building design. It was a timely introduction, says Betuel, because retrofitting buildings to make them bird friendly can be expensive and less aesthetically pleasing compared to when bird-friendly glass is incorporated during the initial design phase.

Located on the Georgia Tech Campus, the Kendeda Building for Innovative Design is the first academic and research building in the Southeast to pursue Living Building Challenge 3.1 certification—the world's most ambitious green building program—which aligns with Georgia Tech's longstanding vision for its campus to serve as an educational center for innovation that transforms future generations.

Through the Kendeda project, Georgia Audubon was introduced to Steve Place, a horticulturist and the Georgia Tech associate responsible for the landscape surrounding the Kendeda building as well as an eight-acre section of the Eco-Commons, located nearby. This thoughtfully designed greenspace will ultimately contain more than 600 new trees and tens of thousands of perennials, shrubs, ferns and grasses following what was originally a naturally occurring stream.



Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design at Georgia Tech, by Jonathan Hillyer.

Place's role is that of facilitator, connection maker, partner, and advocate of the students. "What I try to do in everything I'm involved with is to include the students as much as possible," he says.

Steve works with three student groups—Students Organized for Sustainability (SOS), Bioengineering and Bioscience Unified Graduate Students (BBUGS), and a Scouts group—that are doing everything from collision work, to landscape design, to choosing native plants, and restoring a small forested area on campus.

The SOS group is charged with taking care of the community garden and working with Steve to help choose plants and design installation at the Kendeda Center. They also help with maintenance.

BBUGS is currently working with a group of freshmen to raise money to install a pollinator garden in the Eco-commons. The graduate students are mentoring the freshmen in grant writing to raise funds for these projects so that they can influence and promote the outcomes that they want to see on campus.

Finally, the Scouts group is working on a habitat restoration project to restore a forest fragment that is full of invasive species. "It's a perfect partnership," says Place. "I provide logistical help—hauling ivy, helping with plant ID, etc.—and the students pull the ivy. We also discuss regenerative ecology and what plants we want to reintroduce to the area. In two years, when this restoration project is complete, the area will be a safe harbor for birds and will complement the nearby Kendeda Center and Eco-Commons. It will be a great legacy for these students.

Steve has also spearheaded a Bird-safe Glass Committee, with representation from the three groups.

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STAFF SPOTLIGHT

On Beverly Fooks

By Steve Phenicie

(This is the 48th in a series on Georgia Audubon volunteers, board members, and staff.)

Beverly Fooks has things in common with Joe Biden, Gabe Andrle, and Santa Claus. Like Biden, she hails from Wilmington, Del. Like Gabe, she was a model for Georgia Audubon's 2020 Bird Fest T-shirts. And like Santa, she's responsible for seeing that packages get delivered."

Beverly, who is Georgia Audubon's part-time membership and development associate, moved to Atlanta about 30 years ago after being swept off her feet during an "absolutely gorgeous" spring visit. She says she has never seen Biden but knows a few people who have had connections with him. As for her modeling session with Gabe, Georgia Audubon's habitat conservation manager, she was a bit apprehensive when she found out she had been drafted for the role. She had a fun time despite being caught without makeup but doesn't see this as the springboard to a modeling career. As for the packages, she's in charge of sending out Audubon merchandise—the T-shirts, hats, coffee, books, note cards, and the like. Despite the office being closed because of the pandemic, she's been going in one or two days a week to prepare the shipments, which typically number 10 to 15.

In general, her duties are to assist Dottie Head, director of communications, and Michelle Hamner, director of development, in managing the growing membership of the organization and helping with events. When you get a letter reminding you to pay your dues,

it's from Beverly. Often, she follows behind Michelle on matters that have already been put in place. Beverly actually learned of the job through Michelle, whom she knew when both worked at Emory University. She's also worked for a number of other organizations in the metro area.

Beverly's birding expertise was limited to identifying such things as cardinals and robins when she came to Georgia Audubon, but that has changed. She recently completed the Master Birder class and is looking forward to doing some birding the next time she travels overseas, when the pandemic is finally behind us.

Beverly and her husband, Orlando, live in the Stone Mountain area with

their two "furry children," a miniature pinscher named Cinnamon and a terrier named Quade. Orlando is in the entertainment industry, and no—just in case you were wondering—he doesn't happen to be from Orlando. She met him in Atlanta, but he's from the Washington, D.C., area.

"Beverly really is one of the cogs that keeps the wheels turning at Georgia Audubon, and she's done an amazing job keeping the office running during the pandemic," says Dottie. "Most of what she does is in the background, but she truly is integral to the organization's operation. Michelle and I could not accomplish what we do without her help."

By the way, if you never got one of those T-shirts modeled by Beverly and Gabe, there are still a few available in the Georgia Audubon online store.



Beverly Fooks poses with Gabe Andrle in the 2020 Atlanta Bird Fest T-shirts. Photo by Dottie Head.

THANK YOU!

A Million Thanks...

... to the dozens and dozens of people who participated in the 121st annual Christmas Bird Count ... to **Amanda Woomer** for her commissioned painting of a Red-headed Woodpecker that was presented to the 2020 Scottie Johnson Spirit Award recipient, Charles Loeb, for his years of dedicated volunteer service to Georgia Audubon ... to **Charles Bowen, Gina Charles, Robin Lanier, Charles Loeb,** and **Rusty Pritchard,** who finished their terms as Georgia Audubon board members at the end of 2020 ... to Project Safe Flight volunteers **Nancy Kennell, Mary Kimberly, Gavin MacDonald, Kelly Bryan, Maureen Carroll, Cheryl Hensley, Linda Keleher, Steve Place, Joseph Laneve, Ghaith Al Tibi,** and **Michelle Wong** ... to BeltLine Camera Monitoring Project volunteers **Abby Back, Alex Addison, Alexandra Edwards, Amy Stout, Andrea Applegate, Gavin Allvine, Cassandra Woodson, CJ Voltaire, Erika Burgess, Irena Hwang, Monica Moukalif, Nadia Said, Nick Levesque, Tito Tomei, Valerie Zuver,** and **Van-Dyke Holder** ... to **Stephen Ramsden,** founder of Sunlit Earth!, for his generous donation of four pairs of Meade binoculars as prizes for students in our Atlanta Urban Ecologists program and for leading the December session ... to **Beth Thomson** of Blue Ridge Raptors Education Programs and **Sami Netherton** of AWARE Wildlife Center for making guest appearances (with owls and a crow) on Georgia Audubon Bird Stories

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Save the Date: Georgia Bird Fest Returns April 17 to May 16, 2021

Registration opens on March 2 for Georgia Audubon members

We are excited to announce that Georgia Bird Fest 2021 will return this spring with more than 40 events. Each weekend between April 17 and May 16, 2021, join fellow nature and bird enthusiasts for exciting field trips, workshops, and other events to celebrate and enjoy Georgia's exciting spring migration period.

This year we will welcome two special guests for Georgia Bird Fest 2021. Our special guest for our opening weekend will be ornithologist Scott Weidensaul. Scott is the author of more than two dozen books on natural history, including the Pulitzer Prize finalist *Living on the Wind*, *Return to Wild America*, and *The First Frontier*. His newest book, *A World of Wings*, about global migration, will be released in spring 2021. Joining us for our closing weekend will be Carolyn Finney,

Ph.D. Carolyn is a storyteller, author, and a cultural geographer. Her first book, *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*, was released in 2014. Bridging the fields of environmental history, cultural studies, critical race studies, and geography, Finney argues that the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, and racial violence have shaped cultural understandings of the "great outdoors" and determined who should and can have access to natural spaces. Look for more information soon on both of these keynote events.

Other event highlights for Georgia Bird Fest 2021 include past favorites such as a behind-the-scenes tour of Zoo Atlanta's bird collection, a guided tour of the avian-inspired collections at the Michael C. Carlos Museum, nature photography workshops, and Shorebird Weekend on the Georgia coast. We'll also be debuting new events such as a guided trip to view rare shoals spider lilies at Flat Shoals Creek and guided birdwatching tours of Phinizy Swamp and Nash Farm Battlefield.

Registration for Georgia Bird Fest events will open to Georgia Audubon members on Tuesday, March 2, and to the public on March 8. Please visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfest for more information, to purchase T-shirts, and to preview the full schedule of events.



Scott Weidensaul will be the keynote speaker for the Georgia Bird Fest 2021 opening event. Photo by Chris DeSorbo.



Carolyn Finney, storyteller, author, and cultural geographer, will join us for Georgia Bird Fest's closing celebration. Photo by Michael Estrada.

NEW 2021 ARTWORK! This year's Georgia Bird Fest artwork features the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, the smallest breeding bird species in Georgia and the Georgia Audubon conservation focal species for 2021-2022. This year's artwork was designed by Atlanta-based artist Sachi Rome. Sachi is a painter and mixed media artist exploring the idea of memory, portraiture, and the dignity of using and giving new life to discarded things. The use of Bible and hymnal pages from her grandmother's collection are a driving force in many of the images she creates. Her murals and public art can be seen throughout Atlanta: along the Westside Trail on the Atlanta BeltLine, Old Fourth Ward, Five Points, and at Blue Heron Nature Preserve.

A limited number of Georgia Bird Fest T-shirts featuring this year's artwork will be for sale in our online store, with proceeds supporting Georgia Audubon's conservation and education efforts.



THANK YOU!

A Million Thanks...

(Continued from Page 4) ...

to **Rebecca Garlinger**, with White Oak Conservation, for her October Monthly Meeting presentation on Saving the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow ... to **Louise Harris**, with the Piedmont Park Conservancy, and to **Jason Ward** for being part of the November Birds and Beer event on Piedmont Park ... to **Lauren Pharr** for her excellent presentation on the effects of urban noise and light pollution on avian species ... to **The Lodge on Little St. Simons Island** for their generous donation to the raffle for our Georgia Audubon Annual Meeting ... to **Josh Jackson** for giving us permission to run his article on his 150 days of birding adventure and his story about the Christmas Bird Count ... to **Anne McCallum, Chris Lambrecht, Gus Kaufman, Jamie Vidich, Jason Ward, Jay Davis, and Roseanne Guerra** for giving generously of their time and energy to lead field trips that connect people with birds and the world around them.

Oconee Rivers Audubon Society's Plants for Birds Garden

By Lauren Gingerella, President, Oconee Rivers Audubon Society

The North Oconee River flows through the heart of Athens. The forested river corridor provides important habitat for many wildlife species and a stage for the songs of Louisiana Waterthrushes and Summer Tanagers yards from downtown and the campus of the University of Georgia. A linear park system with a network of multi-use greenway trails connects the Athens community to this wonderful greenspace. It is here, along the North Oconee River Greenway, where the Oconee Rivers Audubon Society (ORAS) set out to build a bird-friendly native plant demonstration garden.

Birds need all the help they can get right now. A 2019 study published in the journal *Science* reported a net loss of nearly three billion birds in North America since 1970. Some of the species with the greatest population declines are common species we may see every day at our backyard bird feeder. Though this is depressing, there are easy activities we can do in our everyday lives to support bird conservation. One of the best ways to help is to add native plants to your yard or garden.

Many of you reading this are already aware of the benefits of planting natives for birds, such as more nutritious food resources, shelter, and resilient landscapes against climate change. However, more people need to be aware of the importance of native plants to help increase avian populations. ORAS wanted to target members of the diverse Athens community not typically involved in bird conservation and native plant restoration. By placing the demonstration garden along the greenway, we are able to engage audiences who use the greenway for exercising, commuting to work or school, fishing, and wildlife viewing.

In January 2020, ORAS was awarded a Burke Grant through the National Audubon Society's Plants for Birds program to create the high-profile demonstration garden. Our ultimate goals are to emphasize the importance of native plants for wildlife, encourage community members to choose native plants in their home and garden, and create a gathering space to engage the community in conservation efforts. The garden plans consist of more than 1,500 native plants, interpretive signage, a bench, and a small water feature.

The Athens-Clarke County's (ACC) Sustainability Office enthusiastically partnered with ORAS on this project. The



The native plant garden restored habitat along a stretch of the North Oconee River Greenway in Athens. Photo by Allison Walters.

location of the garden at the corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Parkway and North Avenue fits nicely into ACC's plans to restore habitat along the North Oconee River corridor. The garden restores approximately 15,000 square feet of wildlife habitat in an area historically fallow and often plagued by invasive plant species. Now, this sunny patch of land will be a mosaic of native prairie and meadow perennials and grasses.

The COVID-19 pandemic added an unexpected challenge to the project. The anticipated springtime site preparation and plantings were delayed until summer and fall. Our vision of large volunteer events was scaled down to a dozen people socially distanced from another. Hand-sanitizer was readily available on workdays, and dedicated volunteers wore masks while shoveling mulch in excessive heat and humidity. By mid-November, the garden was fully planted, and all that still needs to be added are the bench, water feature, and interpretive sign.

Students from the Odum School of Ecology at the University of Georgia designed interpretive signage and helped create a list of native plant species. The sign highlights the importance and connection of native plants to birds and other pollinators, and describes the ecological importance of Piedmont prairie habitat. A QR code to access a Spanish translation is on the sign as well, so we can engage as many members of our community as possible.

ORAS purchased many of the native plants from Beech Hollow Farms in Lexington, Georgia, as well as the State Botanical Garden of Georgia. Volunteers, ACC staff, and members of Lilly Branch Audubon Society added more than 30 species of perennials and grasses to the garden primarily as plugs and pint-sized plantings. We are looking forward to seeing the results of our efforts over the next few years as the garden grows, matures, and shows off all its flowering glory.

Next time you are in Athens, grab your binoculars and go for a walk along the North Oconee River Greenway. In ORAS' new Plants for Birds demonstration garden, you may now be able to spot Indigo Buntings, Field Sparrows, or Eastern Kingbirds and be inspired to add native plants to your own landscape.



More than 30 species of perennials and grasses were added to the garden. Photo by Allison Walters.

Equitable Conservation Is a Win for Wildlife and People

By Corina Newsome, Community Engagement Manager

Conserving birds and other wildlife helps protect the diversity of species and ecosystems that exist in our rapidly changing world. The threats faced by wildlife around the globe vary in severity, and certain threats have more serious consequences for some species than others. For example, when faced with increased annual temperatures, certain avian species in North America may have the flexibility to shift northward if the resources they need are accessible at higher, cooler latitudes, while other species may have resource needs that are more restricted geographically, making them more vulnerable to such a threat.

The differential impacts of environmental stressors experienced by wildlife mirror, in many ways, those experienced by human communities. We have already seen, with such issues as climate change and environmental degradation, that environmental stressors do not affect all people equally. Marginalized communities that have been subjected to systemic inequities, such as less access to economic security, healthy food, and healthcare, are impacted most quickly and severely by these threats. In the United States, climate change and the pollution that causes it are impacting Black, Indigenous, Peoples of Color, and low-income communities the most.

Because the very threats faced by birds and other wildlife are also faced by people, it's critical that we operate with an intersectional perspective in our conservation efforts. We must craft solutions that promote the survival of our most vulnerable species, and provide equitable outcomes for currently and historically marginalized communities; if not, we risk crafting solutions for wildlife at the expense of already-marginalized people (e.g., the displacement of Indigenous peoples in the name of conservation, and "green gentrification" in urban neighborhoods), and our conservation efforts will ultimately be less successful.

As part of Georgia Audubon's work to build places where birds and people thrive, we are embarking upon a new project in collaboration with the

National Audubon Society to address gaps in avian conservation data that highlight socioeconomic inequities. Research has shown that in cities around the country, data collection in eBird (a popular community science application) has been biased to regions with higher median income, likely due to the typical demographic of eBird users (white, middle aged, middle and upper class), even in regions where avian biodiversity is not decreased in low-income neighborhoods (Perkins, 2020). This pattern not only weakens the robustness of data for avian conservation, but it highlights inequities in access to community science. The goal of this project is to identify low-income neighborhoods in Atlanta that have gaps in eBird data and to design community-centered engagement around birding and participation in community science—a solution that benefits both the conservation of birds and the lives of people in our city.

For its success and long-term sustainability, solutions for wildlife conservation must be equitable, addressing the needs of communities who have been systemically disenfranchised. However, equity should not be a means to an end. It should be the foundation on which conservation efforts are built, understanding that diversity is both critical and beautiful not only among wildlife, but among our neighbors, near and far.



Wilson's Warbler, by Camillia Cerea.

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird

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and a myriad of engagement and education opportunities. Anyone who has met our ambassador hummingbird, Sibley, cannot deny how fascinating it is to observe these small birds up close. In addition to helping save threatened bird species, Georgia Audubon strives to keep common birds common. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and Red Knots deserve all the effort and resources we can afford them to ensure their well-being and continued success. Nevertheless, we also need to care for the Carolina Wren, Blue Jay, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird. In the 2019 Three Billion Birds study, one of the main takeaways was the massive losses experienced by

some of our most common species. Broadly speaking, we all need to continue to take steps to help our birds, all birds, in any way we can.

For the past five years, Georgia Audubon has been monitoring bird-building collisions across metro Atlanta. In that time, we have documented more than 115 species colliding with buildings. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are by far our most frequently encountered victim. Using our hummingbird as an example and driving force, we will continue our commitment to making buildings safer for birds and expanding our collision programs outside of the

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Species Profile: Rusty Blackbird

By Steve Phenicie

An organization exists for practically anything you can think of, and Rusty Blackbirds are no exception. Ever hear of the International Rusty Blackbird Working Group? This group of scientists has been around since 2005 and exists for a good reason—in recent decades populations of “Rusties” have declined sharply, and the reason is difficult to pin down.

The North American Breeding Bird Survey estimates that populations have dropped 90 percent since 1966. Loss of wet woodland habitat through drainage, clearcutting, and conversion to agriculture is one possible reason, particularly in the southeastern U.S., where some 80 percent of the population winters. Historically, the hunting of beavers across North America may also have reduced habitat by diminishing the number of beaver ponds, but the resurgence of beaver populations may be having a positive effect. Rusty Blackbirds in northeastern North America have been recorded with high mercury counts, which could be contributing to their decline there.

The bird’s remote breeding grounds in the hard-to-access boreal forests of the far north, from Newfoundland to Alaska and lapping into New York and northern New England, make it hard to study. No other blackbird has such a northerly breeding distribution. In the winter it is found from Iowa and southern New England south to the Gulf of Mexico. There and during migration it usually hangs out in swampy places, wading in shallow water at the edges of wooded streams. Rusties also forage in open fields and cattle feedlots with other blackbirds.

The Working Group tries to get a better handle on this by organizing birders to report on the birds during specific times of the year, particularly during spring migration.



Rusty Blackbird, by Joan Tisdale.

Among its activities are outfitting birds with monitoring devices on their breeding grounds and along western Lake Erie in Ohio and Michigan, where they stop during migration. Closer to home, Savannah-based Ogeechee Audubon, in cooperation with the Working

Group, monitors Rusty Blackbirds on the campus of a private school. (For the full story on that, see the November 2020 issue of *Wingbars*.)

The majority of this species’ diet is insects, including aquatic ones such as caddisflies, mayflies, dragonflies, and water beetles, plus land insects such as grasshoppers and others. It also eats snails, crustaceans, small fish, small salamanders, seeds, waste grain, and a few berries.

It sometimes nests in small, loose colonies but more often in isolated pairs. The female typically lays four or five eggs that are pale blue-green, spotted with brown and gray. The nest site is in dense cover, usually in conifers or in shrubs. Typically it is only a few feet above the water or ground, but it can be up to 20 feet high. The nest, built by the female, is a bulky open cup of twigs and grass. Incubation is by the female only. Both parents feed the nestlings, and the young leave the nest about 11-14 days after hatching.

Around Atlanta, some good spots for Rusties are Piedmont Park, Grant Park, Decatur Cemetery, Cochran Shoals, Constitution Lakes, and, in smaller numbers, at Zonolite Park. Anywhere with flooded woodlands or large blackbird flocks has the potential for them. The name “Rusty” applies to the colors of fall birds, but it could also describe the rusty-hinge sound of its creaking song.

Say Hi to Sibley: Georgia Audubon’s Ambassador Hummingbird

By Melanie Furr, Director of Education

This summer will mark three years since Sibley, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird injured in a window collision that rendered him flightless, became Georgia Audubon’s education ambassador, just a few ruby speckles on his throat at the time. Because Sibley is the world’s only education hummingbird (as far as we know), no one could have anticipated that he would be with us for almost three years, the average life expectancy for a hummingbird—and still be going strong. During his time as an education ambassador, Sibley has touched the lives of thousands of people through education programs, chance encounters, social media, and even on Zoom. Sibley’s companion, a female name Polly, who was injured as an adult, has been with us for more than a year. If you’d like to learn more about Sibley or schedule a program, visit our website at www.georgiaaudubon.org/hummingbird-ambassador-programs. You can see regular updates with photos and videos of Sibley on social media by using his hashtag, #SurvivorSibley



Sibley (left) and Polly (right), by Melanie Furr.

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird *(Continued from Page 7)*

Atlanta area. Over the next two years, we will strive to grow our habitat restoration program, building off recent successes. These projects will see us removing Chinese privet from riparian corridors, turning turf grass plots into productive habitat, as well as making a large effort to increase and improve pollinator habitat on private lands. All of this work will directly benefit the Ruby-throated Hummingbird but will also aid birds of higher conservation concern that utilize these habitats and rely on native plants and robust insect populations.

Speaking of native plants, plant some at home! Georgia Audubon will continue to offer native plant sales, and we plan to expand our offerings. These plants provide valuable resources to our birds in an often-compromised landscape. Regardless if it is your first native plant in a pot on your porch or the next addition to your backyard haven, what better way to improve your space than a hummingbird-friendly flowering plant?

We believe the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, as our focal species, will engage all of our members, no matter their skill or interest level. It will connect a variety of our education and community outreach initiatives while also serving as an umbrella species for many of our conservation goals. At the same time, these birds will bring much needed joy and happiness

to us all as we look forward to a more positive year, and one hopefully filled with in-person community events. Additionally, Georgia Audubon will continue to more directly work with and focus on birds that are more imperiled. We will continue to monitor Piping Plovers on Jekyll Island, survey for climate-threatened species, construct Chimney Swift towers, and identify other future opportunities.

Enjoy the start of the new birding year and all the excitement that comes with it. In addition, keep our Ruby-throated Hummingbird in mind as you think about your home/greenspace and your favorite birding spot. In less than two months, these feathered jewels will be storming our state from the south, looking for flowers and feeders.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird on Cardinal flower, by Mim Eisenberg.

Empowering Students to Drive Change *(Continued from Page 3)*

“Bird collisions were clearly a concern across campus that different student groups have talked about, and I was able to bring together a group to look at and address this problem,” says Place. The Bird-safe Glass Committee is working to identify the worst bird hazards on campus and write grants to raise money to purchase and install film to treat these problem windows on campus.

“The students have been monitoring bird strikes for a while now and have enlisted landscape services and the Georgia Tech police department to report dead birds,” says Place. “We have a Vertical Integration Program (VIP) made up of students that do different work, including water quality, air quality, energy use, and wildlife. The wildlife group has done a lot of early morning monitoring of buildings, and I was able to plug them in with Adam and his existing data.”

Steve is rightfully proud of his work. “The Eco-Commons used to be 90 percent parking lot, and now all of it has been converted to greenspace. We are planting hundreds of trees every year,” he says. “This a huge commitment to creating this habitat and making sure it will last well beyond our time at Georgia Tech.”

Ultimately both the grounds of the Kendada Building and the Eco-Commons will be certified as a Georgia Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary. Gabe Andriele, habitat program manager for Georgia Audubon, has been

brought in to consult with students on native plants and the birds that use them. Gabe and Adam led a bird walk on campus earlier this year with students and faculty to begin assessing what birds are currently using the campus habitat and the steps taking place to make campus more bird-safe. Georgia Audubon has been a great partner, says Place.

In recent months, Georgia Audubon has also connected with Dr. Diana Hicks, a professor in the School of Public Policy at Georgia Tech specializing in metrics for science and technology policy. In consultation with Georgia Audubon, Dr. Hicks is offering a year-long course in the School of Public Policy which, among other topics, will be addressing possible public policies related to bird-friendly design and how Georgia Audubon could potentially move forward with legislation to ensure future buildings incorporate bird-friendly design elements. Adam is serving as an advisor for this group and will be meeting with them throughout the year.

“We’re very excited about this partnership and the great work for birds that is taking place on Georgia Tech’s campus,” says Betuel. “Through the work of all of the student groups and with the help of professors and others staff, there is a lot of really substantial progress being made to make the campus a safe and attractive place for birds.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please check our website or our Bird Buzz e-newsletter for additional events that may be scheduled after *Wingbars* goes to press.

FEBRUARY

Field Trip: Piedmont Park (Fulton County)

Saturday, February 6, at 8:00 AM

Leader: Jason Ward

Registration required at

www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve (Clayton County)

Wednesday, February 10, at 8:00 AM

Leader: Anne McCallum

Registration required at

www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips

Three Billion Art Exhibit at The Hudgens Center for Art and Learning

Exhibit will run February 6 through April 24, 2021

Opening Event: February 6, 2021, from 2:00 to 4:00 PM

The Hudgens Center for Art and Learning in Gwinnett County will feature an art show entitled “Three Billion”—representing the three billion North American birds that have been lost in the past 50 years, according to a recently released study in the journal *Science*. The causes for the loss of these birds, many of them familiar backyard birds, include habitat loss, overuse of pesticides, building strikes, and free-roaming domestic cats.

If you would like to attend the exhibit opening on February 6, you may register for a free, timed ticket event at www.georgiaaudubon.org/three-billion-art-exhibit. If you'd like to attend at another time, the Hudgens Center allows 10 people at a time into the space, as long as they socially distance and wear masks. The opening date will require tickets, but on any other date, no tickets are required.

Georgia Audubon Bird Stories: *Whoo-Ku Haiku*, by Maria Gianferrari

Friday, February 19, at 9:30 AM

Join us for the free monthly Georgia Audubon Bird Stories, featuring a virtual story hour with different children's book authors. Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/georgia-audubon-bird-stories

Field Trip: Lullwater Preserve (DeKalb County)

Saturday, February 20, at 8:00 AM

Leaders: Gus Kaufman and Jamie Vidich. Registration required at www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips

Georgia Audubon Master Birder Program

February 27 to April 3

Georgia Audubon is excited to offer our popular Master Birder Program again in winter of 2021. Due to ongoing concerns about the pandemic, the winter program will consist of virtual webinars on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and in-person Saturday field trips at birding hot spots. Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/master-birder-program.

Virtual Meeting: Early Birds Book Club

Sunday, February 28, at 2:00 PM

February book: *Winter World*, by Bernd Heinrich

The Early Birds welcome all who enjoy reading about birds, birding, and birders. We are a “no commitment” book club—some folks come every time and others occasionally. For more information or to register, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/early-birds-book-club.

Webinar: Georgia Audubon Monthly Meeting

Sunday, February 28, at 3:30 PM

A Virtual Tour of the Three Billion Art Exhibit with

Brickworks Gallery Owner Laura Adams

Registration: Free

“Three Billion” is a group show of art curated by Brickworks Gallery owner and artist, Laura W. Adams, at the Hudgens Center for the Arts. In this show, Adams has curated a group of ten artists from the Atlanta region and beyond whose work focuses on environmental themes and wildlife declines. In this monthly meeting, Adams will take us on a virtual tour of the exhibit and speak with some of the artists whose work will be on display. The name “Three Billion” refers to the recent report published in the journal *Science* on the loss of some three billion of our North American birds in the last 50 years. The artists in this show have come together to display art that speaks to this horrifying loss, its causes and its solutions, as well as to the beauty and awesomeness of birds and their environments. The artists hope to bring more awareness of this unfolding tragedy and its potential solutions through the medium of art. The show opens on February 6, 2021, and runs through April 24, 2021. The Hudgens Center for the Arts is located in Duluth in the Infinity Energy Center complex. To learn more or register for this free event, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/monthly-meetings.



MARCH

Tuesday, March 2, at 10:00 AM

Georgia Bird Fest Event Tickets on sale to Georgia Audubon members

Event registration for upcoming Georgia Bird Fest events will open to current Georgia Audubon members at 10:00 AM on March 2. Please be sure your membership is current and that you know your login name and password in order to register for these events. Some events will sell out within minutes, so be ready!
www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfest

Field Trip: Piedmont Park (Fulton County)

Saturday, March 6, at 8:00 AM

Leader: Jason Ward

Registration required at

www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve (Clayton County)

Wednesday, March 10, at 8:00 AM

Leader: Anne McCallum

Registration required at

www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips

Georgia Audubon Bird Stories: Paddle Perch Climb: Bird Feet are Neat, by Laurie Ellen Angus

Friday, March 19, at 9:30 AM

Join us for the free monthly Georgia Audubon Bird Stories, featuring a virtual story hour with different children's book authors. Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/georgia-audubon-bird-stories

Field Trip: Sweetwater Creek State Park (Douglas County)

Saturday, March 20, at 8:00 AM

Leaders: Gus Kaufman and Jamie Vidich

Registration required at www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trip

Virtual Meeting: Early Birds Book Club

Sunday, March 28, at 2:00 PM

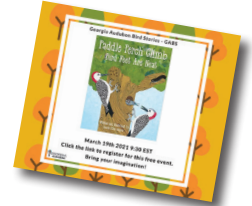
March book: *Owl of the Eastern Ice: The Quest to Find and Save the World's Largest Owl*, by Jonathan Slaght

The Early Birds welcome all who enjoy reading about birds, birding, and birders. We are a "no commitment" book club—some folks come every time and others occasionally. For more information or to register, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/early-birds-book-club.

Sunday, March 28, at 3:30 PM – Georgia Audubon Monthly Meeting Webinar

Equity in Birding: Does Where We Go Birding Matter?—with Deja Perkins

We are connected through our love of birds, but does where we go birding impact science? Join us as we speak with Deja Perkins on Equity in Birding. We will explore Georgia spatially and take a closer look at how the diversity and abundance of birds change across different socioeconomic neighborhoods. Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/monthly-meetings.



APRIL

Field Trip: Piedmont Park (Fulton County)

Saturday, April 3, at 8:00 AM

Leader: Jason Ward

Registration required at www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve (Clayton County)

Wednesday, April at 8:00 AM

Leader: Anne McCallum

Registration required at www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Sweetwater Creek State Park (Douglas County)

Saturday, April 10, at 8:00 AM

Leader: Gus Kaufman and Jamie Vidich

Registration required at www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips

Field Trip: Morgan Falls Overlook Park (Fulton County)

Saturday, April 10, at 8:00 AM

Leader: Roseanne Guerra

Registration required at www.georgiaaudubon.org/field-trips

Virtual Meeting: Early Birds Book Club

Sunday, April 25, at 2:00 PM

April book: *Falcon Freeway: A Big Year of Birding on a Budget*, by Christian Hagenlocher

The Early Birds welcome all who enjoy reading about birds, birding, and birders. We are a "no commitment" book club—some folks come every time and others occasionally. For more information or to register, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/early-birds-book-club.

Sunday, April 25, at 3:30 PM – Georgia Audubon Monthly Meeting Webinar

Presentation on Coastal Bird Conservation Work

Don't miss this great opportunity to learn more about bird conservation on the Georgia coast in this webinar with Abby Sterling, with Manomet, and a panel of other bird experts. To learn more or register for this free event, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/monthly-meetings.

Sunday, April 18

Georgia Bird Fest Opening Celebration, with Scott Weidensaul

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/birdfest.

Wingbars

GEORGIA AUDUBON

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Georgia Native Plant Society Symposium Virtual Event

February 27 and 28, 2021

Georgia Audubon is thrilled to be partnering with the Georgia Native Plant Society (GNPS) to co-host the 2021 Symposium. This year's event will be a virtual event featuring a terrific lineup of speakers.

Saturday, February 27, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

- Dr. Patrick McMillan, Heronswood Director, TV host: **Creating a Garden for Life: Embracing the Intersections of Life in Your Landscape**
- Jim Ozier, Georgia Power: **Wildlife Habitat Values of Georgia's Native Woodland Plants**

Sunday, February 28, from 1:00 to 3:00 PM

- Malcolm Hodges, The Nature Conservancy, retired: **The Importance of Native Grasslands to Georgia's Biodiversity**
- Giff Beaton, noted author, speaker, naturalist: **Wetlands: Hydric Powerhouses**

Registration for this virtual event is now open. The cost is \$5 per day for current Georgia Audubon and GNPS members and \$10 for non-members. To learn more or register, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/upcoming-events.



Why Native Plants & Places Are Essential

