



fall 2008 meeting. . .

9 - 13 October 2008
Jekyll Island, GA

meeting summary. . .

You could say that the Colonial Coast Birding and Nature Festival came of age in 2008. From its hatch year in 2003, the Festival has been growing in fits and starts in a sometimes arduous effort to leave the nest and take wing. The sixth annual festival, which was held on October 9-13, posted a record attendance -- 413 participants -- up an impressive 12 percent from the previous year. This year's festival participants had the opportunity to select from an amazing 70 field trips and events, of which more than 30 sold out, some in just minutes. Those of us who hovered over our keyboards waiting for the registration clock to begin probably felt like we were teenagers once again, trying to beat everyone else to the box office for tickets to that special rock concert. Fortunately, the technology cooperated this year, allowing almost everything from registration to field trip logistics to come off without a glaring hitch.

The weather certainly accented the weekend, almost like bookends on a shelf. On Thursday night, rain squalls complete with hail soaked the coast, leading some of us to wonder if we were in for a wretched weekend. Brief showers reappeared throughout the weekend as the weather front struggled to make its way to the sea, almost like a warbler that's reluctant to start the seaward leg of its migration. The occasional sprinkles failed to dampen anyone's enthusiasm, but the wind that followed the trailing edge of the weather front did its level best to ground many birders. By Sunday the 12th the wind offshore was blowing so hard we were forced to cancel the trip to Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge, and we woke up to more of the same on Monday morning. Festival organizers scrambled to arrange alternative land-based trips for the grounded birders, and the number of people participating in Jekyll Island trips blossomed considerably on Sunday and Monday.

Field Trip Highlights

This year's species count was 181 species. This gives the festival a six-year average of 191 species, and a total species count of 251. Curiously, 132 of those species have been seen every year, but 32 have been seen only once in six years.

The increased number of field trips included four consecutive days' worth to Sapelo Island, Little St. Simons Island, and Blackbeard Island, two consecutive days to both St. Catherines Island and Cumberland Island, and double trips on most days to Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area. Nearly all of these trips were completely booked, leading the planners to ponder the possibility that it may be impossible to schedule too many trips to coastal Georgia's greatest birding hits. Highlights of this year's field trips include the heron, woodpecker and thrush slams, 20 species of

warblers, 22 species of shorebirds, and an impressive showing of raptors and falcons. Other highlights included the banding of a Loggerhead Shrike in front of an amused crowd at the convention center by a hobbled Charlie Muise, Dan Vicker's rescue of a Gopher Tortoise from a concrete storm drain at the Glennville Water Treatment Facility, a flock of 30 Roseate Spoonbills seen on the Jekyll Island Causeway on Monday, and the brunch of fresh, wild Georgia shrimp eaten on the Lady Jane.

Workshops and Seminars

The Raptor Show was once again the big hit of the Festival, with more than 300 people attending the two shows. The 17 workshops and seminars offered covered a little bit of everything, from shorebird and sparrow identification to bird photography. Possibly the most entertaining workshop was Pete Dunne's "The Art of Pishing." Pete is an internationally renowned author, creator of the World Series of Birding, Director of the Cape May Bird Observatory, and Vice President of the New Jersey Audubon Society. Try to imagine 30-plus people in a small room gamely following Pete's lead as he demonstrated the fine points of the knock-down pish, the hand smack, the squeak, and the owl whinny. It was [wet?], we hit "musical" keys never recorded in a concert hall, and it was very funny.

Banquet and Keynote Speaker

About 200 people, still buzzing from the day's workshops and field trips, enjoyed a delightful wild Georgia shrimp and grits dinner Saturday night. Moments later they were choking with laughter (and grits) as Steve Holzman, closet comedian, once again regaled the crowd with his banter and bartered off raffle tickets for a variety of great prizes, including autographed copies of David Sibley's field guides.

Saturday evening's program featured Pete Dunne, who reflected on "The 25 Things That Changed Birding" in his lifetime, an insightful list of the people, places, products, ideas and organizations that helped make birding what it is today. Some things on the list were obvious, such as iPods, Roger Tory Peterson, and David Sibley; others were not so obvious, such as President Eisenhower's creation of the interstate highway system, which made it much easier for birders to [gallop? in cars? —how about 'motor'?] all over the country compiling life lists. Pete ended his talk by challenging the audience to come up with their own examples of things that changed birding, which led to a freewheeling discussion filled with great ideas.

The evening ended, as it always does, with a species countdown, this time led by Georgia's own Giff Beaton. It's usually rather late in the evening when we get to the countdown, and banquet participants are often red-eyed, yawning, and ready to flee to their hotel rooms after such a long day. Giff kept an amused crowd in their chairs throughout the countdown, as he flitted from good-natured ribbing of his fellow birders to insights about species distribution and identification that only professional birders can know.

Next Year's Festival

Next year's Festival is already on the books for October 8-11, 2009, and our tentative featured speaker is author Scott Weidensaul. Mark your calendars and plan to attend. Our festival has taken flight. Come join your friends, meet some new ones, and help to keep it soaring!

Submitted by Dan Vickers and Bob Sargent

species countdown. . .

Steve Holzman, Compiler
181 species observed

The following table contains a combined list of the species reported from the all of the field trips:

| | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Black-bellied Whistling-Duck | Lesser Yellowlegs | Carolina Wren |
| Canada Goose | Long-billed Curlew | House Wren |
| Wood Duck | Marbled Godwit | Sedge Wren |
| Mottled Duck | Ruddy Turnstone | Marsh Wren |
| Blue-winged Teal | Red Knot | Ruby-crowned Kinglet |
| Northern Shoveler | Sanderling | Blue-gray Gnatcatcher |
| Green-winged Teal | Western Sandpiper | Eastern Bluebird |
| Wild Turkey | Least Sandpiper | Veery |
| Pied-billed Grebe | Dunlin | Gray-cheeked Thrush |
| Northern Gannet | Short-billed Dowitcher | Swainson's Thrush |
| American White Pelican | Wilson's Snipe | Hermit Thrush |
| Brown Pelican | Laughing Gull | Wood Thrush |
| Double-crested Cormorant | Ring-billed Gull | American Robin |
| Anhinga | Herring Gull | Gray Catbird |
| American Bittern | Lesser Black-backed Gull | Northern Mockingbird |
| Least Bittern | Great Black-backed Gull | Brown Thrasher |
| Great Blue Heron | Caspian Tern | European Starling |
| Great Egret | Royal Tern | Cedar Waxwing |
| Snowy Egret | Sandwich Tern | Northern Parula |
| Little Blue Heron | Common Tern | Yellow Warbler |
| Tricolored Heron | Forster's Tern | Chestnut-sided Warbler |
| Reddish Egret | Black Skimmer | Magnolia Warbler |
| Cattle Egret | Rock Pigeon | Cape May Warbler |
| Green Heron | Eurasian Collared-Dove | Black-throated Blue Warbler |
| Black-crowned Night-Heron | Mourning Dove | Yellow-rumped Warbler |
| Yellow-crowned Night-Heron | Common Ground-Dove | Yellow-throated Warbler |
| White Ibis | Yellow-billed Cuckoo | Pine Warbler |
| Glossy Ibis | Eastern Screech-Owl | Prairie Warbler |
| Roseate Spoonbill | Great Horned Owl | Palm Warbler |
| Wood Stork | Barred Owl | Blackpoll Warbler |
| Black Vulture | Chimney Swift | Black-and-white Warbler |
| Turkey Vulture | Ruby-throated Hummingbird | American Redstart |
| Osprey | Belted Kingfisher | Worm-eating Warbler |
| Bald Eagle | Red-headed Woodpecker | Ovenbird |
| Northern Harrier | Red-bellied Woodpecker | Northern Waterthrush |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | Common Yellowthroat |
| Cooper's Hawk | Downy Woodpecker | Hooded Warbler |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | Hairy Woodpecker | Yellow-breasted Chat |
| Red-tailed Hawk | Red-cockaded Woodpecker | Summer Tanager |
| American Kestrel | Northern Flicker | Scarlet Tanager |
| Merlin | Pileated Woodpecker | Eastern Towhee |
| Peregrine Falcon | Eastern Wood-Pewee | Clay-colored Sparrow |
| Clapper Rail | Trail's Flycatcher | Savannah Sparrow |
| King Rail | Eastern Phoebe | Saltmarsh Sharp-tld. Sparrow |
| Virginia Rail | Eastern Kingbird | Seaside Sparrow |
| Sora | Loggerhead Shrike | Song Sparrow |
| Purple Gallinule | White-eyed Vireo | Swamp Sparrow |
| Common Moorhen | Yellow-throated Vireo | Northern Cardinal |
| American Coot | Red-eyed Vireo | Rose-breasted Grosbeak |
| Sandhill Crane | Blue Jay | Indigo Bunting |
| Black-bellied Plover | American Crow | Painted Bunting |
| Wilson's Plover | Fish Crow | Bobolink |
| Semipalmated Plover | Tree Swallow | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Piping Plover | No. Rough-winged Swallow | Eastern Meadowlark |
| Killdeer | Bank Swallow | Common Grackle |
| American Oystercatcher | Barn Swallow | Boat-tailed Grackle |
| American Avocet | Carolina Chickadee | Brown-headed Cowbird |
| Spotted Sandpiper | Tufted Titmouse | Baltimore Oriole |
| Solitary Sandpiper | White-breasted Nuthatch | House Finch |
| Greater Yellowlegs | Brown-headed Nuthatch | House Sparrow |
| Willet | | |

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