



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Media Note:** *There will be a **Ribbon Cutting Ceremony** on **Friday, March 15, at 1:30 PM** along the Greenway at 3655 Preston Ridge Road, Alpharetta. Representatives from the City of Alpharetta, Atlanta Audubon Society, and Ed Isakson/Alpharetta Family YMCA will be on hand. The media is invited and encouraged to attend.*

**GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY AWARDS GRANT TO ATLANTA AUDUBON FOR BIG CREEK GREENWAY HABITAT RESTORATION**

**(Atlanta, Ga.) March 13, 2019** – Atlanta Audubon was recently awarded a grant from the Georgia Ornithological Society's (GOS) Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grants fund to implement bird-friendly habitat restoration at Big Creek Greenway in Alpharetta. Grant funding from GOS will be combined with funding from Patagonia Atlanta to allow Atlanta Audubon to restore approximately ten acres of important habitat along a stretch of the Greenway. Atlanta Audubon is partnering with the City of Alpharetta and the Ed Isakson/Alpharetta Family YMCA to complete this work.

Big Creek Greenway is a linear park that runs approximately eight miles from its northernmost point near Windward Parkway in Alpharetta to its southernmost point near Old Alabama Road in Roswell. This park has proved to be very important greenspace for resident and migratory birds in Fulton County, with more than 180 bird observations recorded on eBird, a real-time, online checklist program that has revolutionized the way the birding community reports and accesses information about birds.

The focus of this restoration project will be to create bird-friendly habitat by removing invasive and exotic plant species such as Chinese privet and oriental bittersweet, and installing native plants as appropriate that will assist resident and migratory birds to use the area as nesting, foraging, and stopover habitat.

In addition to the restoration work, Atlanta Audubon will monitor bird activity at the site and will create a set of data from which to better inform conservation decisions in the future. In particular, the data collected through field surveys and banding sessions will provide valuable information on individual and species movement, survival rates, annual apparent reproductive success, habitat selection, species density at focal locations, site fidelity, and dispersal of offspring. Additionally, this project will allow Atlanta Audubon to conduct volunteer work days and community education programming, which will help raise awareness of the importance of birds and healthy habitats.

“Alpharetta’s Big Creek Greenway is a highly used public amenity, not only by birders, but also by walkers, joggers, cyclists, and other who enjoy the outdoors,” says Nikki Belmonte, Atlanta Audubon Executive Director. “We are delighted to receive these grants from GOS and Patagonia that will allow us to remove invasive plant species and strengthen the native forest ecosystem to the benefit of birds and other wildlife. This project will provide a tremendous opportunity for us to create a strong public-private partnership to educate the public about the important dual roles that our parks must play as recreational and therapeutic spaces for people and high quality habitat for wildlife.”

Birds that will benefit from the habitat restoration work include several species that are listed on Georgia’s State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), including the Brown-headed Nuthatch, Common Grackle, Chimney Swift, Brown Thrasher, Wood Thrush, and Rusty Blackbird. SWAP is a statewide strategy to conserve populations of native wildlife species and the natural habitats they need before these animals, plants, and places become rarer and more costly or difficult to conserve.

“The City of Alpharetta is grateful for our partnership with Atlanta Audubon, whose efforts benefit the local wildlife and residents,” says Jason Binder, Alpharetta City Council Member. “Maintaining natural habitats is essential for us to maintain the natural beauty and wildlife we all enjoy in Alpharetta.”

For more information on the Big Creek Greenway, visit

[www.alpharetta.ga.us/government/departments/recreation-parks/facilities/big-creek-greenway](http://www.alpharetta.ga.us/government/departments/recreation-parks/facilities/big-creek-greenway).

*Atlanta Audubon Society is building places where birds and people thrive. We create birds -friendly communities through conservation, education, and advocacy.*

**Media Note:** Photos to accompany this article and a MS Word version of this press release are available for download at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/y3l9s32oktcs94e/AADL4n1VHbxzzwGhN455VJ-fa?dl=0>.

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