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Media Note: Photos to accompany this article and a MS Word version of this press release are available for download at <https://bit.ly/33mdYok>.

JEKYLL ISLAND TO BENEFIT FROM GEORGIA AUDUBON HABITAT RESTORATION WORK FUNDED BY NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION GRANT

(Atlanta, Ga.) November 2, 2021 - Georgia Audubon was recently awarded a grant from National Fish & 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 on the east side of the island between the Ocean View Trail bike path and Beachview Drive, North.

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*). This will be followed by an installation of 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*).

"We are thrilled to have the support of the National Fish & 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 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.

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.

This is the fifth award that Georgia Audubon has received from The Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program, which seeks to develop nation-wide 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.

The Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration grant program seeks to develop community capacity to sustain local natural resources for future generations by providing modest financial assistance to diverse local partnerships focused on improving water quality, watersheds and the species and habitats they support. The program is sponsored by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC), in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), USDA Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), FedEx, Southern Company and BNSF Railway.

Georgia Audubon is building places where birds and people thrive. We create bird-friendly communities through conservation, education, and community engagement.

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