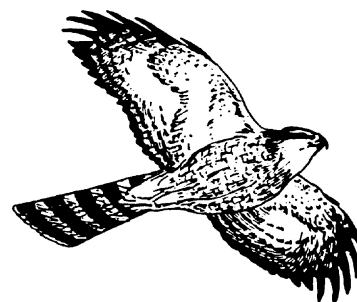


# GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society



Georgia Rare Bird Alert: 770-493-8862

GOS on the web: [www.gos.org](http://www.gos.org)

## President's Message: The Future Looks Bright

By Bob Sargent

I've often spoken and written about the need to recruit more young people to birding, so I'm especially heartened to see that most of this newsletter consists of enthusiastic articles from DeeAnne, David, and Luke. These three people are recipients of the Richard Parks Birding Conference Scholarships, and I don't believe I'm going out on a flimsy limb when I say that GOS made great decisions in choosing these winners. They have certainly represented the society and Georgia well. We hope to continue this "winning streak" when we select next year's recipient for this scholarship in January (see the application announcement on p. 13 of this newsletter).

Speaking of recruiting young people to birding, last month I attended a planning meeting for next spring's Youth Birding Competition (YBC). If you have a child who has been involved in that event, then you know how popular and successful the YBC has become. Last spring's event included 127 kids – nearly double the number from just two

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

### 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Colonial Coast Birding and Nature Festival

October 9-13, 2008, Jekyll Island, GA

### GOS Winter Meeting

January 16-19, 2009, Tybee Island, GA

### GOS Spring Meeting

May 1-3, 2009, Rome, GA

years ago. Those kids counted 200 species that April weekend and raised \$3,642.36, all of which was donated to conservation causes. The growth of the YBC and the increase in the number of kids involved are wonderful developments, but the flip-side is that it costs more each year to run the event, and it requires more volunteer help to pull it off. GOS, as you may know, helps sponsor the event with financial support, but I'd like to see us more involved in terms of mentoring the kids' teams and in providing volunteer help on the awards day at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center. As you can imagine, when all those hungry kids, their mentors, and their parents arrive at the center following the conclusion of their weekend big day, the situation can make a shark feeding frenzy look docile. This is especially true when Tim Keyes and just a handful of other folks find themselves trying to tally all the teams' species totals, make sure that dozens of prizes are distributed to everyone in a fair manner, manage the award ceremony, and ensure that everyone (especially the kids) receives special attention. You get the picture – they need help.

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<i>Conservation:</i>	
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of the month prior to publication.  
Text by e-mail is appreciated.*

## **Welcome, New Members!**

### **Northern Bobwhite Members**

Little St. Simons Island, LLC

Little St. Simons Island, GA

### **Red-cockaded Woodpecker Members**

Sandra Key  
Mark McShane  
Ron and Julia Moye

Blairsville, GA  
Lawrenceville, GA  
Albany, GA

### **Bachman's Sparrow Members**

Dan Furbish  
Volaine Gibbs  
Gene Hatfield  
Liz Horsey

Lithia Springs, GA  
Tallahassee, FL  
Jonesboro, GA  
Atlanta, GA

*The 2008 GOS membership list is available electronically via e-mail or as a hard copy. Please send your request to [membership@gos.org](mailto:membership@gos.org) (Allison Reid) for an e-mail copy or to GOS, 198 Ponce de Leon Ave, Unit 7C, Atlanta, GA 30308 for a paper copy. Available to members only.*

### **Application Deadlines for Graduate Student Grants**

If you're a graduate student and are planning to apply for one of the grants GOS offers for students, please note that the deadline for applying for this year's Bill Terrell Graduate Student Research Grants is December 1. The new deadline for applying for the H. Branch Howe Graduate Student Research Grants is December 31. Be sure to study thoroughly the application criteria for each grant and choose the one that is best for you, as a student cannot apply for both grants in the same year. Only GOS members can apply for grants offered by the society. For more information, visit <http://www.gos.org/grants/grant.html>

### **GOShawk Now Available Online**

Past and current issues of the *GOShawk* are now available online in .pdf format at the following URL:  
<http://www.gos.org/newsletters/newsletter.pdf>

### President's Message *(continued from page 1)*

When we first decided on the dates for next year's spring GOS meeting in Rome, the weekend for the 2009 YBC had not yet been selected. Now it has, and it coincides with our meeting (April 25-26). Because I want to ensure that we provide GOS members with the opportunity to help with, or to get their kids involved in, the 2009 YBC, I asked the executive committee to postpone the Rome meeting until the first weekend in May. I hope you'll be able to participate in both events, but I especially hope that you'll show up at the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center by 4:00 p.m. on the afternoon of April 26, 2009, and give your encouragement and your help to the next generation's birding community. They'll also be the future leaders of Georgia's conservation organizations.

As for conservation activities, we've been dabbling in several initiatives and planning efforts since I last penned this column. The planning for October's coastal festival on Jekyll Island is coming together thanks to Lydia Thompson, Janie Smith, Marge Inness, Dot Bambach, and the rest of us, and as of this date (September 16th), 363 birders have registered. One of the new attractions we hope to help unveil for this festival is a birding platform behind the Welcome Center on the Jekyll Island Causeway. GOS and Atlanta Audubon Society partnered with the Jekyll Island Authority and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to assist in paying the cost for the construction of an elaborate platform overlooking the marsh, and we're hopeful that it will be available for use by this year's festival participants. Speaking of Jekyll Island, I hope you've heard by now about the conference, "Bird Conservation Through Education: A National Gathering," which will be hosted by the Council for Environmental Education in Jekyll Island's historic district next February. This conference is being billed as an opportunity for educators to learn from some of birding's best teachers how to more effectively teach others about the wonders of birds, and features an impressive lineup of speakers. For more information, visit the following website: <http://www.birdeducation.org/jekyllisland.htm>

In other news, I'll be heading to Athens later this week to attend the unveiling of the Richard Parks Collection at the University of Georgia (UGA) Li-



braries. Dick is a charter member of GOS, and if you've ever attended one of our meetings, or looked at the cover of our journal or one of our occasional publications, then you've seen samples of his extraordinary artistic talent. Dick has devoted his immense talent and gifts to GOS and ornithology in Georgia ever since the society fledged. In fact, so far as I know, he has attended all of our meetings since he returned from service in the U.S. Navy during World War II. I am pleased to know that Dick's life's work has found a permanent home at a public institution where future generations of ornithologists and birders will be able to visit and admire it. GOS has made a donation to UGA to help pay for the restoration and preservation of the collection, but credit for arranging this acquisition is due entirely to the talent and perseverance of Ron Rogers, an Atlanta-area attorney.

I hope that you're enjoying fall migration, and I do hope that all of us are doing the best that we can to heed the words in one of Carol Lambert's recent GABO posts in which she admonished us to realize that birders should be especially cognizant about how our adventures impact the environment. Sure, the money we spend helps some communities, thereby promoting the values of birds in the eyes of non-birders; but the carbon our cars emit contributes to environmental problems that we bemoan every day. Please bird locally as much as you can.

## Children's Birding Books

By Dan Vickers

A couple of weeks ago, my 18-month-old grandson Aiden and I were searching the trees in my yard for a "tweet-tweet" that was singing. An American Robin flew in and landed just feet from Aiden. The two just looked at each other briefly before the robin went about its business of searching for food for its young. Aiden was thrilled, and so begins what I hope will be a love of birds and nature that we can share.

A couple of days later, I received an e-mail advertisement from Amazon.com regarding bird books they would recommend. One was *United Tweets of America: 50 State Birds Their Stories, Their Glories* by Hudson Talbott. It is a very cute book with cartoon-like illustrations and tons of information. It is a little advanced (ages 4-8) for Aiden, but he likes the pictures, and the rest can come later.

Curious about what other children's books for birding might be available, I contacted Grant McCreary, host of the Birder's Library ([www.birderslibrary.com](http://www.birderslibrary.com)), and did a little research on my own. Here's some of what I learned:

### Children Ages 2-5

*Good Night Owl*, by Pat Hutchins (1990, 32 pages, color)

This is one of the all-time favorite children's books. All poor Owl wants to do is sleep, but he keeps being awakened by the other noisy occupants of the forest.

*Owl Babies*, by Martin Waddell and Patrick Benson (2002, 32 pages, color)

Wonderful illustrations showcase this story of three owlets awaiting their mother's return from her night's hunt.

*Make Way for Ducklings*, by Robert McCloskey (1941, 68 pages, color)

This classic story of a mother's devotion has fascinated children for generations. McCloskey received the Caldecott Award for his illustrations.

*Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* by Mo Willems (2003, 40 pages, color)

Kids love this wonderful tale of a pigeon trying to convince a busload of people (and the reader) to let him drive the bus after the driver steps off for a break.

### Children Ages 4-8

*The Burgess Bird Book for Children*, by Thornton W. Burgess (2003, 272 pages, black and white)

A creative story about the feathered friends such as Jenny Wren, Redwing the Blackbird, Melody the Wood Thrush, Spooky the Screech Owl, Creaker the Purple Grackle, and Downy the Woodpecker.

*Song for the Whooping Crane*, by Eileen Spinelli and Elsa Warnick (2000, 48 pages, color)

Visually and poetically captivating, this ode to the most celebrated endangered species of our time will stir an environmental awareness in any child.

*Birds, Nests, & Eggs*, by Mel Boring (1998, 48 pages, color)

ID tips on 15 birds and the homes they build. This book contains a series of activities, seven pages for notes or scrapbooking, and numerous safety tips.

*Owls*, by Adrienne Mason (2004, 32 pages, color)

Easy to read with plenty of detailed descriptions of the owls and how they live, eat, and hunt.

*About Birds: A Guide for Children*, by Cathryn Sill (1997, 40 pages, color)

Various North American species are illustrated in this beginner's guide to birds. Lots of basic

## Children's Birding Books (continued from page 4)

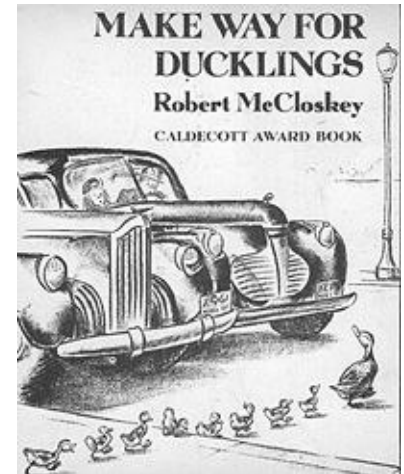
information is followed by an afterword which lists more detailed life histories.

*Backyard Birds for Young Naturalists* (Peterson Field Guide Series) (1999, 48 pages, color)

A first field guide for your young birder, it describes 20 common birds as only a Peterson Field Guide could.

*Beginning Bird Watcher's Book: with 48 stickers*, by Sy Barlowe (2000, 32 pages, color)

Kids can record sightings of 48 common North American birds, with sticker images and notes on location, date and any remarks.



*Bird Log: A Kid's Journal to Record Their Birding Experiences*, by Deanna Bryant (1998, 80 pages)

This is a log book for children to record their sightings. It provides observation questions to help fill in the information.

### Children Ages 9-12

*The Young Birder's Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*, by Bill Thompson III, and illustrated by Julie Zickefoose (2008, 256 pages, color, paperback)

This new Peterson Field Guide, written just for kids, gives detailed descriptions and vivid illustrations of 200 birds in eastern North America.

There were many other books that could have been included here, some unfortunately out of print, so check out Amazon.com, or better yet, visit your local library. Of course, there are plenty of other nature books about mammals, reptiles and amphibians, or butterflies to give your child a well-rounded appreciation of nature.

I'll keep you updated on Aiden's life list, to which he has now added Chimney Swift, Gray Catbird, Northern Cardinal and Barn Swallow. I realize he can't even pronounce them yet, much less spell them, but it is his list, right?

## Passings . . .

*By John Swiderski*

Three members of the GOS family passed away in the past few months.

Dr. Ann D. McAllister, 62, died on June 14, 2008, from cancer. She had been a member of GOS since 1993. She was a clinical psychologist for some 32 years, but limited her practice to four days a week. Much of her spare time was devoted to eco-tourism and nature. She was an Earth Watch volunteer and helped study mammals and birds in Namibia, Indonesia and Costa Rica.

Mrs. Barbara Mitchell Acree, 82, died on June 28, 2008. She and her surviving husband, Ken, were GOS members some 25 years ago. They were active in birding and annual surveys and hosted countdowns for Christmas Counts at their home.

Mrs. Florence Phillips Griffin, 88, wife of the late William W. (Bill) Griffin, a GOS founding member, died on August 11, 2008, after a lengthy illness. She and Bill met at an Atlanta Bird Club meeting in 1945 and shared a lifetime interest in birds. She was a gifted plant person with a special interest in historic plants. She and Bill were very interested in the early history of Georgia and were active with the Atlanta History Center and the preservation of the Tullie Smith House.

## Earle R. Greene Memorial Award – Nomination Criteria Change

By John Swiderski

When the Earle R. Greene Memorial Award was established in 1975, the criterion for nomination was either for achievement in ornithology or for service to GOS. As time passed, GOS has evolved into a group where a significant number of the members are very passionate and active birders. Many of these members develop an interest in conservation and environmental protection as they learn more about birds and pursue their avocation.

The Greene Award Committee has been asked to consider adding a nomination category for achievement in some aspect of birding. The American Birding Association has such an award, the Peterson Award, for lifetime achievement in promoting the cause of birding.

The committee agreed that it would be feasible and proper to add a nomination category for the award to recognize achievement in the promotion or fostering of birding by activities such as teaching and leading field trips, for example. (The late Joe Greenberg comes to mind as an example of such a person. He taught numerous birding classes and introduced hundreds of people to the joy and fun of birding in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.) The GOS Executive Committee recently approved the change in the nomination criteria.

For 2009 and future years, the nomination criteria for consideration to receive the Earle R. Greene Memorial Award will be as follows. A person may be nominated for:

- \* Achievement in ornithology by a professional or a citizen scientist
- \* Achievement in promoting birding
- \* Service to GOS

A person may be nominated in any of the three categories either for achievement over a long period of time or for a specific project or activity.

If you wish to nominate someone for consideration to receive the Earle R. Greene Memorial Award, simply communicate your nomination to the committee chair, John Swiderski, at P.O. Box 5707, Valdosta, GA 31603, or by e-mail to swiderskij@bellsouth.net.

## Announcement of GOS Bylaws Modifications

Our bylaws is a living document and, as such, requires modifications from time to time to reflect new needs and ideas, new technologies, and newly proposed operating procedures. The following modifications (see the underlined sections) will be presented to the Society for a vote of approval at the festival in October:

Article III. Membership. Section 4. Receive a discounted rate on registration fees for Society meetings. Be afforded the opportunity to participate in members-only field trips. Have the exclusive opportunity to apply for GOS grant funds, if qualified (i.e., only graduate students can apply for some grants). Get discounts on the cost of some Society merchandise and publications.

Article V. Duties of Officers. Section 4. The secretary shall serve on the Education Committee, assisting with the evaluation of applications submitted for the Parks scholarship, as well as the development and implementation of programs designed to teach the public about birds and conservation.

Article V. Duties of Officers. Section 7. Note: This is a newly created section, as no duties were previously defined in the bylaws for past presidents. The past president shall serve one two-year term and shall act in an advisory capacity to the president. The past president shall provide assistance at Society meetings, entertaining guest speakers if the first vice-president is otherwise engaged, providing assistance at the registration desk and greeting meeting attendees. The past president shall serve on the membership committee, assisting the chair of that body with efforts to recruit new members and shall assist other chairs with special projects, at the request of the president.

## Editor's Note: ABA Young Birders' Conference and the Richard Parks Scholarship

This year GOS awarded two Richard Parks Scholarships for two young people to attend the American Birding Association's Young Birders' Conference (YBC) in Minot, North Dakota. In this newsletter we highlight the experiences of the 2008 awardees, David Hollie, of Ringgold, Georgia, and Luke Theodorou, of Lawrenceville, Georgia, who went to the YBC in North Dakota from June 17-22. The deadline for applications for the 2009 Parks YBC Scholarship is December 15, 2008.

### ABA Young Birders' Conference Report

By David Hollie

Anticipation filled the air as I boarded the plane for Minot, North Dakota. It had already been a long day and I was very tired, but it would all be worth it, for in just two hours I would be at the hotel in Minot, along with 13 other teenagers with the same interest as me!

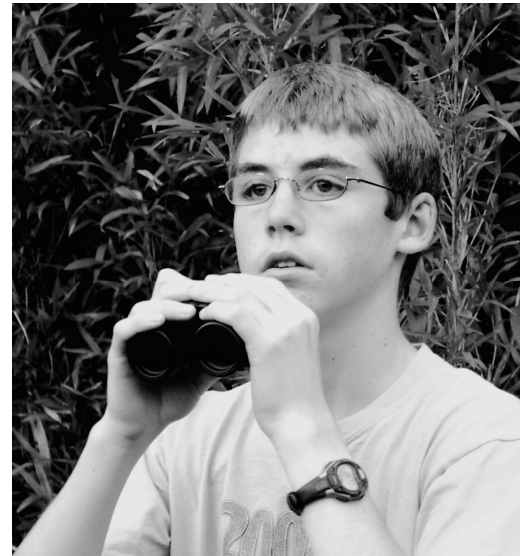
Once at the hotel, we all met together to have an introductory meeting, where we all introduced ourselves and mentioned what our target bird was. Mine, of course, was the Baird's Sparrow. After dinner, we had a nice presentation about North Dakota birds from the resident birder, Ron Martin.

After all this excitement I was more than ready to go to bed; the problem was actually falling asleep. Try as I might, I just couldn't stop thinking of all the wonderful birds we were going to see the next morning. It seemed I had just fallen asleep when I was suddenly awakened by my alarm clock at 4:15 a.m. I hurriedly got ready for our exciting field trip. Up in the breakfast room, things were quiet as everybody sleepily ate their breakfast and looked at the photo quiz. Promptly at 5 a.m. we got in the vans and headed for Lostwood NWR.

On the way to Lostwood, we pulled off on the side of the road where there was a Ferruginous Hawk nest with two young! The adults were nearby (both light morphs), giving us awesome scope views. While we were watching the hawks, we noticed a single Sharp-tailed Grouse, the first lifer of the trip for me! Soon another appeared, and another, and another! It was amusing to watch how close the Sharp-tailed Grouse would get to one of the adult Ferruginous Hawks sitting on the hill. Through the scope it looked as if they came within five feet! As the mate of the Ferruginous came flying in to join the one sitting on the hill, a flock of 23 Sharp-tailed Grouse flushed; apparently most of the grouse were hiding out of view from us. Somebody found a dead Savannah Sparrow on the side of the road, giving Steve Howell the perfect opportunity to give a fascinating in-the-field lecture on plumage.

We continued on and arrived at Lostwood NWR at 7:30 a.m. Soon after entering, we stopped at a small marsh pond, where there were several Black Terns of all ages. At this pond I also got great looks at my life Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Wilson's Phalarope. We then headed on to the refuge headquarters for a bathroom stop before we went out looking for Baird's Sparrow. While at the headquarters I and a few others went birding around the immediate area, where I got my life Clay-colored Sparrow, along with good looks at a first-year male Orchard Oriole. From there we drove on a dusty gravel road and stopped by a small wet field that had singing Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, and in the drier part there was a heard-only Le Conte's Sparrow. The highlight at this spot was Sprague's Pipit displaying high (and I mean HIGH) above us. Not the best looks, just a little black speck in the sky, but the song is enchanting. Moving on, we came to better habitat for Baird's Sparrows, and as we were walking out into the field, we flushed a Sprague's Pipit, giving me a bit more satisfying views. We found several Baird's Sparrows without much effort, giving us all fantastic views.

From Lostwood we took a short stop at Des Lacs NWR, where the highlight was seeing a pair of Western Grebes doing their courtship display, the first I've seen of this behavior and definitely amazing! Just before we went back to



David Hollie, winner of the 2008 Richard Parks Scholarship to attend the 2008 ABA Young Birders' Conference. *Photo courtesy of D. Hollie.*

(continued on page 8)

**ABA Young Birders' Conference** (continued from page 7)

the hotel, we stopped at a large pasture that had a Burrowing Owl, another lifer! We then returned to Minot, where we had supper and then a fantastic presentation on "Birding by Ear in Minot" by Michael O'Brien.

The next morning we left not-so-bright but early at 4 a.m. for the Turtle Mountains in the northern part of the state. On the way in, we stopped at a small pond that had my life Red-necked Grebe on it! After that we were birding mostly in woodlands and getting stuff that I get back home, such as American Redstart, Yellow Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Ovenbird, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak, just to name a few. However, there were a few surprises! First off, we had a heard-only Mourning Warbler that treated us to its beautiful song, but one of my favorite experiences of the day was *feeling* the drumming of a Ruffed Grouse, truly exhilarating!

One of my most memorable experiences during the YBC came during lunch time. While everybody else was up in a picnic area, three of us decided we would go down to a dock during the break. Now this wasn't any old dock, this dock was on a lake that hosted several pairs of Red-necked Grebes. Off in the distance we could see one of these gorgeous grebes sitting on a nest. Closer to the dock was a sleeping grebe. I noticed that the wind was blowing towards us, ever so slowly pushing the grebe closer and closer. We patiently waited, taking a few pictures every couple of minutes. Finally, after what seemed like more than thirty minutes, it got close enough to get some awesome pictures. I lay flat on the dock to get more of an eye-level view of the bird and fired at will. I took more than 150 pictures of this amazing bird! We took a side trip on the way back to the hotel in hopes of finding Upland Sandpipers, and, as usual, we were successful! There was a pair sitting on a large telephone pole not far off, giving us excellent scope views!

The following morning we left at 5 a.m. to head to Garrison Dam. When we got there we went straight to the open woodlands, where we had a calling Black-billed Cuckoo, several Yellow-breasted Chats, and Clay-colored, Field, and Lark Sparrows. There were also several singing Spotted Towhees, and we were treated to great views of two Common Mergansers circling low over us several times. From there we moved on to open grasslands, hoping for some buntings. We were successful and found several Lazuli-ish Buntings. One bird at first glance looked like a Lazuli, but upon closer inspection there was very minimal rust on the breast and the upper wing-bar was blue; thus we estimated that it was about 75 percent Lazuli. Another bird looked to be pretty much pure Lazuli, but being in North Dakota it is really hard to tell if it was pure or if it had a trace of Indigo. Since these buntings were mostly Lazuli we nick-named them "Lazigo" Buntings. From there we moved on to an area with lots of terns and gulls, where we got great looks at California and Ring-billed Gulls along with more than a hundred Common Terns with a few Forster's mixed in. Unfortunately we had to be back by noon, so we didn't have time to scan the dam for waterfowl. After lunch at the hotel, we had an enlightening presentation on molt by Steve Howell. He went into great detail on what molt can tell us about a bird's age and how it can sometimes help in separating very similar species.

On the final full day of the Young Birder's Conference we left at 5 a.m. for J. Clark Salyer NWR. On the way, we stopped at a field near Denbigh, ND, and spent most of the morning there because there were so many great birds! The highlight of the morning was finding several Le Conte's Sparrows singing low in the grass, making it tough for observation. Other highlights in the field included many singing Sedge Wrens, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, Willow Flycatcher, and winnowing Wilson's Snipes. We also got to see a pair of Eastern Kingbirds carrying large clumps of nesting material back and forth across the field. We could have easily spent the whole day watching all these incredible birds, but we had to move on to Clark Salyer, where, upon entering the refuge, we had amazing looks at several pairs of Mountain Bluebirds nesting in some of the boxes along the road. It was quite the experience to hear shutters of several digital SLR cameras rapidly clicking off hundreds of pictures of these roadside beauties. Further into the refuge we stopped and had lunch at some picnic tables. In between bites, we would look through the scope at a very cooperative Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow that sat out in the open for almost the whole lunch period! After lunch we headed to marshy areas, where we had several Forster's Terns winging back and forth over a waterway, sometimes at eye-level and incredibly close! Once again the shutter sounds came into action; even without looking you could almost guess when the terns came flying by just by hearing the rapid *click-click-click* of the cameras. I joined in on the action and took more than one hundred pictures of this memorable incident. Also nearby were several Eared Grebes, Blue-winged Teal, White-faced Ibis, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and flyby Black Terns, Franklin's Gulls, and Black-crowned Night-Herons.

As usual, all good things must come to an end, and the next morning was a sad morning, for about half the group

(continued on page 9)



## **ABA Young Birders' Conference** *(continued from page 8)*

(myself included) were leaving at noon; however, we got to bird for a few hours around Minot before we left. There was really nothing new for the trip list, though we did get to see some more pure "Lazigo" Buntings. The van ride to the airport was quite depressing for everybody, but what we had experienced the past five days would give us memories for years to come.

I want to give a huge thanks to the American Birding Association for making the Young Birder's Conference possible, and also Michael O'Brien, Steve Howell, Louise Zamatis, and Ron Martin for sharing their knowledge with us in the field. Also a special thanks to Jane Kostenko and Tyler Bell for the on-site organization.

The biggest thanks goes to the Georgia Ornithological Society for making it possible for me to attend this fantastic once-in-a-lifetime event!

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## **ABA Young Birders' Conference**

*By Luke Theodorou*

On Tuesday afternoon, July 17th, I finally arrived in Minot, North Dakota, for the ABA 2008 Young Birders' Conference. At the airport, I met up with some of the kids attending the conference and the field trip leaders. We had a short van ride to the hotel, picking up some common local birds along the way, such as Yellow-headed Blackbird, California Gull and Western Kingbird. Once at the hotel, we found our roommates and introduced ourselves to the rest of the group and leaders. We got to know each other over pizza dinner and had a workshop called "Intro to Birds of North Dakota" by Ron Martin. That night I had trouble sleeping because I was so excited about birding that week!

Wednesday morning I woke up at three thirty, got dressed and hurried up to the breakfast room. We all piled into two vans and were off. Everyone was excited when we pulled up to our first roadside stop and got great looks at a pair of Ferruginous Hawks with chicks, and about twenty Sharp-tailed Grouse in the same view! Both were lifers for me!

Next, we headed for Lostwood, a national wildlife refuge of mixed-grass prairies, lakes and prairie potholes. We checked off Clay-colored and Savannah Sparrows and then picked up Sprague's Pipit and Nelson's and Grasshopper Sparrows, along with spectacular views of Marbled Godwits, Western Willets, Wilson's Phalaropes and Swainson's Hawk. The highlight of the day was definitely the Baird's Sparrows, which were perched and singing out in the open. They turned out to be the only Baird's Sparrows of the whole trip! As we were driving, I was amazed at how beautiful the grasslands and prairies of North Dakota were. After a great day of birding, we had a "Birding by Ear in Minot" workshop by Michael O'Brien. He taught us how to distinguish the many calls and songs of the birds of North Dakota.

Everyone was geared up and ready to go early Thursday morning for one of our most anticipated field trips. The Turtle Mountains gave some of the kids from the West a chance to see some of the eastern warblers that breed there. Once out of the van, we could hear American Redstarts, and Yellow and Black-and-white Warblers all around us. Later we heard Ruffed Grouse drumming, and I got my lifer Mourning Warbler. My favorite part of the day was watching a Common Nighthawk doing a display in broad daylight. He circled right above a patch of trees and made a noise with his wings that sounded just like a race car turning a corner. We could hear it from about a hundred yards away. Michael O'Brien theorized that there was a female in the patch of trees and the louder noise meant a faster bird that could catch food easily. Very cool. We hiked a lot that day and saw and heard many woodland species, such as Veery and Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireo. On the way back, we made a couple of roadside stops and saw a Red-necked Grebe sitting on a nest and got a glimpse of a Black-billed Magpie, and in a field we saw a Burrowing Owl and our first of many Chestnut-collared Longspurs. We were all exhausted that night when we finally went to bed.

We left about five a.m. Friday and headed for Garrison Dam, where we hoped to get some looks at gulls and terns. On the trails around the dam, we saw both Orchard and Baltimore Orioles and heard several Black-billed Cuckoos.

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## ABA Young Birders' Conference *(continued from page 9)*

A pair of Common Mergansers flew overhead. As we neared the dam, we saw Lark Sparrows and Mountain Bluebirds, and then we came across a cliff riddled with holes that was home to a Bank Swallow colony. At the dam itself, we had awesome views of Common Terns, California and Franklin's Gulls and White Pelicans. We headed back to the hotel for dinner and two workshops: "The Big Picture" by Louise Zemaitis, where we learned about bird conservation, particularly the Red Knot, and "Got Molt?" by Steve Howell, which was confusing, but interesting.

Saturday was our last full day of birding. We went to J. Clark Salyer NWR, the largest wildlife refuge in the state, and in my opinion it was one of the most beautiful places we visited in North Dakota, and my favorite place to bird. On the way there, we tried for a Yellow Rail (which all the kids really wanted) that the field trip leaders had found earlier in the week. Unfortunately, we didn't have any luck, but we did have spectacular views of snipe flying right over our heads as Nelson's and LeConte's Sparrows flitted in the grass around us. As we arrived at J. Clark Salyer, we stopped at a forested area, where I got my lifer Alder Flycatcher and Western Wood-Pewee. Next we headed for the marshy part of the refuge, where we had White-faced Ibis, Eared Grebe, Ruddy Ducks and some other waterfowl. But the coolest part of the day was when we were able to get within feet of Black and Forster's Terns hunting up and down a small channel of water. Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Marsh Wrens sang from the grasses. I couldn't believe the conference was almost over.

That night back at the hotel we had a panel discussion and photo quiz. The feeling was bittersweet as everyone sat down and talked about our great times in North Dakota and also about what it meant to be a birder. I had such a great experience and met many new birder friends that I hope to keep for life. We really learned a lot from Steve Howell, Michael O'Brien, Ron Martin and Louise Zemaitis, our field trip leaders.

The last day of the conference came fast, for no one wanted to leave. But we tried to have a great morning of birding before leaving for the airport. We went to a camping area just outside Minot, where we had a few warblers, some flycatchers and Lazuli and Indigo Buntings. But we soon had to leave to catch our flight home.

I would like to thank GOS for giving me such a wonderful opportunity, and also thank Jane Kostenko from ABA and Tyler Bell for helping organize the trip. I would definitely encourage other young birders to join GOS and ABA. They are both great birding organizations. I hope to attend the ABA YBC in 2010!



American White Pelican, by John James Audubon.

## **GOS E-Mail List**

In order to more efficiently communicate with our members, GOS has established an e-mail list. The e-mail list will be used to communicate with you about bird conservation issues, membership renewals, birding events in Georgia, and occasional items that may be of interest to GOS members. If you wish to add your e-mail address to the GOS database, please contact Allison Reid, GOS Membership Chair, at [membership@gos.org](mailto:membership@gos.org).

## Nesting on a Wing and a Prayer: Monitoring Shorebirds for Massachusetts Audubon

By DeeAnne Meliopoulos

I remember the moment I saw my first Piping Plover. I was standing on South Beach in Chatham, Massachusetts, buffeted by icy winds and decked out in gloves, three jackets, pants, and socks under my Texas, to boot, broadcasting my southern roots loud and clear. In other words, I was anxious to see the bird I had left the warmth of the South for. My supervisor, who was actually able to use her limbs due to her much lighter attire, pointed suddenly to a nearby stretch of gravelly beach. “That’s a Piping Plover,” she announced. I squinted expectantly, but all I could see was gray rocks scattered over the sand. Then suddenly, one of the rocks moved, and so began my acquaintance with the Piping Plover.



DeeAnne Meliopoulos with one of her study species, an American Oystercatcher. *Photo courtesy of D. Meliopoulos.*

After that sighting, I greatly improved at finding plovers, and learned to appreciate the details that set them apart from rocks: their pert orange bills tipped with ebony, dapper black neckbands, comical “eyebrows,” and spindly orange legs. Equally enchanting were their personalities. I was smitten with the way they ran pigeon-toed over the sand and then suddenly stopped short, like confused wind-up toys. Their daring pursuits of Herring and even Greater Black-backed Gulls that entered their territory were very impressive (and surprisingly effective). Some of them wanted to get to know me, as well. Sitting against a dune having lunch one day, watching a pair of plovers that had led me on an epic but fruitless nest search, I froze as one of them sauntered over to me, stopping five feet away and turning his head sideways to inspect me. I looked back at him, wondering how strange I must appear to him. He must not have been as impressed with me as I was with him, because he soon decided he’d seen enough and went back to eating his own lunch.

My admiration for the plovers grew throughout the summer. They were fastidious nestmakers, the males making multiple scrapes so that the female could choose the perfect one in which to lay her clutch of one to four greenish-gray eggs. It took me a month to find my first nest -- the plovers chose sites where their small, speckled eggs would best be concealed, like open beach scattered with shell fragments, or tucked away in grassy dunes. “Plover highways,” or a congregation of tracks leading to the nest, loud peeping, the impressive broken-wing display, and false-brooding (a plover pretending to incubate in order to lead me away from the real nest) were all clues that I was near a nest. They were fierce defenders, and I was amazed at the risks the plovers would take to protect a nest. When it rained or the wind was blowing especially hard, I thought of all the plovers sitting steadfastly on their nests, determined to protect their eggs when even the elements were against them. They kept trying, despite the predators always watching for an easy meal, the changing tides that threatened to wash away eggs, the people constantly walking by, the abundance of “Piping Plover Tastes Like Chicken” bumper stickers. Their determination, whether it was due solely to Darwinian programming or not, made me deeply committed to helping them in every way I could. Even if a pair’s first nest failed, they would most often simply try again. One pair lost two nests, but on the third try, all three eggs survived to hatch into downy, impossibly tiny chicks, proving that

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## Nesting on a Wing and a Prayer

(continued from page 11)

sometimes the third time really is the charm. The chicks, too, were much more intrepid than their fuzziness belied. On the first day, they could walk, and had to feed themselves from the moment they broke free of the egg. They quickly became experts at using their absurdly long legs — we would find them half a mile from the nest site in a matter of days!

Piping Plovers may be masters of camouflage and charisma, but they are powerless to stop coastal development, oust introduced predators from their nesting habitat, keep off-road vehicles at bay, or slow the over-harvesting of horseshoe crabs, whose eggs make up an important part of the plovers' diet. That's why, in 1987, Massachusetts Audubon created the Coastal Waterbird Program (<http://www.massaudubon.org/cwp/>) to give the plovers, and other shorebirds, such as Least Terns and American Oystercatchers, a hand. The CWP was originally created to protect nesting areas of Piping Plovers and terns, but ultimately aims to extend this protection to the whole coastal ecosystem. The success of the program is indisputable: in 1986, before CWP's inception, only 135 plover pairs were observed in Massachusetts; preliminary data for 2008 indicates the presence of around 600 pairs.

In contrast to the plovers, the American Oystercatchers stuck out like sore thumbs no matter where they were. I had seen these clowns of the shorebird world before on Jekyll Island, but had never gotten to hear their wheedling shrieks or see their fuzzy black chicks stumbling behind their parents on disproportionately long legs. Massachusetts is the northernmost part of the oystercatchers' breeding range, and though there were only a few pairs on South Beach, many of them produced fledglings, which were almost carbon copies of the adults except for their darker bills.

Least Terns made it a point to be conspicuous — either by raucous screaming, dive-bombing, well-aimed projectile poop, or a combination of all three. There were two major Least Tern colonies on the beach, and both required mental stamina and an acclimation to walking through bird poop. It was quite a sight to watch a hundred or so terns converge on a trespassing gull, and a beachgoer who tried to take a shortcut through the Least Tern fencing was apt to regret it immediately!



Least Tern. *Photo courtesy of D. Meliopoulos.*



Piping Plover. *Photo courtesy of D. Meliopoulos.*

Today, the Coastal Waterbird Program protects Piping Plovers, Least Terns, Common Terns, Roseate Terns, and American Oystercatchers. Conservation efforts include identifying and fencing off areas where plovers, oystercatchers, and Least Terns are nesting to prevent disturbance from beachgoers, ensuring that off-road vehicles aren't being driven in nesting habitat, public education, and much, much more. This summer, I was inspired by the tireless efforts of both the birds and the people working to protect them. I'd like to think that if I see a Piping Plover on the Georgia coast this year, then maybe, just maybe, it's a bird that made the miraculous journey from egg to chick, from chick to fledgling, and finally, from Massachusetts to Georgia.

**WANT TO WIN A FREE BIRDING TRIP TO CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS?  
RICHARD PARKS  
YOUNG ADULTS' ABA CONFERENCE SCHOLARSHIP**

**What is it?** GOS wants to help young adults learn about birds and birding. We are offering one scholarship to an interested young person to attend the American Birding Association's (ABA) Conference in Corpus Christi, Texas, April 27 to May 3, 2009. ABA will be celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday bash, and the organization is billing Corpus Christi as the "birdiest" city in the U.S. ABA's staff predicts that nearly half of America's breeding birds will be seen during the conference. For more information about the conference, visit the ABA website: <http://www.americanbirding.org/mtgs/upcoming.html>

**How will GOS help?** GOS will pay the registration fee and up to \$1,000 to cover the travel expenses for one young birder. The registration fee covers the cost of food, lodging, and birding trips. GOS will make arrangements with ABA to register the scholarship recipient. The recipient will need to make his/her own travel arrangements.

**What do you have to do to apply?** The applicant must be age 19-26 during the period of the conference, and must be a Georgia resident. The interested birder must fill out the application form (<http://www.gos.org/grants/parks.html>) and write an essay (minimum 300 words) explaining why he/she is interested in birds and birding, what he/she plans to do with the knowledge gained from going to the conference, and how he/she will spread interest in birding to friends, including recruiting friends to join GOS. Three letters of recommendation must be submitted with the application.

**What do you have to do for GOS?** The recipient of this scholarship must write an article for the GOS newsletter (*GOShawk*) when he/she returns home describing the birding conference experience, and present a poster about the conference at a GOS meeting. The recipient will also serve a one-year term on the GOS education committee, assisting that committee with providing information to the public about birding.

**When should you apply?** The deadline for submitting your application, essay, and letters of recommendation is **December 15, 2008**. The winner of this scholarship will be selected by January 15.

**Where do you apply?** Send your application paperwork to:  
Robert Sargent (Parks Scholarships), 1263 Clairmont Place, Macon, GA 31204



# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please complete the form and mail with your payment to: Georgia Ornithological Society, P.O. Box 181, High Shoals, GA 30645

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

### Annual membership rates for individuals and families:

- |   |      |
|---|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bachman's Sparrow (Regular)          | \$20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Sustaining) | \$30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Bobwhite (Patron)           | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fledgling (Students only)            | \$10 |

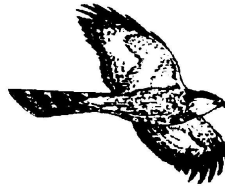
### Life Membership Rates for individuals or couples:

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Goshawk | \$400 |
|---|-------|

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Yes, I would like to make an additional contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ in support of GOS and its programs.

# *GOShaw*



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