



Wingbars



**GEORGIA
AUDUBON**

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NOVEMBER 2021

Conservation at Work: Doing More Work for Birds Across Georgia

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.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, photo by Tom Wilson.

November marks the end of fall migration, and it has been a busy one not only for the birds but also for the conservation staff at Georgia Audubon. Building off of the success of last year, we once again hosted native plant sales in both Atlanta and Athens, getting more plants in the ground that will support our local wildlife. Additionally, in conjunction with Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month in September, we highlighted some of our certified wildlife sanctuaries via our virtual Wildlife Sanctuary Tour. We look forward to expanding this program statewide in the coming months and encourage any of you plant lovers, especially those of you in the southern portions of the state or along the coast, to help us with this effort



Making buildings safer for birds is a priority for Georgia Audubon's conservation efforts. Photo by Adam Betuel.



Kim Savides participated in an effort with Georgia DNR to capture and band roughly 45 Red Knots on Wolf Island, a USFWS wilderness area that lies between Sapelo and Little St. Simons Island. Photo by Kim Savides.

On the coast, our new Sea Grant Fellow Kim Savides assisted Georgia DNR biologists with Red Knot banding, installing a MOTUS tower to track bird movement, and she is busy developing future research and monitoring programs on which Georgia Audubon will collaborate. In addition to Kim's hard work, I was honored to speak at the Coastal Wildscapes native plant sale, participate in a virtual bird walk with our community engagement team and Wild Cumberland, and present at the Georgia Ornithological Society's fall meeting on Jekyll Island. Finally, Gabe Andrle and our restoration crew have begun work on our restoration project on the eastern edge of Jekyll Island. This National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funded project will focus on the removal of turf grass and the installation of native, maritime grasses. We are excited to be partnering with the Jekyll Island Authority, Coastal Georgia Audubon, the Tidelands Nature Center, Jekyll Island Historic District, and the UGA Marine Extensions Sea Grant Program on making this space more productive and engaging the

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From the Executive Director

Giving Thanks

This time of year, we all like to give thanks for the friends and family that keep us grounded, the organizations that keep us inspired, and the birds that keep us connected. It's also a good time to share the wonder and joy of birding, since fall migration brings so much excitement and hope for the future. As Georgia Audubon moves forward with new faces, programs, and opportunities, we need to reflect on the time it's taken to get here, and those who helped forge the successful organization we've become. Starting in 1926, the essence of Georgia Audubon was forged and grown by volunteers. The sheer number of those who helped contribute and move us forward is like the flocks of thousands of migrants on their way to wintering grounds.

But there have been a few key volunteers along the way who have led us to achieve significant milestones. Oftentimes, these individuals marked the point of their leadership by inspiring others to step forward in their shadow and eclipse those points of success. We marvel at the sheer will and leadership of Joy Carter as she helped remake a volunteer-led organization into a staffed nonprofit.

The next step was going from one staff to several to meet the needs and challenges of a mission. This required vision and leadership to understand that we needed staff to manage the organization and board leadership to provide governance and fiduciary oversight. Joy Carter recruited Linda DiSantis to the board to help Georgia Audubon become a transformational organization. It was a daunting task with big shoes to fill, and yet Linda stepped into the shadow and put her own mark on the organization.



Linda DiSantis has brought transformational leadership to Georgia Audubon.



Jared Teutsch



Linda (2nd from right) with her husband, Bob Kerr, and friends Kay Grinnell and Phillip Nelson on the 2018 trip to Guatemala.

Linda has brought transformational leadership to so many of us throughout Georgia. Whether at UPS, the City of Atlanta, Institute for Georgia Environmental Leadership (IGEL), or Georgia Audubon, Linda has inspired us to think critically, speak passionately, and give back by challenging ourselves to step forward from the shadow of those that have come before us.

It's remarkable to think how far we have come from the first part-time staff in 2007 to where we are today. Linda's transformational leadership helped carve out a path forward for a statewide organization that can *Build Places Where Birds and People Thrive*. As we reflect back on this year, and all the years of her board service, please join me in giving thanks for Linda's leadership. If you feel so called, we encourage you to make a gift to our Year-End Campaign in her honor.

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

Keep birding!
Jared

Georgia Audubon Expands Bird-friendly Habitat Restoration to the Coast

By Michelle Hamner, Director of Development

Georgia Audubon was recently awarded a grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program to complete bird-friendly habitat restoration on Jekyll Island. With this funding, Georgia Audubon brings its successful model of restoration to the Georgia coast for the first time. Funds will support the restoration and stabilization of 3.5 acres of coastal dune habitat with native maritime grasses and perennials.

Jekyll Island is the smallest of Georgia's famed barrier islands, and notable for its pristine beaches, tidal salt marshes, and dense coastal forests. The natural features include quiet beaches where endangered sea turtles nest, critical "stopover" habitat for migrating shorebirds, and an abundance of wooded areas for millions of migrating birds, butterflies, and dragonflies. A tidal creek and salt marsh border the island on its western side, while a rim of low dunes, beaches, and the Atlantic Ocean border the eastern side. It and Georgia's thirteen other barrier islands protect valuable salt marshes, which represent 28 percent of all salt marsh habitat along the U.S. eastern seaboard.

As part of our project, Georgia Audubon's habitat restoration crew and volunteers will remove non-native invasive plant species from the 3.5-acre project site, primarily Bahia Grass (*Paspalum notatum*) and Bermuda Grass (*Cynodon dactylon*). Then we will install new native plant vegetation, including approximately 24,000 native coastal grass and perennial plugs (*Muhlenbergia sericea*, *Panicum amarum*, *Sporobolus virginicus*, *Paspalum virginicus*, *Monarda punctata*, *Euthamia graminifolia*,

and *Pityopsis graminifolia*), as well as approximately 10 pounds of native Broom Sedge seed (*Andropogon virginicus*).

"We are thrilled to have the support of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for our organization's very first habitat restoration project along the Georgia coast," says Adam Betuel, Georgia Audubon's director of conservation.

"This project will serve as a model of dune restoration that can be undertaken on all 14 of Georgia's important barrier islands."

In addition to the invasive plant removal and native plantings that will occur, the project will also engage local community members through volunteer projects, bird and wildlife monitoring, and public outreach and education programming. Georgia Audubon is joined by several partners to complete this work, including the Jekyll Island Authority, the UGA Marine Extension Sea Grant Program, Coastal Georgia Audubon Society,

the Georgia 4-H Tidelands Nature Center, and the Jekyll Island Historic District.

This is the fifth award that Georgia Audubon has received from The Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program, which seeks to develop nationwide community stewardship of local natural resources, preserving these resources for future generations and enhancing habitat for local wildlife. Grants seek to address water quality issues in priority watersheds, such as erosion due to unstable streambanks, pollution from stormwater runoff, and degraded shorelines caused by development.



Painted Buntings are just one of the many bird species that will benefit from Georgia Audubon's coastal restoration work. Photo by Simon Tan/Audubon Photography Awards.

Give the Gift of Membership This Holiday Season

Give the gift of a Georgia Audubon membership to friends and family and introduce them to an inspiring world of bird appreciation, conservation, and habitat protection. It's also another great way to extend your own support of Georgia Audubon's work, building places where birds and people thrive.

Gift membership recipients will receive a letter and new member welcome packet from Georgia Audubon notifying them of your generosity. All regular membership benefits are bestowed upon gift recipients.

Following your gift membership purchase, you may also download a Gift Membership Card to print or e-mail to your gift recipient. A selection of different card themes is available to choose from. Purchase a gift membership today at www.georgiaaudubon.org/joinrenew.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT On Gabe Andrle

By Steve Phenicie

(This is the 51st in a series on Georgia Audubon volunteers, board members, and staff.)

Is a bird in the hand really worth two in the bush? Gabe Andrle has had a chance to make a comparison – he’s worked with both. Now Georgia Audubon’s habitat conservation program manager, Gabe formerly took care of birds at Zoo Atlanta.

Gabe is originally from Berwyn, Ill., outside Chicago and still has family there. He has always been interested in nature and volunteered at the Brookfield Zoo while in high school. When it came time to decide where to go to college, he chose Emory

University because it was the alma mater of a mentor and “it’s a solid school in an area with unique nature.” (Apparently he didn’t need football.) Majoring in environmental sciences, he got a chance during college to work for three months at the Diann Fossey Gorilla Fund International in Rwanda, where he set up a parasitology lab. He worked for three months in Madagascar, studying such things as moths, insects, and amphibians and how deforestation affects people and animals. He also visited Peru twice for a tropical ecology class.

Upon graduation he landed a job at the zoo, where he cared for reptiles, amphibians, and birds, including bustards, owls, cranes, flamingoes, and smaller birds. Among his charges was the elderly but still dangerous Cecil the Double-Wattled Cassowary, who was past 40 when he died. Gabe says that taking care of the birds gave him “a unique insight on life” and “a whole new perspective.”

Gabe came to Audubon in August 2019 where he started part

time with the title of conservation program coordinator, managing the Wildlife Sanctuary Program and Plants for Birds initiatives, and assisting with restoration projects. Nowadays, with Atlanta Audubon having become Georgia Audubon, he works full time on restoration projects across the state. Among



Gabe Andrle kayaking in the Okefenokee Swamp.

them are Cooper’s Furnace Day Use Area along Lake Allatoona, Panola Mountain State Park near Stockbridge, Deepdene Forest in Druid Hills, and Sams Lake in Fayette County.

For the grunt work, he depends on Master Birders, people who have expressed interest in doing restoration work, and volunteers from participating organizations. Gabe has built a reputation as somewhat of an authority on plants but says he has little formal training. He did, however, gain insight while doing some work at Fernbank in ecological restoration and forest management.

Gabe enjoys leading bird walks, talking to garden clubs and other organizations, and making environmental education videos called “Nature with Gabe.” They’re available on YouTube and carry such names as “Easy Way to Find Snakes,” “Helping a Wild Snapping Turtle,” and “How to Find Great Blue Heron Nests.” He also made the videos used in this year’s Virtual Wildlife Sanctuary Tour.

Gabe’s “lovely girlfriend” of five years, Natalia Rivera-Viscal, whom he met at Emory, is studying veterinary medicine at the University of Georgia. Gabe lives near the Georgia Audubon office.

THANK YOU!

A Million Thanks...

... to volunteers at the Snake Day Wildlife Festival at Elachee Nature Center: **Mamie Kerr, Paul Campbell, Tim Baranowski, Phillip Prichard, and Janelle Kovner** ... to volunteers at the Chattahoochee Nature Center Butterfly Festival: **Janet Poole, John Poole, Tasha Messer, Sandy Murray, Phillip Prichard, Annalise Kaylor, Sherry Rosen, and Lori Bonham** ... to **Mary Nevil** for coordinating the Early Birds book club this year ... to **Beth Blalock**, who facilitated the very successful Board retreat ... to **Stephen Ramsden** for allowing us to use his video footage for the Mayoral Forum ... to **Abby Sterling, Sergio Sabat-Bonilla, and Adam Betuel** for speaking at our August Monthly Meeting ... to **Leslie Edwards, Georgann Schmalz, Gus Kaufman, Jamie Vidich, Sandy and Rick Krause, Bob and Deb Zaremba, Walter Bland, Sandy Kruger and the Olmsted Linear Park Alliance** for participating in Georgia Grows Native for Birds Month events ... to **Laura Adams and Andrew Feiler** for hosting the Swift Night Out event at Brickworks Gallery ... to **Sheryl Berg, Stella Wissner, Lisbet Phillips, Stephanie Madson, Eden Madson, Teresa Mayes, John Mayes, Beth Brock, Cathy McGraw, Jillian Little** and staff for helping with the Fall Native Plant Sale ... to **Melinda Langston, Lou Clymore, Georgia LaMar, Annalise Kaylor, Paula Grad and Michele Buchanan** for continued support with the Wildlife Sanctuary Program ... to Project Safe Flight Georgia volunteers **Nancy Kennell, Kelly Bryan, Kendra Frick, Cynthia Peng, Michelle Wong, Steve Place, Maureen Carroll, Cheryl Hensley, Joanna Parkman, Michael Zhou, Mary Kimberly, Gavin MacDonald, Kiedon JerMias Bryant, Raquel Gonzalez, Cristal Valdez, Alejandra Tapia Batres, Steven Williams, Michelle Ross, Phillip Yovino, Halimah Budier, Amberlee Cook, Shanice Solomon, and Coralie Jean-Noel** ... to **Dottie Head** for her efforts in organizing our recent board and staff strategic planning retreat ... to our incredible field trip leaders, **Stephen Ramsden, Anne McCallum, Shannon Fair, Gus Kaufman, Jamie Vidich, Michelle Hamner, Nithya Guthikonda** (one of our dynamite high school leaders!), and **Carolyn Joiner**. You have each connected people to birds and the joy they bring in unique and memorable ways ... thank you!

Introducing Alex LoCastro and Kim Savides: New Georgia Audubon Team Members

Georgia Audubon is pleased to welcome two new staff members to help with conservation efforts. Alex LoCastro is the new conservation program coordinator and Kim Savides joins us on the coast as our new Georgia Sea Grant State Fellow. Alex and Kim will help expand our capacity and programs across the state.

In her role as Conservation Program Coordinator, Alex will oversee Georgia Audubon's Wildlife Sanctuary Program and will be working with our Avian Advocate volunteers to roll this program out state wide. We recently launched virtual sanctuary certifications, which will allow us to certify properties outside of the metro Atlanta area.

Alex LoCastro is an environmental educator, entomologist, and artist from Orlando, Florida. Before joining Georgia Audubon, she worked as an interpretive ranger at the



Alex LoCastro, Conservation Program Coordinator

Fernbank Museum of Natural History, leading educational programs and engaging in habitat restoration in the largest urban old-growth forest in the Piedmont region. Alex is most passionate about insects and the many vital roles they play in our environment, including keeping our native birds fed and pollinating our beautiful native flora. She is looking forward to helping Georgia

Audubon in our mission to expand the Wildlife Sanctuary program and get more native plants into peoples' yards.

In addition, Georgia Audubon is delighted to welcome Kim Savides as our new Sea Grant Fellow. The annual position is the culmination of a partnership between Georgia Audubon, the Jekyll Island Authority, and the Georgia Sea Grant.

Headquartered on Jekyll Island, Kim will build upon the work of Sergio Sabat-Bonilla, our 2020-2021 Fellow, to further develop programs that engage and activate local communities, specifically the BIPOC communities of Glynn and McIntosh Counties, and develop a replicable, inclusive community strategy that brings conservation, birdwatching, and community science to the public. She will also participate in bird monitoring activities, including habitat monitoring, bird banding, and other field work.

Kim Savides is a field ornithologist and a master's student at Utah State University. She began her avian career as a field technician during her undergraduate degree and has moved around the country studying birds and their migrations, working with such species as the Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black Rosy-finch, and Lazuli Bunting, as well as at several bird banding stations. Her research has focused on combining information from new tracking technologies with more traditional survey methods to produce better and more complete views of birds' full life histories. In her work, Kim has mentored budding ornithologists in the field and shared her passion for birds with the public through stewardship, education, and public engagement. She is looking forward to helping Georgia Audubon in continuing to develop our Coastal Program through new research, partnership, and outreach opportunities.



Kim Savides, Sea Grant State Fellow

Flocking Together for Georgia's Birds Help us meet our goal by December 31

We're wrapping up our Year-End Giving Campaign with the goal to raise at least \$50,000 to support bird-friendly conservation, education, and community engagement throughout the state. **We're so close to meeting our goal, but we need your help!** Please make your gift before December 31. Donations will support habitat restoration, STEM-based educational programs, certification of additional wildlife sanctuaries, coastal bird monitoring, and strengthening the Audubon network throughout the state. As a special thank you for your support, donors who make gifts of \$100 or more will receive one of our new Georgia Audubon magnets. **To donate, please visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/donate before December 31.** Together, we're building places where birds and people thrive. Thank you for your support!



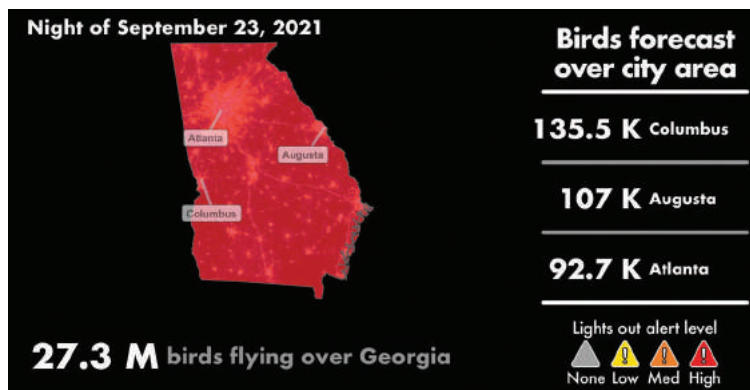
Receive one of our 5-inch Georgia Audubon magnets as a special thank you for your donation of \$100 or more.

New Tool Allows Georgia Audubon to Forecast, Issue Alerts on Nights of High Bird Migration

By Dottie Head, Director of Communications

Georgia Audubon has a new tool to help minimize bird collisions with buildings and to alert the public to dim the lights on nights of high bird migration. Thanks to a collaborative venture between Georgia Audubon and Dr. Kyle Horton at Colorado State University, it is now possible to predict nightly bird migration over the state. Georgia Audubon has begun issuing Lights Out Alerts on nights of elevated migration intensity. This work was funded through a generous grant from the Disney Conservation Fund.

Atlanta is a dangerous place for migrating birds, ranking as the fourth most dangerous city during fall migration and ninth in spring for light exposure to migratory birds, according to a 2019 study by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. With an estimated 250 million birds passing over Georgia during spring and 675 million birds migrating over in the fall, it is vital to learn about migration over our state and make our cities safer.



The forecast map shows the relative scale of migration intensity across the state as well as pinpointing specific areas of intense bird movement. The map has a three-level classification (low, medium, and high migration). More than 80% of all migratory species in Georgia are affected by light pollution.

“We are very excited about this new forecasting ability to alert the public on nights when large numbers of birds will be traveling over the area,” says Adam Betuel, Georgia Audubon’s director of conservation. “For many people, turning out the lights every night for weeks at a time is impractical, but reducing or eliminating outdoor lighting for a few nights a year is totally reasonable. Migration lasts many weeks, but during each migratory period, over 50% of all migration movement occurs on roughly 10% of the nights. The ability to forecast these nights a few days in advance and alert the public to turn out the lights can save many thousands of birds each migratory period.”

Each year, an estimated 365 million to one billion birds die in the U.S. after colliding with buildings.

Most migrating birds pass through Georgia during the nighttime hours, when skies are generally calmer, predators are less active, and temperatures are cooler. Large, brightly lit cities wreak havoc on migratory birds as the ever-present glow of artificial light turns the normally safe nighttime sky into a perilous pathway.

Bright lights confuse and disorient resident and migrating birds as they pass over brightly-lit cities causing birds to collide with structures or become trapped in beams of light where they circle until they are exhausted. Once on the ground, brightly-lit building lobbies, reflective glass showing trees and shrubs, transparent facades, or even indoor plants near windows can lead to more collisions.

“We’re thrilled to be collaborating with Georgia Audubon. Light pollution is a national threat to migratory birds, but it’s clear that partnerships within communities are essential to make conservation action a reality,” says Kyle Horton, Ph.D. and assistant professor at Colorado State University.

In an effort to reduce the number of bird-building collisions, Georgia Audubon launched Lights Out Georgia in spring 2017. A voluntary program, Lights Out Georgia encourages business owners, building managers, and residents to turn off or reduce lighting from midnight to dawn during peak bird migration periods. Participants pledge to reduce non-essential lighting during peak migration periods of March 15 to May 31 (spring) and August 15 to November 15 (fall). The pledge is available on the Georgia Audubon website at <https://www.georgiaaudubon.org/lights-out-georgia.html>.



Reducing or eliminating nighttime lighting can go a long way toward helping birds on their migratory journeys. Photo by Adam Betuel.

Georgia Audubon Rolls Out Enhanced, Revamped Habitat Restoration Program Across Georgia

By Gabe Andrle, Habitat Conservation Program Manager

Habitat loss and habitat degradation are the top threats to biodiversity across most of our planet. Georgia Audubon is addressing these issues with the expansion of our Habitat Program focused on the ecological restoration of spaces across Georgia. Our state is home to an incredible array of natural communities anchored by unique geological features, from the mountains to the barrier islands. Each of these communities has a distinct mixture of plants and animals whose intricate relationships and interactions allow these systems to perpetuate. As we lose green spaces across the state to development and our remaining greenspaces face the threats of non-native invasive species, fire suppression, pollution, overuse, etc., it is vital that we begin to reverse the damage we have already done in order to preserve the unique identity of our state but, more importantly, the life it sustains.

Historically, our habitat work has focused on smaller urban spaces, which are incredibly important for community engagement, education, and preserving urban wildlife, including the hundreds of species of migratory birds. Urban habitat work will continue to be a part of our restoration efforts moving forward; however, we are beginning to work on larger-scale projects across the state that will be able to support a greater array of plants, insects, birds, and more.

For example, through the support of the Georgia Ornithological Society and the Robert F. Schumann Foundation, we have begun work at Panola Mountain State Park, where we are working on our largest projects to date. Half of our project is focused on removing non-

native invasive plant species such as Chinese privet, Bradford pear, and *Elaeagnus* from a riparian area and woodland edges. The other half is focused on restoring native grassland habitat, which is critical for some of our most at-risk bird populations due to the development of the large majority of historic southeastern grasslands.

As we take on a variety of restoration projects we are excited to be working with both new and old partners, which allows us to grow stronger relationships with the organizations and people that make much of this work possible. At Cooper's Furnace, a greenspace open to the public near Lake Allatoona, we are working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which manages the space, to convert turf grass around the parking lot into some beneficial pollinator meadows which will support insects that so many of our birds and other wildlife need to survive and reproduce. Finding supportive partners ensures that the restoration work we do will be managed long term for the good of the planet.

As we continue to add new projects, we hope you will begin to see some new faces joining Georgia Audubon. With a never-ending supply of restoration work to be done, we will need more and more hands to scale up this important work. Not only will it be important to add new staff members, but a great deal of this work would not be possible without the gracious hard work of our restoration volunteers.

If you or anyone you know is interested in volunteering with our Habitat Program to remove non-native invasive species, plant native plants, and more, please contact gabe.andrle@georgiaaudubon.org.



Photos of a recent habitat restoration workday, spreading broom sedge bales at the Panola Mountain restoration area. Photos by Steve Rushing.

Travel with Georgia Audubon in 2022

It's not too late to register for one of our upcoming birding trips. The Georgia Audubon Travel Program strengthens our current goals to protect Georgia's birds by instilling a love of nature that will impact conservation, education, and community engagement on a local level. Space is limited, so please reserve your spot soon. For complete itineraries and registration information on each of these trips, please visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/travel.

Southwestern Spain: Extremadura, Coto Doñana, and Tarifa

Guide: Melanie Furr, with local support from Manuel Solar

April 25 to May 4, 2022

South Florida: Miami, The Keys, and Dry Tortugas

Guide: Adam Betuel | May 3 to 8, 2022

Montana and Yellowstone: Where the Mountains Meet the Plains

Guide: Michelle Hamner, with local support from Red Hill Birding

June 22 to 27, 2022 (with optional Cassia Crossbill Idaho extension June 27 to 29)

New Jersey: Winter Birding in the Mid-Atlantic

Guide: Adam Betuel, with local support from George Armistead

December 1 to 7, 2022



Mangrove Cuckoo is one of the target birds for our 2022 trip to South Florida. Photo by Dan Vickers.

Conservation at Work: Doing More Work for Birds Across Georgia

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people of Jekyll Island. You'll find more detailed updates on many of these projects in this issue of *Wingbars*.

None of our conservation initiatives are as tied to migration as Project Safe Flight Georgia and its sister program, Lights Out Georgia. For the past few months, our volunteers have been monitoring the areas across Atlanta that we have been surveying for years, often discovering birds that had their migration come to an early end at the base of a glass wall. In addition to our historic monitoring efforts, we have been able to establish new partnerships that will not only shed light on the issue of collisions across metro Atlanta, but will open the door to new research opportunities, student engagement programs, and the possibility of making our universities safer for wildlife. This fall, we have established new student-led collision-prevention programs at Georgia State University and Kennesaw State University (KSU) that build upon our existing program at Georgia Tech. Our fall intern, KSU master's student Courtney Linkous, has recruited students to survey campus and will be engaging faculty and facilities management to explore opportunities to make the campus, close to one of Georgia's premier migration hotspots (Kennesaw Mountain), safer for birds. At Georgia State, a coalition of students and faculty will be doing similar work. Expanding our downtown monitoring, campus-wide education, and exploring how to make the buildings at our most urban campuses less problematic for birds attracted to the area by the metro area's bright lights will be among our top goals.

Beyond monitoring for building collision victims, we are taking steps to reduce these collisions through education, advocacy, and physically improving problematic buildings. With funding from a Disney Conservation grant, we have created a Lights Out alert tool with Dr. Kyle Horton to alert people and corporations of nights with heavy bird movement. We are currently in conversations about applying bird-safe film to select buildings with a collision problem. Keep an eye out for an update soon. Finally, we are explor-

ing the best avenues for getting more new construction built in a way that not only works for its inhabitants, but also the avian life that shares these spaces. I am excited about the momentum our collision-prevention programs have and the potential to expand them statewide.

This is just a sampling of the hard work that our conservation team has been up to the past few months. Thank you all for your support, and we are hungry to continue doing our best to make our state for the birds. Enjoy the sparrows and ducks and arrival of other winter visitors!

Gifts for Bird Nerds

If you're looking for the perfect gift for the bird-lover on your list, look no further than the Georgia Audubon online store. We've got Georgia Audubon hats, long- and short-sleeve T-shirts, ornaments, coffee, chocolate, Brown-headed Nuthatch boxes, books, notecards, and more. Quantities are limited, so shop early. Browse our selections today, at www.georgiaaudubon.org/shop.



Species Profile: The Fish Crow

By Steve Phenicie

Even non-birders know about American Crows – the “caw-caw” guys. But Fish Crows – the “uh-uh” guys? Not so much. Fish Crows are a bit smaller than American Crows (about 15.5 inches vs. 17-21 inches) but are so similar that usually the only way to distinguish between the two is their call.

Unlike many species, the range of the all-black Fish Crows seems to be expanding and their numbers increasing. Range maps vary, but generally the bird can be found from New England down the Atlantic Seaboard, around the Gulf of Mexico, and up along the Mississippi River. Adam Betuel, Georgia Audubon’s conservation director, says, “Fish Crows are definitely expanding their range northward (well beyond Georgia) and are common in the Atlanta area during most of the year. They definitely could be undercounted, as most birds that do not vocalize are left as just ‘crow species’ or are not reported.”

Decatur birder Mary Kimberly says, “It’s my experience that they are much more abundant in recent years.” Anne McCallum of Clayton County says, “We see lots of them at the Panola Mountain Banding Station,” which is near Stockbridge. Jay Davis, who isn’t willing to venture whether he has noticed an overall increase, says he sees more Fish Crows than American Crows now that he lives near the Chattahoochee River. He adds that late in the summer of 2020 there were hundreds of Fish Crows gathered for several weeks at the Johnson Ferry South unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

Fish Crows are more likely to be found near water than American Crows, and their plumage is smoother and silk-

ier. They like tidewater, river valleys, swamps, woodland and farmland. Along the coast they forage on beaches, marshes, and estuaries. Inland they usually follow the large rivers, although they may feed in woods or fields miles away. Just about anything is on the menu, including carrion, crabs, shrimp, crayfish, insects, berries, seeds, nuts, bird eggs, turtle eggs, and garbage.

When it comes time to nest, often a few pairs form a loose colony. They put their nests near the tops of evergreens, deciduous trees, palms, and mangroves, depending on what’s available. They may nest in heron colonies and raid the herons’ nests. The nest is a bulky platform of sticks and strips of bark, lined with softer materials such as grass, rootlets, hair, feathers, paper, pine needles, and even manure.

A clutch typically consists of four or five eggs, which are dull blue-green to gray-green, blotched with brown and gray. Incubation is by the female, possibly assisted by the male, for about 16 to 18 days. Both parents probably feed the nestlings. The age when young leave the nest is not well known but is probably three to four weeks.

Partners in Flight estimates a global breeding population of 450,000, entirely in the United States. Although crows are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, states retain the right to allow hunting of them because they are regarded as pest species.

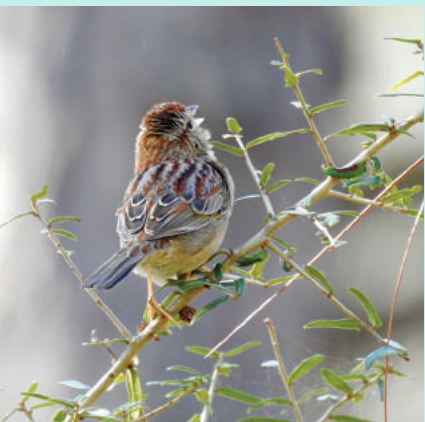


Fish Crow, by Alejandra Lewandowski.

The Red Hills of Georgia: Georgia Is Getting a New Audubon Chapter

By Janell Cleveland, Red Hills Audubon Society

Nestled deep in the heart of the coastal plain of Georgia is a little-known geographical wonder known as the “Red Hills.” The Red Hills region straddles the Florida-Georgia line, covering Tallahassee to the south and Thomasville to the north, encompassing about 400,000 acres. This unique habitat is defined by gently rolling red clay hills, covered with longleaf pines, live oaks dripping in Spanish moss, and ubiquitous wiregrass. This habitat has largely been protected due to private



Bachman's Sparrow, by Janell Cleveland.

land ownership and conservation easements, but there are many places accessible to the public, such as River Creek Wildlife Management Area and Birdsong Nature Preserve. Amazingly, we have the Northern Bobwhite quail to thank for much of this preservation, as many of these large tracts have been preserved for hunting them.

What really defines the Red Hills are the unique plant and animal species found there. Savannahs and bogs are filled with carnivorous plants like pitcher plant, bladderwort, butterwort and sundews. Look up to the tall pines for a glimpse of a Red-cockaded Woodpecker, or listen intently for the “Here, kitty kitty!” call of a Bachman’s Sparrow. But while you are looking for birds, don’t forget to watch your step. Red Hills is one of the few remaining habitats of the gopher tortoise, which is known for digging long, deep burrows. These burrows are “borrowed”

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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

NOVEMBER

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum
Wednesday, November 10, at 8:00 AM

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

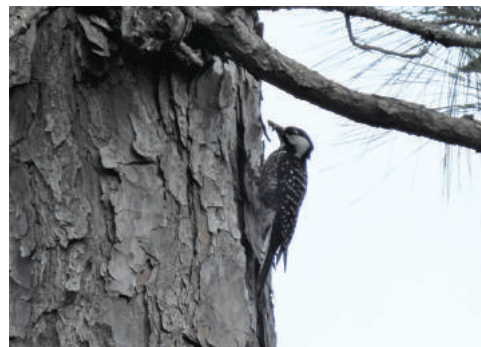
Field Trip: Silver Bluff Quail Trail, Jackson, SC | Leader: Lois Stacy
(sponsored by Augusta-Aiken Audubon Society)

Saturday, November 13, at 8:00 AM

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

Field Trip: Dunwoody Nature Center | Leader: Shannon Fair
Saturday, November 20, at 8:00 AM

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



Red cockaded woodpecker, by Janell Cleveland.

DECEMBER

Field Trip: Brickyard Ponds, Augusta (sponsored by Augusta-Aiken Audubon Society) | Leader: Lois Stacy
Saturday, December 4, at 8:00 AM

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

Field Trip: Sweetwater Creek State Park | Leader: Gus Kaufman and Jamie Vidditch
Saturday, December 4, at 8:00 AM

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

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

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

Field Trip: Phinizy Swamp, Augusta (sponsored by Augusta-Aiken Audubon Society) | Leader: Lois Stacy
Saturday, December 11, at 8:00 AM

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

JANUARY

Sandhill Crane Sunset Kayak Tour
Saturday, January 8, 2022, from 2:30 to 5:30 PM

Price: \$90

Join Chattanooga Guided Adventures and Georgia Audubon for a sunset kayaking tour at Hiwassee Island National Wildlife Refuge. Learn more or register at www.georgiaaudubon.org/upcoming-events.

Field Trip: Reynolds Nature Preserve | Leader: Anne McCallum
Wednesday, January 12, 2022, at 8:00 AM

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

Early Birds Book Club
Sunday, January 23, 2022, at 2:00 PM

FREE

The Early Birds Book Club welcomes 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 a list of past books and more details on those coming up, or to register for the Zoom meetings, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/early-birds-book-club. The Early Birds will not meet in November or December. Our next meeting will be at 2:00 PM on Sunday, January 23, and we will discuss *The Bird Way: A New Look at How Birds Talk, Work, Play, Parent and Think*, by Jennifer Ackerman. Please check *Bird Buzz* or the website to determine if this will be an in-person or virtual meeting.

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

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

Little St. Simons Island has graciously donated a two-night stay for two at The Lodge on Little St. Simons Island for our 2021 Holiday Party Raffle. Stays are all-inclusive, and include accommodations, boat transfers to and from the island, three prepared meals daily, soft drinks, all activities including Naturalist led excursions, and use of all recreational equipment. The winner will be selected at our Holiday Party and Annual Meeting on Sunday, December 5, at 3:00 PM, at Manuel's Tavern. You do not need to be present to win. The trip must be used by December 15, 2022. To learn more or purchase raffle tickets, visit www.georgiaaudubon.org/upcoming-events.



Purchase Raffle Tickets for a two-night stay for two in The Lodge on Little St. Simons Island. The drawing will take place on Sunday, December 5. Photo courtesy of Little St. Simons Island.

The Red Hills of Georgia: Georgia Is Getting a New Audubon Chapter

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by more than 350 other species, including the eastern diamondback rattlesnake.

Fall is a glorious time to visit the Red Hills. Migrating warblers gather in the live oaks looking for a quick bite before a long flight. Some of them choose to stay here all winter, like the Black-and-White Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Orange-crowned Warbler. Brown-headed Nuthatches squeak in the trees above your head. And nothing sounds as magical as wind in the tops of

longleaf pines. Swamp sunflowers give a burst of color to the forest floor, the warm tones set off by the cool blue grasses. Breathe in the fresh pine air, and know that you are in a special place.

We are working on forming a Red Hills Audubon chapter and would love your support. If you are interested in more information, contact Janell Cleveland at jtccleveland@gmail.com.



Long-leaf pine and wiregrass ecosystem, by Janell Cleveland.



Northern Bobwhite, by Janell Cleveland.

Wingbars

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In-Person Holiday Party and Annual Meeting at Manuel's Tavern

Sunday, December 5 | 3:30 to 5:00 PM

FREE, but registration required so that we may limit capacity

Join Georgia Audubon for our Annual Meeting on Sunday, December 13. This is an in-person event and will be our first time back at Manuel's Tavern since the pandemic struck. We'll also hold a short annual meeting at which we will hear from Jared Teutsch, executive director, introduce our newly installed Board of Directors, and bid a fond farewell to our outgoing Board members.

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

Georgia Audubon will provide a variety of appetizers, and, of course, additional food and beverages will be available for purchase. Please join us as we celebrate another successful year for Georgia birds.

Please note: You must be vaccinated against COVID-19 to attend this event. According to the CDC, individuals are considered fully vaccinated when they are at least two weeks past the second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine or at least two weeks past the single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

This event is free to attend, but we are requiring registration so that we are not too jammed into the space.

Sign up for the holiday party or purchase raffle tickets at www.georgiaaudubon.org/monthly-meetings.



2022 Holiday Ornament