

VOLUME XLIII, ISSUE 2, ATLANTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Atlanta Bird Fest 2017 Registration Opens March 1 for Atlanta Audubon Members



Registration for Atlanta Bird Fest opens on March 1 at 10 AM for Atlanta Audubon members and on March 8 for non-members. Running from April 15 to May 14, our 2nd Annual Atlanta Bird Fest will offer dozens of field trips, workshops, and other events to engage not only Atlanta Audubon



the private trails of Serenbe, learning more about the 57 active family groups of Red-cockaded Woodpecker that call Piedmont National Wildlife Refuge home, a behind-the-scenes look at Zoo Atlanta's avian collection, workshops to help build your nature photography skills

members, but nature enthusiasts from across the region during Georgia's exciting spring migration period.

and create a wildlife sanctuary in your yard, and special guest speakers such as authors David Haskell and Drew Lanham.

Atlanta Bird Fest will feature many special events and outings, including exploring

View this year's Atlanta Bird Fest Schedule at www.atlantaaudubon.org/atlanta-bird-fest.

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Giff Beaton leads a group at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park during Atlanta Bird Fest 2016. Photo by Adam Betuel.



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Wingbars is the official newsletter of Atlanta Audubon Society and is published 10 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 Atlanta Audubon Society.



President's Perch March 2017

By Linda DiSantis

Recently, while talking to a potential Atlanta Audubon donor, I was asked, "Why should I donate to Atlanta Audubon instead of some other worthy conservation organization?" I must have answered the question to the donor's satisfaction because we got the grant. But, in pondering the exchange later, it made me realize that it is important to have an answer to this question. What makes Atlanta Audubon stand out from many other very worthy, successful groups when someone is trying to decide whether to join, donate, or provide support?

For several months, I have considered the question and here is my answer: Atlanta Audubon has three primary attributes that make us special. First, we have birds. How many times have you been birding when a passerby asks, "What are you looking at?" When you point out the bird, they say something along the lines of, "Oh, wow! I've never seen that bird before. What is it? What can you tell me about it?" Birds draw people in and create an instant connection. Secondly, we contribute to

science in more ways than almost any other grassroots environmental or conservation group. Think of all the data collected through eBird, NestWatch, Christmas Bird Counts, Great Backyard Bird Counts, and other citizen science programs. Audubon members directly contribute valuable information that helps scientists gain a better understanding of birds and their habitats, migration patterns, and declines. Finally, Audubon members have a natural, outdoor activity we enjoy doing together. Many conservation groups must create activities to connect their members and their donors. Audubon folks have a natural connection that starts with "Let's go birdwatching" and often develops into friendship and community. Birding forges a bond that keeps us interested and engaged. Not every conservation non-profit is so lucky. I hope you will find these points useful as you talk to friends and colleagues about why you support Atlanta Audubon. Perhaps after hearing from you, they will decide to become a supporter too.

Atlanta Audubon 2nd Annual Big Day Challenge Kicks Off April 15

Last spring during Atlanta Bird Fest, eight teams scoured their backyards, local parks, and hot spots across the state to see how many different species of birds they could count during our inaugural Big Day Challenge. This year, we are again offering both a 6-hour and 24-hour option to participants who may choose to organize as a team of up to four individuals or to go it alone. In addition to a fun day of birding, the Big Day Challenge offers participants the opportunity to highlight the importance of bird conservation by engaging friends and family through fundraising to support Atlanta Audubon's conservation and education programs. Each participant in the 2017 Big Day Challenge who raises or donates at least \$100 will receive a complimentary Atlanta Bird Fest 2017 T-shirt. Big Day Challenge participants who raise or donate at least \$150 will also be invited to an exclusive lunch and meet-and-greet at Manuel's Tavern on Sunday, May 21, with our May member meeting speaker, author and Clemson University professor, Drew Lanham. Learn more about the 2017 Big Day Challenge and set up your team fundraising page at www.atlantaaudubon.org/BigDayChallenge.



Anhinga observed by the 2016 Big Day Challenge team, "The Butcher Birds," Adam Betuel, Shannon Fair, and Nathan Farnau. Photo by Adam Betuel.

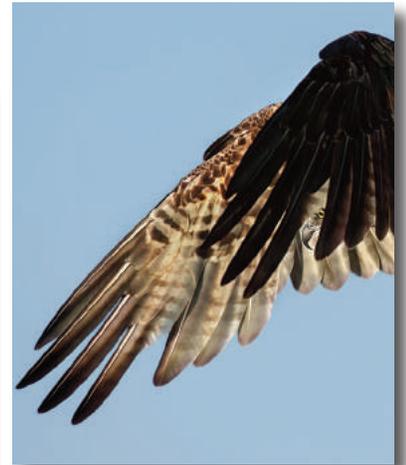
Atlanta Audubon Hosts the 2016 National Audubon Photography Awards Exhibit

Visit the downstairs boardroom at Blue Heron Nature Preserve from March 31 through April 15 to walk among the winning bird photographs from the 2016 Audubon Photography Awards.

Selected from more than 7,000 entries submitted from all 50 states, D.C., and Canada, the winning photos were published in the May/June 2016 issue of *Audubon* magazine. A panel of five judges had the daunting task of sifting through the stunning images and grading them based on technical quality, originality, and artistic merit. On a somber note, half of the species in the winning and honored photos are birds identified as threatened or endangered by climate change in Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report, which shows that 314 bird species in North America face an uncertain future due to shifting climatic suitability. The exhibit may be viewed on your own by visiting Blue Heron Nature Preserve Monday through Friday, March 23 through April 14, from 10:30 AM to 2:30 PM. The exhibit may also be viewed during our Spring Open House on Saturday, April 15, from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM.



*Grand Prize Winner, Bonnie Block
Bald Eagle and Great Blue Herons.
Photo: Bonnie Block/Audubon Photography Awards*



*Professional Winner, Dick Dickinson, Osprey
Photo: Dick Dickinson/Audubon Photography Awards*

Introducing Atlanta Audubon Society 2017 Interns

Please join us in welcoming three interns to Atlanta Audubon Society who will be helping us this year. **Joel Owen** is a graduate student from UGA who will be a Conservation/Project Safe Flight Atlanta Intern working with Conservation Director Adam Betuel on Project Safe Flight Atlanta, banding, and other Atlanta Audubon projects. Many of you may remember Joel's talk from our February 2016 monthly meeting, where he presented his thesis work on Red-and-Green Macaw nest site selection in Piaui, Brazil.



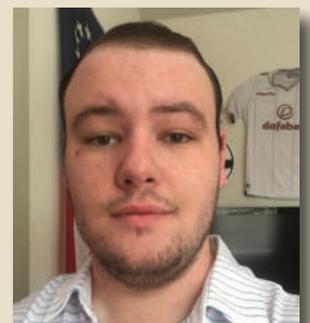
Joel Owen holds a Canada Warbler. Photo by Angela Hsiung.



Kelsey McKenna, Communications & Development Intern

In addition, we're pleased to welcome **Kelsey McKenna**, a junior at Kennesaw University, who is pursuing a degree in Communications with a focus in Public Relations. Kelsey will be working as a Communications and Development Intern and will assist Development Director Michelle Hamner and Communications and Membership Director Dottie Head with Atlanta Bird Fest, press releases, social media posts, and other Atlanta Audubon events throughout the year.

Finally, **Don Martin** will be coming on board as an Education Intern helping Education Director Melanie Furr with her myriad programs for students, youth, adults, scouts, and teachers. Don is a junior at the University of Georgia, majoring in Natural Resources Recreation and Tourism.



Don Martin, Education Intern

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT on Vinod Babu

By Steve Phenice

(This is the 18th in a series on Atlanta Audubon volunteers.)

If Atlanta Audubon needs a ringing endorsement, it gets one from Vinod Babu, who calls it “the best community I have found in Atlanta. I’m really happy to have found Atlanta Audubon.”

Vinod is a native of Madurai, India, and his hometown is in the country’s southernmost state of Tamil Nadu. He grew up in the “middle of the city,” as he puts it, and received an undergraduate education in India. He came to the United States in 2008 to pursue a Ph.D. in chemical engineering at Georgia Tech, graduated in 2014, and is now doing post-doctoral work. His parents still live in India, and he has a sister in Boston.

Vinod—better call him Dr. Vinod—has been birding only since 2012 or 2013. When attending a social event, he began talking with Atlanta Audubon member and bird walk leader Gus Kaufman, who invited him to a walk. Vinod, who lives in Midtown, not only accepted the invitation but launched a new pastime. He has participated in Christmas Bird Counts at

Cumberland Island and in Atlanta, where he has been on Gus’s team on the west side. He’s led walks at the Confluence (where I-85 and Ga. 400 meet), Fernbank Forest, and Morningside Nature Preserve, and was a leader in last year’s Bird Fest. Vinod’s friend, Jamie Vidich, credits Vinod with getting him interested in birding.



Vinod Babu
Photo by Vandana Devi, his sister.

Vinod’s out-of-town birding experiences include trips to Boston, Chicago, and the Black Hills of South Dakota. He’s also found his native India to be fertile ground for birding. The bird life is diverse, and many birds from farther north make their way to nature preserves in India for the winter. The popularity of birding has grown as incomes have risen in India, Vinod says, and Christmas Bird Counts there have become huge in both participants and the number of species spotted.

Because Vinod is also interested in plants, he recently joined the board of the Georgia Native Plant Society.

THANK YOU!

A Million Thanks...

... to **Iris Levin**, assistant professor of biology at Agnes Scott College, for her talk on Barn Swallows at the January monthly meeting (as she competed with the hooting and hollering every time the Falcons put another nail in Green Bay’s coffin) ... to **Steve Cook, Gina Charles, Stuart Arey, Sandy Miller, Susan Loeb, Jason Williams**, and **Anita Chilcut** for their help with January Peel & Stick ... to **Sandy Miller** for her help with the Board of Directors handbooks ... to **Les Cane** for help with education programs ... to **Cynthia Smith, Jason Williams**, and **Kathryn Jackson-Van Detta** for their help with festival outreach ... to **Mary Nevil** for her help preparing curriculum kits for teachers as part of our Georgia Gives Day campaign to provide 50 “*Learning About Birds*” kits for educators ... to our bird walk leaders for February: **Jason Ward, Angie Jenkins, Anne McCallum, Lieren Forbes, Tom Painting, Joy Carter**, and **Sheila Stevens** ... to **Nikki Belmonte, Michelle Hamner, Melanie Furr, Steve Dupont, Victor Williams, Wayne Powell, Cathy Cornelius, Cheryl Beshke, Jay Davis, Laura Hardy, Sandy Murray**, and **Beth Giddens** for their help with Climate Watch in January. This is a National Audubon Society program to test the climate models it included in the Climate Report in 2014.

ASK CHIPPY

Q: There has been an owl sitting on a pine limb outside our second-story office window for about a week now. It burrows its head into its body and only moves when other birds try to mess with it (crows, raptors, etc.) Is there something wrong? Should we contact someone for help?

A: Thanks for contacting the Atlanta Audubon Society. My hunch is that you are just very lucky to have a front row seat to watch an owl while it sleeps. Owls are nocturnal. They roost quietly during the day, often camouflaged in a tree, and then hunt at night. Because other birds recognize owls as predators, they sometimes mob them, or attack and harass them. If you see or hear crows making a racket and dive-bombing a tree, it may be an indication that they are bothering a roosting owl.

Because this owl has been sitting in the same tree for a week, it may simply be a favorite roost. One way to

determine if the owl is healthy is to check for droppings and pellets at the base of the tree. Owls eat entire animals, including fur and bones. They regurgitate undigested material in the form of compact pellets. If you find pellets, you will know that your owl has been eating and is probably just fine.

Happy Birding!

—Chippy



EYES on EDUCATION

Connecting Students with STEM through Birds

by Melanie Furr

Birds—beautiful, fascinating, and accessible—provide the perfect opportunity to engage people in outdoor exploration and learning. Connecting people with the birds around them instills empathy and connection with the natural world that leads to greater stewardship of our planet. With an uncertain future for the environment, what better place to foster an appreciation of birds and engage people in conservation activities than in our local schools?

Atlanta Audubon's project *Connecting Students with STEM through Birds* works with schools in underserved communities to create outdoor classrooms and to provide training and resources for teachers to connect



Gifted/STEM teachers at Cleveland Avenue Elementary School in the future bird-friendly garden. Photo by Melanie Furr.

students with STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) and other subjects through the study of birds. The goal of our project is twofold: to create bird-friendly habitat that can be enjoyed as outdoor learning areas and to raise environmental awareness and action in the school community and beyond through the lens of birds.

Through the generosity of the Morgens West Foundation, we've recently begun implementing the project with two schools in southwest Atlanta, Emma Hutchinson Elementary and Cleveland Avenue Elementary. We are excited to partner with Daniel Ballard of Convivial Gardens, LLC, who will design the outdoor learning areas and install bird-friendly native plants, engaging teachers and students in the process. The funding will provide the following for each school:

- A bird-friendly outdoor learning area with nest boxes and low-maintenance native plantings
- Two complete sets of our bilingual Learning About Birds (LAB) curriculum, aligned with Georgia Performance Standards, including student handouts and teacher lesson plans
- Training for teachers on how to use the LAB curriculum and incorporate the study of birds into STEM and other disciplines
- In-house programs for students with Atlanta Audubon naturalists
- A bird-banding demonstration by Atlanta Audubon's Director of Conservation

- Bird-themed books and two class sets of field guides for the school library
- Coordination of a community event to include birds walks, habitat improvement, and other activities

Daniel and I recently visited both schools and met with the lead gifted/STEM teachers to look at the school grounds and create a timeline for programming and planting. (I couldn't resist introducing the teachers to the eBird app and doing a count as we chatted). The teachers are excited for all the opportunities that an outdoor bird-friendly garden will provide to engage their students in learning—and they couldn't believe that it's all a gift. After our meeting, one teacher commented that she had already learned so much in the short time we had together looking at birds and talking about native plants. I got a little choked up imagining students spotting their "spark bird" in the gardens behind their school.

We are grateful for the generous support of the Morgens West Foundation. With additional funding, we hope to expand this program to other schools in future years. If you are interested in supporting this meaningful project with a gift that benefits both birds and people, please contact Michelle at michelle@atlantaaudubon.org.

Giving is so much fun!

Thanks to the support of our Georgia Gives Day donors, we've been able to provide 50 Learning About Birds curriculum kits to educators in the metropolitan Atlanta area. Several kits were given to participants who



Teachers receiving LAB kits at the Georgia Science Teachers Association Conference. Photo by Kimberly Johnson.

attended Atlanta Audubon's session at the Georgia Science Teachers Association annual conference in February as well as to teachers who submitted online requests for the kits. Kits contained our 13-unit bilingual Learning About Birds curriculum with teacher guides and student handouts (both a printed copy and a digital copy), as well as a selection of several books, field guides, and posters that complement the curriculum. The teachers were thrilled to receive these classroom resources. Thanks to everyone who supported our Georgia Gives Day campaign!



Gifted/STEM teachers at Emma Hutchinson Elementary School in the future bird sanctuary. Photo by Melanie Furr.

LIVE and LEARN

With These Atlanta Audubon Society Workshops

Becoming a Better Birder

Sunday, March 12 • 1:00 to 3:00 PM

Join Georgann Schmalz for a two-hour workshop to improve your skills and increase your enjoyment of birding. This class is a must for any new birder who feels somewhat overwhelmed by the skills of more advanced birders. Time will be spent learning good techniques of birding in the field and choosing good optics, books, and sound devices. Not only will participants develop key identification skills under Georgann's expert guidance, they will also experience the satisfaction that better birding can yield. Georgann holds a master's degree in ornithology, taught at Fernbank Science Center for 29 years, and is three-time past president of Atlanta Audubon. She is a wealth of information and entertainment.

The workshop will be held in the Atlanta Audubon Society Classroom. Space is limited, so secure your spot by registering online at www.atlantaaudubon.org/adult-workshops. For more info, contact Melanie Furr at melanie@atlantaaudubon.org or 678.973.2437.

FEE: Atlanta Audubon members: \$40
Non-members: \$50

At Home Outdoors: Eco-Adventures for Homeschoolers

Join Atlanta Audubon and Blue Heron Nature Preserve in our new classroom space, "The Nest," on the third Friday of each month from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM for our homeschool program for youth ages 5 to 12. Our programs focus on hands-on experiences in the outdoors and inquiry-based learning.

FEE: \$12 per child

Space is limited. Learn more and register at <http://www.atlantaaudubon.org/homeschool-programs>

Upcoming themes: March—Spring Green
April—The Three R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
May—Terrific Turtles



At Home Outdoors Homeschool Program enjoys a day outside on the Blue Heron Nature Preserve. Photo by Amy Zvonar.

Warbler Workshop 2017

Wednesday, April 5 • 6:00 to 9:00 PM

Few families of songbirds get birders more excited—and frustrated and confused—than the wood-warblers, some of the most colorful birds in North America. With more than 20 breeding species in Georgia, these elusive and quick birds can be a challenge even for experienced birders.

Our Warbler Workshop will be held at the Atlanta Audubon Office with Master Birder instructor Theresa Hartz. She will cover all of Georgia's warbler species, concentrating on key field marks, tips for song recognition, and sorting out tricky identifications.

Space is limited, so register early at www.atlantaaudubon.org/adult-workshops.

FEE: Atlanta Audubon members: \$40
Non-members: \$50
Master Birders in good volunteer standing: \$35



Worm-eating Warbler by Giff Beaton.

Warbler Weekend Workshop 2017

Class TBD (April)

Trip to North Georgia Mountains: May 6 to 7

Stretch your neck and warm up those ears. It's time to prepare for spring migration. Georgia hosts more than 20 breeding warblers, and this workshop will cover them all. This two-part workshop will begin with a Warbler ID class with Giff Beaton held in April at the Atlanta Audubon office. The class will concentrate on the key identification characteristics of warbler species, as well as tips to song recognition. Participants will put their ID skills to the test during the weekend field trip with Master Birder instructor Theresa Hartz on Saturday, May 6, and Sunday, May 7, in the North Georgia mountains, where it's possible to find more than 20 species of warblers, many of which will be singing on their breeding grounds. Participants in recent years have seen 20 warbler species, including the unusual Brewster's Warbler, a hybrid formed by a Golden-winged Warbler and a Blue-winged Warbler. The group will visit some of the mountain hot spots as well as some new warbler-rich locations.

Space is limited, so register early. To register online, visit www.atlantaaudubon.org/adult-workshops.

For more information about the workshop, contact Theresa Hartz at jthartz50@gmail.com. For registration questions, contact Education Director Melanie Furr, at melanie@atlantaaudubon.org or 678.973.2437.

FEE: (excludes food and lodging) Atlanta Audubon members: \$150
Non-members: \$175



Chestnut-sided Warbler by Dan Vickers.

FIELD TRIPS

are open to the public and free (unless otherwise noted). We welcome everyone from beginners to advanced birders. No registration is necessary except where indicated below. The only fees that apply are parking fees at some venues such as state and national parks. Any applicable fees will be listed in the field trip description on the website.

Editor's note: In the interest of saving space (and trees), Atlanta Audubon is reducing the field trip listings in our newly redesigned *Wingbars* to date, location, time, contact information, and GPS coordinates. Details about trips, including driving directions, can be found on our website: www.atlantaaudubon.org/field-trips. As always, we encourage field trip participants to check the Atlanta Audubon Field Trips web page before any of these trips to check for updates, changes, typo corrections, etc., and for the most up-to-date information. Also, frequently trips are added after the newsletter deadline has passed.

Saturday, March 4 Piedmont Park (Fulton Co.)

8:00 AM
Leader: Jason Ward
Cell contact, morning of walk: 404.759.7770
GPS: N 33 47.025 W 84 22.746

Saturday, March 4 Morgan Falls Overlook Park (Fulton Co.)

8:30 AM
Co-sponsored by the City of Sandy Springs
Leader: Roseanne Guerra
Cell contact, morning of walk: 678.358.4916
GPS: 33.97004, -84.37996
Registration required:
<http://www.sandyspringsga.gov/registration>
or 770.730.5600

Saturday, March 4 George Pierce Park (Gwinnett Co.)

9:00 AM
Leader: Chris O'Neal
Cell contact, morning of walk: 404.514.7057
GPS: 34.06112, -84.04597

Sunday, March 5 Noonday Creek (west section) (Cobb Co.)

8:00 AM
Leader: Angelia Jenkins
Cell contact, morning of walk: 678.570.4891
GPS: 34.00125, -84.59163

Wednesday, March 8 Reynolds Nature Preserve (Clayton Co.)

8:00 AM
Leader: Anne McCallum
Cell contact, morning of walk: 678.642.7148
GPS: 33.601464, -84.346874

Friday, March 10 Vaughters' Farm (DeKalb Co.)

8:30 AM
Co-sponsored by Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites
Leader: Lieren Forbes, Interpretive Ranger,
Panola Mountain State Park
Phone contact day of walk: 770.389.7801
(park office)
GPS: 33.6841894, -84.114098

Saturday, March 11 Deepdene Park (DeKalb Co.)

8:00 AM
Co-sponsored by the Olmsted Linear Park Alliance
Leader: Rob McDonough
Cell contact, morning of walk: 404.754.8159
GPS: 33.773143, -84.318320

Thursday, March 16 Johns' Homestead Park (DeKalb Co.)

8:30 AM
Co-sponsored by Friends of Johns' Homestead Park
Leaders: Dave Butler and Mary Kimberly
Cell contacts, morning of walk: 404.580.3917 (Dave);
404.308.6279 (Mary)
GPS: 33.829704, -84.248614

Saturday, March 18 Atlanta Science Festival Walk in Fernbank Forest (DeKalb Co.)

9:00 AM
Co-sponsored by Fernbank Museum of
Natural History
Leaders: Vinod Babu and Ralph Smith
Cell contacts, morning of walk: 413.230.6276 (Vinod);
404.358.2166 (Ralph)
GPS: 33.77540, -84.32936
Registration required: 404.929.6400

Sunday, March 19 Friendship Forest Wildlife Sanctuary (DeKalb Co.)

8:00 AM
Leader: Adam Betuel
Cell contact morning of walk: 407.492.1139
GPS: 33.815451, -84.235746

Friday, March 24 Constitution Lakes (DeKalb Co.)

8:00 AM
Co-sponsored by Friends of Constitution Lakes
Leaders: Joy Carter, Sheila Stevens, and
Mary Kimberly
Cell contacts, morning of walk: 404.822.0030 (Joy);
770.630.7857 (Sheila); 404.308.6279 (Mary)
GPS: 33.68306, -84.34740

Saturday, March 25 Lost Corner Preserve (Fulton Co.)

8:30 AM
Co-sponsored by the City of Sandy Springs
Leader: Roseanne Guerra
Cell contact, morning of walk: 678.358.4916
GPS: 33.9540715, -84.386592
Registration required: <http://www.sandyspringsga.gov/registration>
or 770.730.5600

Saturday, March 25 Oakland Cemetery (Fulton Co.)

8:30 AM
Co-sponsored by Historic Oakland Foundation
Leaders: Gus Kaufman and Rob McDonough
Cell contacts, morning of walk: 404.483.7457 (Gus);
404.754.8159 (Rob)
GPS: 33.7474539 -84.3751184

Sunday, March 26 Olde Rope Mill Park (Cherokee Co.)

8:00 AM
Leader: Roseanne Guerra
Cell contact, morning of walk: 678.358.4916
GPS: 34.1242443, -84.5316593

If you would like to lead a field trip, contribute ideas for places to go, or give feedback about leaders, trips, or the field trip directions, please e-mail Field Trip Director Mary Kimberly at mmkimberly1954@gmail.com.



ATLANTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

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March Monthly Meeting

Studying Wildlife Abundance in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone

Sunday, March 26, 2017, 3:30 to 5:30 PM at Manuel's Tavern

The Chernobyl Power Plant 1986 explosion in Ukraine is considered the worst nuclear accident in human history. In response, the Soviet government established the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (CEZ) around the nuclear reactor and displaced all humans living within the region. However, no measures were taken to exclude wildlife, and many species have continued to persist in the area since the time of the accident. Currently, very little is known about these wildlife populations, especially how chronic radiation exposure inside the CEZ may be affecting their survival and abundance. **Sarah Webster** and her colleagues conducted research to assess the populations of medium and large predators within the CEZ using several different approaches. They use remote camera surveys, GPS collars, scat surveys, and biological samples to create a scientifically cohesive picture of how these species have been able to persist in this contaminated landscape in the decades since the accident. Sarah has an undergraduate degree from Virginia Tech, and a Master's of Science from the University of Georgia (UGA). Her research interests are primarily in predator population biology, and she has worked on several different research projects including coyote population ecology in the Appalachian Mountains, population biology of carnivores in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, jaguar abundance in Belize, and bat conservation and monitoring in New Jersey. She is currently pursuing a PhD at UGA, investigating the population dynamics and potential competition between carnivore species in the southeast.



Manuel's Tavern is located at 602 N. Highland Avenue, N.E., Atlanta. Our monthly meetings are free and open to the public. Free parking is readily available to the south of the building. Food and drink are available for purchase.