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GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY AWARDS GRANT TO ATLANTA AUDUBON FOR PHASE TWO HABITAT RESTORATION WORK AT BIG CREEK GREENWAY

(Atlanta, Ga.) March 2, 2020 – Atlanta Audubon was recently awarded a grant in the amount of \$20,900 from the Georgia Ornithological Society’s (GOS) Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grants fund to implement a second phase of bird-friendly habitat restoration at Big Creek Greenway in Alpharetta. Atlanta Audubon will restore ten additional acres of bird-friendly habitat, building on the 12 acres restored during phase one of this project in 2019. Atlanta Audubon will be partnering with the City of Alpharetta, Georgia Native Plant Society, and the Ed Isakson/Alpharetta Family YMCA to complete this work.

Big Creek Greenway is a linear park extending 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 proven to be an important greenspace for resident and migratory birds in Fulton County, with more than 190 bird observations recorded on eBird, a real-time, online database 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 English Ivy, 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.

“Atlanta Audubon’s restoration work at Big Creek Greenway is central to our efforts to make a difference for important urban public green spaces in Atlanta through our participation in National Audubon’s Bird Friendly Communities Program,” says Jared Teutsch, Atlanta Audubon Executive Director. “Alpharetta’s Big Creek Greenway is a highly used public amenity, not only by birders, but also by walkers, joggers, cyclists, and others who enjoy the outdoors. This project combines habitat restoration work with

ornithological study, community engagement, and strong public-private partnerships 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.

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

Media Note: Photos to accompany this article and a MS Word version of this press release are available for download at <https://bit.ly/2xT2BmQ>.

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