



fall 2012 meeting. . .

**11 – 14 October 2012**  
**Jekyll Island, GA**

meeting summary. . .

Despite its beauty—or maybe because of it—the seashore engages in an ambivalent flirtation with the naturalist. Life is sparse on the beach, yet the next wave could wash up some truly startling life form. The winds may carry clean salt air, or the organic stink of salt marsh. And the birds . . . viewing birds on the beach can be more like astronomy than bird watching. We peer and squint through telescopes as we would at a distant star. Yet shorebirds are beautiful, and difficult, and diverse, and challenging enough to hold the interest of the expert. It was these mixed messages and baffling charms of the Georgia coast that proved to be an irresistible draw for 116 attendees at the fall meeting of GOS on Jekyll Island. From October 11 to 14, GOS members congregated at Villas by the Sea for speakers, lodging, and the traditional banquet, then fanned out from there to enjoy the mild autumn weather and the excellent coastal birding.

The Friday evening speaker was Anna Joy Lehmicke, a Ph.D. student at the University of Georgia, whose talk was titled “Between Chevron and the Deep Blue Gulf: Seaside Sparrows on the Gulf of Mexico.” Anna Joy began with an overview of saltmarsh, a habitat with a total acreage only about the size of Maryland. Despite the considerable value of saltmarsh—economic, recreational, and ecological—this ecosystem is being encroached on by development and faces the insidious threat of sea level rise. Anna Joy made a convincing case that the Seaside Sparrow is an ideal “indicator species” for monitoring the health of saltmarsh, then she described her work on this species in the saltmarshes of Mississippi, where she studies their breeding biology, demography, and the effects of landscape factors on their distribution and density. Preliminary findings showed that concealment is important for nesting success; predators destroy many nests, and, surprisingly, some nests are even parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds. She also discovered that higher elevations in the saltmarshes turn out to be the best microsites for breeding Seaside Sparrows. Anna Joy’s work, funded in part by GOS, will no doubt prove useful in guiding saltmarsh restoration and management.

We were fortunate to have photographer and expert birder Kevin Karlson, coauthor of the ground breaking book, *The Shorebird Guide*, join us for the weekend on Jekyll Island. Kevin kicked off the weekend by leading a Friday afternoon workshop on “Shorebirds by Impression,” attended by 44 people. As a way of reinforcing the lessons from his workshop, Kevin helped lead field trips on Saturday and Sunday to Andrews Island Causeway, Gould’s Inlet, and Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area. He also graciously signed books before the Saturday evening banquet, which was very well attended, with 90 people present. After the buffet dinner on Saturday

evening, Kevin gave his keynote presentation, "Birds on the Wind: The Miracle of Migration." The talk featured Karlson's outstanding photographs, an avalanche of jaw-dropping statistics about the migratory feats of birds, and periodic musical interludes. We came away with renewed appreciation for the wonders of bird migration as well as deep admiration for Karlson's skill as a photographer and a birder. At the end of the evening, he left us with a memorable message of hope as he displayed a final set of favorite bird photographs accompanied by a moving recording of "Over the Rainbow" played on the ukulele.

While Kevin Karlson's presentation was the highlight of the banquet, Saturday evening featured other activities as well. Several ornithologists presented research posters before the banquet. Thank you to Clark Jones, Bryan Nuse, and Andrea Ayala, all of the University of Georgia, for sharing their presentations with the GOS membership. Steve Holzman, a diehard supporter of the duck stamp program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), organized a raffle for purchasers of the 2012-13 duck stamp. He and Ashley Harrington sold duck stamps and raffle tickets, raising \$510 for the USFWS refuge system. As Steve is fond of pointing out, 98% of the proceeds from every duck stamp go directly to purchasing or leasing land for the refuge system, which includes many world-class birding locations across the country. We were also treated to a speech by an up-and-coming birder, ninth-grader Evan Barnard, a three-year veteran of GOS meetings. Evan spoke about some of his experiences as a young birder and encouraged GOS members to consider mentoring a young person who has shown an interest in birds. He also made an appeal for the society to make more efforts to support youth birding in Georgia. Evan must have hit a nerve with the audience, because he received a standing ovation for his speech.

Over the course of the weekend, GOS members participated in field trips to a variety of locations: Altamaha WMA, Cumberland Island, Jekyll Island Banding Station, Glenville Water Treatment Facility, Gould's Inlet and Andrews Island Causeway, Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, and Sapelo Island. While some visited their locations by car and on foot, others traveled by boat, e.g., to Altamaha Sound, Little Tybee Island, and Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge. The total number of species tallied over the weekend was 190, better than the previous two years, but just a hair above the average of 187 for the previous decade's worth of fall meetings on Jekyll. Some of the "best" birds were Short-eared Owl, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Red-breasted Nuthatch (this is an irruption year for the latter species). One of the most extraordinary sightings—an Animal Planet moment if you will—did not involve birds at all. Field trip goers on Blackbeard Island witnessed an alligator attacking and drowning an unfortunate white-tailed deer buck. Another unusual sighting was of a banded Caspian Tern seen on Cumberland Island; it turns out, according to Charlie Muise, that the bird was originally banded on an island in Lake Ontario, nearly 1,000 miles away! While my own field trip to Sapelo was a bust for the Plain Chachalaca (except for a single tail feather by found Terry and Peggy Moore), the species was seen on Sunday near the dump, so at least one group succeeded in sighting this elusive species.

Thank you to all of the leaders who make these field trips possible: Deb Barreiro, Ken Blankenship, Rebecca Byrd, Rachel Cass, Mike Chapman, Chris Depkin, Nathan Farnau, Ashley Harrington, Capt. Rene Heidt, Malcolm Hodges, Steve Holzman, Kevin Karlson, Gene Keferl, Tim Keyes, Bill Lotz, Joel McNeal, Ellen Miller, Charlie Muise, Capt. Phillip, Evan Pitman, Lydia Thompson, Dan Vickers, and Gene Wilkinson. Thank you also to Nathan Farnau for conducting the species countdown after the banquet. Finally, kudos to the members of the GOS Executive Committee for a stellar job in planning and executing another meeting. Our tireless committee members make all of the arrangements for the banquet, speakers, registration, and field trips, and we thank you for your hard work.

*--Jim Ferrari*

species countdown. . .
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**Dan Vickers, Compiler**  
**190 species observed**

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

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Ruddy Turnstone	Brown-headed Nuthatch
Canada Goose	Red Knot	House Wren
Wood Duck	Sanderling	Winter Wren
Mallard	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Sedge Wren
Mottled Duck	Western Sandpiper	Marsh Wren
Blue-winged Teal	Least Sandpiper	Carolina Wren
Northern Shoveler	Pectoral Sandpiper	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Northern Pintail	Dunlin	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Green-winged Teal	Short-billed Dowitcher	Eastern Bluebird
Ruddy Duck	Wilson's Snipe	Veery
Plain Chachalaca	Bonaparte's Gull	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Northern Bobwhite	Laughing Gull	Swainson's Thrush
Wild Turkey	Ring-billed Gull	American Robin
Pied-billed Grebe	Herring Gull	Gray Catbird
Horned Grebe	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Northern Mockingbird
Wood Stork	Great Black-backed Gull	Brown Thrasher
Northern Gannet	Caspian Tern	European Starling
Double-crested Cormorant	Gull-billed Tern	Cedar Waxwing
Anhinga	Forster's Tern	Ovenbird
American White Pelican	Royal Tern	Northern Waterthrush
Brown Pelican	Sandwich Tern	Black-and-white Warbler
American Bittern	Black Skimmer	Tennessee Warbler
Least Bittern	Rock Pigeon	Connecticut Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Common Yellowthroat
Great Egret	Mourning Dove	Hooded Warbler
Snowy Egret	Common Ground-Dove	American Redstart
Little Blue Heron	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Cape May Warbler
Tricolored Heron	Barn Owl	Northern Parula
Reddish Egret	Eastern Screech-Owl	Magnolia Warbler
Cattle Egret	Great Horned Owl	Yellow Warbler
Green Heron	Barred Owl	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Short-eared Owl	Blackpoll Warbler
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Chimney Swift	Black-throated Blue Warbler
White Ibis	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Palm Warbler
Glossy Ibis	Belted Kingfisher	Pine Warbler
Roseate Spoonbill	Red-headed Woodpecker	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black Vulture	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Yellow-throated Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Prairie Warbler
Osprey	Downy Woodpecker	Black-throated Green Warbler
Northern Harrier	Hairy Woodpecker	Yellow-breasted Chat
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Northern Flicker	Eastern Towhee
Cooper's Hawk	Pileated Woodpecker	Clay-colored Sparrow
Bald Eagle	American Kestrel	Field Sparrow
Red-shouldered Hawk	Merlin	Savannah Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	Peregrine Falcon	Nelson's Sparrow
Clapper Rail	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Seaside Sparrow
King Rail	"Empid" Flycatcher	Song Sparrow
Virginia Rail	Eastern Phoebe	Swamp Sparrow
Sora	Eastern Kingbird	Summer Tanager
Common Gallinule	Loggerhead Shrike	Scarlet Tanager
American Coot	White-eyed Vireo	Northern Cardinal
Black-bellied Plover	Yellow-throated Vireo	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Semipalmated Plover	Blue-headed Vireo	Blue Grosbeak
Piping Plover	Red-eyed Vireo	Indigo Bunting
Killdeer	Blue Jay	Painted Bunting
American Oystercatcher	American Crow	Bobolink
American Avocet	Fish Crow	Red-winged Blackbird
Spotted Sandpiper	Tree Swallow	Eastern Meadowlark
Solitary Sandpiper	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Common Grackle
Greater Yellowlegs	Barn Swallow	Boat-tailed Grackle
Willet	Carolina Chickadee	Brown-headed Cowbird
Lesser Yellowlegs	Tufted Titmouse	House Finch
	Red-breasted Nuthatch	House Sparrow

Whimbrel  
Marbled Godwit

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9/2013