

September 2011
Vol. 38, No. 3

75th
Anniversary



1936-2011

GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
www.gos.org

President's Last Message

By Bob Sargent

A few years ago our second vice president Dan Vickers started referring to me as "president for life." His joke always made me cringe and made others laugh. On the heels of the last society election, in October 2009, I confess I was beginning to wonder if the moniker was going to stick to me like insects to a car bumper. I had not intended to serve in this role for eight years, but I've reveled in the ride. I vividly remember the October night in 2003 when past president Gail Russell officially handed the society's engraved (it's dedicated to former president Tom Rial) leadership gavel to me before a huge audience on banquet night at the first Colonial Coast Birding and Nature Festival. I thanked Gail for her leadership and the society for honoring me with this weighty responsibility, said a few words about what I hoped to accomplish for GOS, prodded the audience to buy raffle tickets for a chance to win a copy of Burleigh's *Georgia Birds*, and then I'm certain my words were promptly forgotten when Kenn Kaufman followed me to the microphone and gave an hilarious presentation about bird sex. The next day I departed for home, having absent-mindedly left the gavel on the podium at the Convention Center on Jekyll Island. Two days later my gaffe hit me like a case of jalapeno pepper-induced indi-

gestion, and a few panicky phone calls ensued before I reached a staffer at the center who saved my bacon.

I had four specific goals in mind that I hoped GOS would embrace when I assumed this position on that banquet night. I was particularly interested in recruiting more youngsters to ornithology and birding, finding ways to promote research and management on behalf of birds, getting the society more involved in voicing science-based opinions about conservation issues, and making our already superb meetings even more entertaining and informative. Before we could get serious about those goals, we first had to contend with the dilemma posed by the advent of the coastal festival. The festival was a fabulous development for Georgia birding, but it created tough questions about whether GOS should shelve its traditional fall meeting in order to avoid competition that might hurt both parties. Besides the fall meeting dilemma, there were practical limits to just how far we could progress in achieving the above-stated goals, because the society was hardly fiscally overflowing in those days, and because conservation groups like ours always bite off more work than their handful of volunteer workers can effectively accomplish. Lofty goals are common, but

(continued on page 3)

CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | President's Last Message | 6 | Camp TALON returns |
| 2 | Member News | 7 | Camp Colorado 2011 |
| 4 | GOS Officer Nominees for 2011-2013 | 9 | Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens |
| 5 | Dreyfoos Scholarship Winners | 10 | ABA Young Birder Camp Colorado |
| | | 12 | Once You Sleep upon an Island |
| | | 13 | GOS Grant Application Deadlines |

Georgia Ornithological Society

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

<i>President</i>	Bob Sargent
<i>1st Vice President</i>	Bill Lotz
<i>2nd Vice President</i>	Dan Vickers
<i>Secretary</i>	Ellen Miller
<i>Treasurer</i>	Jeannie Wright
<i>Business Manager</i>	Ashley Harrington
<i>Historian</i>	Phil Hardy
<i>Past President</i>	(Vacant)
<i>The Oriole, Co-Editors</i>	Bob Sargent Renee Carleton
<i>GOShawk, Editor</i>	Jim Ferrari
<i>GOShawk, Asst. Editor</i>	Mim Eisenberg
<i>Webmaster</i>	Jim Flynn

Committee Chairs:

<i>Checklist & Records:</i>	
Giff Beaton	770-509-1482
<i>Conservation:</i>	
Steve Holzman	706-769-2819
<i>Earle Greene Award:</i>	
John Swiderski	229-242-8382
<i>Earth Share of Georgia:</i>	
Mark Beebe	770-435-6586
<i>Editorial:</i>	
Malcolm Hodges	770-997-1968
<i>Howe Research Grant:</i>	
Les Davenport	678-684-3889
<i>Terrell Research Grant:</i>	
Joe Meyers	706-542-1882
<i>Opportunity Grants:</i>	
Dan Vickers	770-235-7301
<i>Avian Conservation Grants:</i>	
Bob Sargent	478-397-7962
<i>Membership:</i>	
Patti Newell	225-939-8112
Cathy Ricketts	404-406-9348
<i>Education:</i>	
Renee Carleton	706-238-5892

Georgia Rare Bird Alert 770-493-8862
Jeff Sewell, Compiler

GOShawk is published quarterly
(March, June, September, December)

Jim Ferrari, Editor
444 Ashley Place
Macon, GA 31204
478-757-0293
jferrari@wesleyancollege.edu

*Deadline for article submission is the 1st
of the month prior to publication.
Text by e-mail is appreciated.*

Welcome, New Members!

Fledgling

Riza Rozin

Alpharetta, GA

Bachman's Sparrow

Helmer N. Ekstrom
Jim Segars

Hamden, CT
Marietta, GA

Quail Covey

Drs. James and Rachel Williamson

Griffin, GA

The 2011 GOS membership list is available electronically via e-mail or as a hard copy. Please send your request to membership@gos.org (Cathy Ricketts) for an e-mail copy or to GOS, 108 W. 8th St., Louisville, GA 30434 for a paper copy. Available to members only.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

GOS FALL MEETING

October 6-9, 2011, Jekyll Island

GOS WINTER MEETING

January 13-16, 2012, Tybee Island

GOS SPRING MEETING

April 20-22, 2012, Augusta



Ruby-throated Hummingbird (from *The American Cyclopaedia*, 1873-1876, by George Ripley and Charles A. Dana).

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

“walking the walk” isn’t. In this, my last report as the society’s president, and with your patient indulgence, I’ll describe what we’ve done to accomplish the goals I outlined back when.

Having served a term as first vice president, I knew in the beginning that the key to success was ensuring that we had a strong Executive Committee. As I look back at the list of committee members from that first fall, I’m reminded that GOS and I were blessed by the presence of an exceptional cast of “accompanying characters” right from the start. Some of them were already on the job and were poised to impart their wisdom to us new kids on the block. Many of the committee members from that era have remained intensely involved all these years, and several other people have served nearly as long as that original team.

Whatever successes we’ve achieved over the past eight years are largely attributable to this experienced, hard-working, consummately committed core group. Bill Lotz, Jeannie Wright, Steve Holzman, Jim Ferrari, Jim Flynn, Mark Beebe, and John Swiderski were all serving on the Executive Committee in those days, and all of them are still serving the society, many of them in the same roles. John, Jeannie, and Jim Flynn predated my cohort, as did the still-serving Terry Moore (Earle R. Greene Memorial Award), Les Davenport, Jr. (H. Branch Howe Graduate Student Award), Mal Hodges (Editorial Committee), and Giff Beaton (Checklist and Records Committee and Earle R. Greene Memorial Award). Pierre Howard and Ty Ivey have served on the Checklist and Records Committee for most of the last decade. Others served the society for many years and moved on during my tenure to other worthy challenges. This group includes teammates like Anne Mursch, Carol Lambert, Marion Dobbs, and Bob Zaremba. Dan Vickers, Mim Eisenberg, Joe Meyers, Todd Schneider, Joe Pugh, and Jim Valentine joined one or more GOS committees in 2005, and are now veterans with impressive society résumés. I can’t begin to describe how invaluable it is to work with pros who know all the intricate details about organizing meetings, ensuring that investments are managed and the IRS remains content, managing our inventory and newsletter and website, keeping us in compliance with Earth Share of Georgia, professionally reviewing sightings reports, evaluating applications for grants and scholarships, and keeping us connected and grounded with our long-time members and with the society’s history.

The surge in involvement by new committee members in 2005 wasn’t a coincidence. One could argue that 2005 was perhaps the second most important year in the history of the society, running a close second to 1936, when the organization was founded. It was the winter of 2004-05 when the late Bill Terrell’s extraordinary bequest stunned the Executive Committee and GOS by way of a phone call from an Atlanta lawyer to me. We had started 2005 with a novelty — a winter meeting in Alabama, which was created to offset the sacrifice of our fall meeting to the coastal festival. (Note: There was only one previous winter meeting in the then 69-year history of the society, in Eufaula, Alabama, in February 2000.) That winter meeting was just the first sign that GOS’s world, as we knew it, was about to radically change. The number of subcommittees within GOS in 2005 mushroomed from five to 10. The number of subcommittee members also spiked, of course, but so did the number of people who agreed to serve on multiple subcommittees, a condition which exists to this day for the current 11 subcommittees. In that memorable year, the society established the core group of a litany of new scholarships and research and habitat management grants that now features the Bill Terrell Graduate Student Research Award, the Opportunity Grant, the Richard Parks Young Birder’s Conference Scholarship, and the Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grant. GOS also increased the level of funding for the H. Branch Howe, Jr., Graduate Student Research Award. This list of awards and scholarships has recently been augmented with the inclusion of the privately-funded Dr. James C. Major, Sr., Young Birder’s Conference Scholarship and the Wally Dreyfoos Scholarship. Since 2005, the society has arranged annual support for Georgia DNR’s Youth Birding Com-



Dr. Robert Sargent,
GOS President, 2003-
2011.

(continued on page 4)

President's Last Message *(continued from page 3)*

petition, paid for some of the start-up and operating expenses for Camp TALON, helped pay for the observation tower on the Jekyll Island causeway, donated monetary support to the former Pinewoods Birding Festival, and assisted DNR with the production cost of the *Georgia Breeding Bird Atlas*. GOS has also donated hundreds of copies of the 2003 edition of the *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds* to nature centers and colleges statewide, helped pay the production costs of four occasional publications, donated funds to the University Georgia to pay for the restoration of Dick Parks' art collection (more than 200 works), and assisted DNR with its purchase of the Silver Lake property in southwestern Georgia. I'd argue that GOS has been successful during this period in promoting ornithological education for young people, and in promoting research, management, and birding.

As for the third goal I mentioned — taking a science-based stand on conservation issues — there's no doubt that our success in this endeavor has been uneven at times, but it has improved considerably in recent years. We learned early on just how difficult it is to mount society-wide letter-writing campaigns. So our conservation committee chose to use the best available science to write tailored position statements and many, many letters sent to regulatory agencies and politicians on behalf of the membership about development and conservation on Jekyll Island, feral cats on various islands and in state parks, forest management for Cerulean Warblers, potential privatization of Harris Neck NWR, wax myrtle management on Tybee Island, fee structures for DNR-managed properties, development on Cumberland Island, deer control at Red Top Mountain State Park, management goals for Piedmont NWR, a conservation easement in Bartow County, road use restrictions on Kennesaw Mountain, and the proposed take of Peregrine Falcons. GOS has also voiced its opinion about conservation issues through its decision to provide funding for causes such as Operation Migration and two fine brochures produced by Atlanta Audubon Society about declining bird species.

GOS has always hosted excellent meetings, so improving them was a dubious goal. We elected to host poster sessions twice a year, starting with the Valdosta meeting, arranged two scientific paper sessions, at the Milledgeville and Athens meetings, and created traveling storyboards that are exhibited at our meetings and elsewhere. (Note: Scientific paper sessions used to be commonplace at GOS meetings up until 25 to 30 years ago.) We also borrowed the "flocking" concept as a social activity from the Florida Ornithological Society when we met with them in Brunswick. As a team member of the festival committee, GOS organized the field trips for those seven events, and recruited and paid for the guest speakers. This wasn't just beneficial for the festivals; it also gave our group key connections and insight into arranging various boat trips to barrier islands, as well as figuring out how best to attract people like Pete Dunne, David

Slate of GOS Officer Nominees for 2011-2013

Georgia Ornithological Society members will vote on the new slate of proposed GOS officers on banquet night at the October meeting on Jekyll Island. The nominees are the following:

Jim Ferrari	President
Dan Vickers	1st Vice President
Ed Maioriello	2nd Vice President
Ellen Miller	Secretary
Jeannie Wright	Treasurer

The next term will run from October 2011 to October 2013. Other members of the GOS Executive Committee are appointed by the society's president. Thank you to the nominating committee of Giff Beaton (chair), Renee Carleton, and Steve Holzman for your work in putting together this slate of talented candidates.

Sibley, John Fitzpatrick, and Don Kroodsma. Including the festivals, GOS has been involved with organizing three meetings per year since 2005. The number and diversity of field trips at our meetings has grown, especially the barrier island trips in association with our many coastal meetings, and attendance remains high, especially at our winter and fall meetings. Of course, the huge (198) attendance at last January's 75th anniversary meeting was an anomaly, but wasn't it a thrill to see so many people, especially the long-time members, celebrating the society's heritage? The growing success of our meetings is due primarily to the efforts of Bill Lotz and Dan Vickers.

Hosting classes and meetings, providing grants and scholarships — these are the visible things people most associate with GOS — but what our members may not notice is the abundance of administrative tasks the committees and individuals have accomplished. Thanks to Jim Flynn, the website is even more informative, as it now includes meeting summaries for the past 10-plus years, "From the Field" sections from recent journals, a backlog of the society's newsletters, a scholarships and grants page complete with biographies of those for whom these awards are named, a comprehensive history of the society, and the current bylaws with appendices. Most of those appendices are handbooks that were created or updated in recent years for the purpose of providing an operating checklist for various committees or for officers. Because of Jim, the website also includes a link that allows birders to check the status of reviews for species sightings that they report, and members can buy the first 71 years of *The Oriole* on DVD. Members can also choose to receive our newsletter, the *GOShawk*, by electronic means, and more than 10 percent of the membership has made that choice. The quality of the newsletter is better than ever thanks to the editing and creativity of Jim Ferrari and Mim Eisenberg.

With Phil Hardy's help, we've scanned all of the society's correspondence and meeting minutes, as well as newsletters (nearly 40 years' worth!), onto CDs. Thanks to Steve Holzman, the society has its own Facebook page and listserv, we distribute "business cards" everywhere we go about feeding hummingbirds and keeping cats indoors and the economic impact of birders and birding ethics, and GOS has raised thousands of dollars through Duck Stamp sales and other fund raisers to benefit habitat acquisition, crane conservation, and preservation of wetland habitats along the Savannah River. Our connection to the conservation community in Georgia has been strengthened not just by our fund raisers and many partnership efforts, but especially through our longtime involvement as a member of Earth Share of Georgia. For eight years, Mark Beebe has guided the society through the labyrinth of annual ESG paperwork and requirements, so much so that the process seems to happen by magic. And speaking of magic, everyone on the Executive Committee will agree with me when I say that the society's master magician during our tenure as a team has most assuredly been Jeannie Wright. GOS's present financial portfolio used to give me brain cramps when we first attempted to devise it in 2005, and it still stuns new members of the Executive Committee when they're first exposed to it. Throughout the remarkable financial metamorphosis the society has undergone in recent years, Jeannie has been our savvy navigator, keeping this ship off the shoals.

It's time to bring this ship into port and drop the gangplank for a new captain. Contrary to Dan's tongue-in-cheek assertion, I will not be president for life. It is my hope that the membership and Bill Terrell's spirit are pleased and proud of what this leadership team has accomplished during these eight years. It has been my great honor to serve with this team on behalf of this society.

Winners of the 2011 Wally Dreyfoos Scholarships Announced

Jordan Budnik and Cathy Ricketts are this year's recipients of Wally Dreyfoos Scholarships. The newly established scholarship, named in honor of Wallace D. Dreyfoos (GOS President, 1973-1975), pays the expenses of two high school or college students to attend the annual fall meeting of the GOS. See the "Grants and Scholarships" link in the GOS website (www.gos.org) for details of the scholarship. The deadline for the 2012 round of Dreyfoos Scholarships will be in August of next year.

Camp TALON Returns

By Bob Sargent

Camp TALON (Teen Adventures Learning Ornithology and Nature) returned to the coast last June after an unplanned hiatus in 2010. In case your memory is a bit hazy regarding the purpose of this camp, it includes 1) getting young people outdoors and therefore away from computer screens; 2) instilling a passion for birds and bird study in teens; and 3) educating future conservationists and teachers. Sure, we hope to make birding “cool” for young people with this camp. But more importantly, we encourage young birders to spread their interest in winged creatures and the outdoors to their friends and parents, with the hope that this will translate into educated voters in some distant point in their lives.

We’ve tinkered with the motor and hopefully have found the tune-up formula that will make this camp purr into the future. The cost is now lower than in 2009 (just \$300 per participant), as is the age range (12-16). The week is a day shorter (Sunday-Thursday) than before, and, most importantly, we employed better advertising than in 2009 or 2010. Frankly, the cost isn’t completely covered by student tuition, but the additional expenses were paid for by a generous \$1,500 grant from our partners with the Atlanta Audubon Society, as well as by supplemental funds from GOS. Atlanta Audubon also donated the journals for the camp, and GOS provided prizes to the students for various accomplishments, such as the best journal and the best scores on a mid-week ornithology quiz.

The weather during this year’s camp week was blistering, and I was routinely tempted to topple over in the front seat of the bus we rented as it made its way back to Epworth by the Sea (our headquarters) each afternoon or evening. Then I’d look over my shoulder at the 10 students scattered like a quail covey behind me and was always re-energized by a gratifying sight: teenagers sketching and scribbling images and thoughts about birds in journals. I couldn’t help but grin. You should have seen the amazing artwork and the creative spelling!



Wood Stork, by John James Audubon.

We filled every day with trips and classroom activities, fitting in a full day at Little St. Simons Island and at Sapelo Island, and half days at Ft. Stewart and Harris Neck NWR. We also visited Jekyll Island’s south beach and amphitheater pond, Gould’s Inlet on St. Simons Island, and Altamaha WMA. The highlights for the students included seeing the spoonbills, storks, herons, and egrets stacked like books on shelves in the trees at the pond on Jekyll Island, the Black-necked Stilts chattering over our heads at Altamaha WMA, the oystercatchers probing the shoreline at Little St. Simon’s Island, the Painted Bunting encounter on Sapelo Island and taking them out of the mist-net at Harris Neck NWR, a ghostly Barred Owl adventure late one night on St. Simons Island, Least Terns flapping like bats and plunging into the rolling waves at Gould’s Inlet, and the naked Red-cockaded Woodpecker nestlings in a cavity at Ft. Stewart. The classes we provided in the afternoons included lessons on journaling and photography, bird song identification, the use of field guides, and lessons on how to become involved in conservation activities. It was a full week, for sure, but we also squeezed in not-to-be-scoffed-at detours to Epworth’s swimming pool, a pizza parlor, and an ice cream shop.

It seems that we’ve blundered into a good thing, and if all of the young birders out there aren’t completely sold yet, then just ask the adult birders; many of the latter keep e-mailing me, asking

why we haven't created a TALON for grown-ups! Speaking of grown-ups, this camp wouldn't fly without the teaching gifts of a veritable flock of "Yodas." Thank you to Harriette, Nikki, and Jamie at Atlanta Audubon for your never-flagging devotion to the students and this camp. Thanks to Stacia, Scott, Abby, and the guys who piloted the boats for the wonderful tour of Little St. Simons Island, for the lunches and the post-lunch shelter from the sun, and for the fascinating program about oystercatcher research and island ecology. Thanks to Dee Mincey (and Larry Carlile) at Ft. Stewart for teaching us about fire ecology, for the rare treat of peering into an RCWO cavity, and for finding the Prothonotary Warbler fledglings in the shrubs along the river. As for the stop at Harris Neck on Thursday that week, I hardly know where to begin with my profuse thanks to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its volunteers. Peter Range and Dot Bambach: you outdid yourselves. The mist-netting and bunting banding show, as well as the colors and noise and smell of a wading bird rookery, left indelible images in the minds of the students and their chaperones. I bow and express my gratitude to the all-out effort of the other team members at the refuge: Kimberly and Chuck Hayes, the two Christines, Sharon, and Caitlin.

This camp wouldn't have happened without the creativity, sacrifices, and sweat expended by a core group of friends: Julie Duncan, Dan Vickers and Mal Hodges. I'm truly awed by you people. Julie was the wizard behind the curtain, as usual, managing the paperwork nightmare, and spending the entire week at the camp teaching journaling and being the amazingly patient chaperone and nurse. Julie works for Georgia DNR, the other key partner (besides GOS and AAS) who's responsible for this camp. Thank you to DNR's Rusty Garrison and Pete Griffin for believing in this camp, and I especially appreciate Rusty for so graciously letting us "borrow" Julie for the week. Dan and Mal taught birding and gave special presentations about photography and the ecological values of birds, and were responsible for guiding the flock all over Altamaha WMA (Dan) and Sapelo Island (Mal). I keep looking for Dan's photographs to appear in portfolio form in bookstores, his work is so good. As for Mal, he's one of the best teacher-naturalists I've ever met. You folks honor me with your support, and I look forward to working side by side with you again to make next year's Camp TALON even better.

Editor's Note:

GOS and the Atlanta Audubon Society have partnered to provide scholarships for young people to attend summer camps sponsored by the American Birding Association (ABA) or the National Audubon Society. The 2011 winners of the Young Birders' Conference Scholarships were Scooter Finney, John Mark Simmons, Nick Sinks, and Riza Rozin. Once you read the reports of their summer experiences (below) at Camp Colorado and Hog Island, Maine, I think you will agree that the scholarship funds were very well spent.

Camp Colorado 2011

By Scooter Finney

During my time in Colorado I saw the diversity of its flora and fauna in a variety of ecosystems. These factors set the stage for viewing many types of birds. In total I saw 128 bird species, 53 of which I had never seen before. There were species ranging from Scaled Quail to Swainson's Hawks, from Lewis's Woodpecker to White-faced Ibis. Our camp, Camp Catamount, was nestled in the foothills of the Rockies just outside of Woodland Park. In the week of camp, we traveled to vast expanses, such as Chico Basin and the shore of the Great Plains, a gorge called Phantom Canyon, and mountains in the Rockies. The most interesting behavior we observed was of a Killdeer defending its nest. Although it is a bird no larger than a softball, it was prepared to protect its offspring at any cost. One of the most extreme birds I saw, a Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, is a bird that breeds at high altitude and endures some of the harshest conditions in the continental United States.

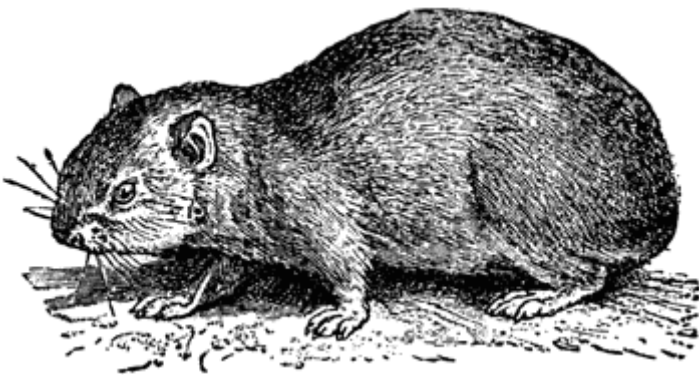
(continued on page 8)

Camp Colorado 2011 *(continued from page 7)*

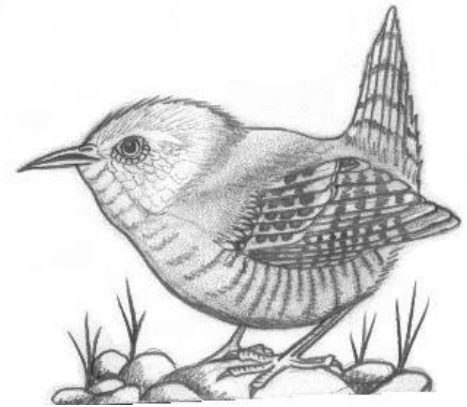
In order to glimpse this species of finch you must reach high altitudes and search amidst the cliffs and rock. So we set out on what would subsequently become my favorite day at camp on a journey up into the alpine tundra. We trudged up a road that started at about 10,000 feet into the snow and up the approach trail of Mount Democrat. It is a monolith that stands among several other 14,000-foot mountains in the Colorado Rockies. We climbed up the mountain in search of two birds: ptarmigans and rosy-finches. During our day trip, we hiked to about 12,500 feet, higher than many venture to in their lifetimes, in order to find these elusive birds. On our way up, the snow-covered slopes jutted out of a small body of snow melt called Kite Lake. We saw three bull moose, several pika, and a couple of Yellow-Bellied Marmots, but we still hadn't seen either of the birds that we had set out to find.

The group knew it was only a matter of time before we would have to retreat from the mountain because we were faced with a rapidly-approaching storm cloud. We hiked onward up to a flat area surrounded by mountaintops on three sides, hoping our luck would be better. By the time we reached the small basin, the clouds had already moved overhead and it had begun to rain. Although we changed our direction in order to descend the mountain and avoid the worst of the storm, we continued to carefully scan the rocky ground. To our surprise, we spotted our finches, of which there were three, and in a last-minute effort set up our spotting scopes to get a closer view. After brief moments of awe and some photography, we were instructed to head down the mountain. At this point, there was thunder every thirty seconds or so, and the wind began to howl. During our hasty descent, the rain turned into hail, which was blowing directly into us. I was already running by then, and I bowed my head into the wind in order to keep the stinging barrage of hail from going directly into my face, which at this point was colder than it had EVER been. The intensity of our departure was real, and it got real quickly. It was an experience that brought tears of pain, or fear, to more than one of my fellow campers' eyes. It was the experience of a lifetime.

On another day trip, we made our way out of the hills of Woodland Park east to Chico Basin Ranch. The land became more flat, and the plant life went from lush aspen and pine to dry grass and cactus. On our way to ranch headquarters, we stopped in a gravel pullout, which was the site of a Killdeer nest. We walked twenty yards from the place we parked to a cracked railroad tie that housed a small nest containing a few spotted eggs. Upon our arrival, a frantic bird posing as if it were injured immediately came from behind the nest. The bird ran side to side in front of us and the nest, posturing its wing to feign an injury. This is a strategy Killdeer use regularly to defend their young from predators. The Killdeer encounter was by far the closest and most unique one we had during the trip.



Pika (from *The American Educator*, 1921, by Ellsworth D. Foster, Chicago: Ralph Durham Company).



Winter Wren, by Scooter Finney.

Throughout our trip, we observed the behavior of birds in order to determine which species were breeding, migrating, etc. I learned the importance of recognizing birdcalls, in addition to studying them, and the group was given a tutorial on sketching. We explored canyons, rock formations, grasslands, deciduous forests, alpine tundra, and desert. The camp expanded my knowledge of birding and of birds in general. Over all, my trip to Colorado was a great learning experience as well as an amazing exposure to the terrain and habitats that exist in Colorado.

Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens on Hog Island, Maine

By Nick Sinks

“Welcome to the Portland Airport. We are so glad that you were able to fly with us today!” I was finally here. It was Sunday, June 19th, and I was in Maine getting ready to go to an Audubon camp that I had looked forward to for months. The camp is on Hog Island in Maine, and the session is Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens. I was one of the fortunate sixteen teens able to go to this camp thanks to the Georgia Ornithological Society 2011 Young Birders’ scholarship competition. After collecting my luggage at the airport, I met Erica and Pete, who took the other teens and me to the island. Our adventure was about to begin.

Once we arrived on the island, we met our group leaders, Laurie and Doug, and headed to the cabin to have our group initiation/get-to-know-each-other games. To start off, we envisioned a map of the United States, and we all had to stand on our home state. We were from about ten different states, all gathered in Maine because we have a passion for birds. When we joined with the adult group, we learned that we were from 22 different states. We learned more about each other and enjoyed our first dinner, which was fantastic. In fact, all the food at this camp was delicious, so my compliments to Yoni, the chef! After dinner, Steve Kress told us the history of Hog Island and Project Puffin. I could not think of a better place to be!

Every morning of the camp, we had the option of an early-morning bird walk before breakfast. After breakfast, we split up into our two teen groups. I was a Wren. On the first day, we joined two adult groups on a Shakedown Cruise, which was a cruise around the island. We saw water birds such as a pair of Long-Tailed Ducks, a Surf Scoter, and a Black Scoter, all lifers for me. After lunch, we had a bird anatomy lesson, which was new to me and very interesting. Dinner was followed by a program about the tides and the different islands in the Gulf of Maine.

On Tuesday I went on another early-morning bird walk. After breakfast, we went on a hike around Hog Island. One of the most interesting birds I saw was the Dark-eyed Junco, another lifer for me. Later we joined a bird banding lesson. The bird banding lesson was probably one of my favorite activities of the camp because we not only learned about banding, but we also got to band a few birds ourselves. The highlight for me was when I got to release the Black-throated Green Warbler. Also great was the evening program, where I learned about the birds of Eastern Egg Rock and about the birds’ night calls and how the migratory calls at night differ from the birds’ other flight calls.

On Wednesday, our teen Wren group joined two adult groups for a trip to Eastern Egg Rock. Eastern Egg Rock is the island where Steve Kress and his friends brought the Puffins back to Maine to colonize. This was definitely the moment I had been waiting for because the teens got to get out on the island and go to blinds where we could look at the birds. My favorite moment was when a Puffin climbed out of its nest, which was about three feet away from the blind I was in, and looked at us. After that moment, I thought, *This camp is everything I had hoped for.* It was not the first time I had thought this, but sitting in that blind with two friends, getting to know the other teens, and looking directly at this Puffin, I could finally say it with conviction. The Puffin was a lifer for me, and a bird I had always wanted to see! After leaving Eastern Egg Rock, we went to Shipwreck Island, where we met up with the adults and saw the heron colony. Here we saw Great Blue Herons. After this fantastic day of birding, we enjoyed an evening program about bird identification. This was interesting for me because it was about learning to identify birds not only by their identifying features, such as their colors, but also by their other features, such as their varying heights and how they fly.

Thursday was our first day of rain, but after breakfast the entire teen group went to McCurdy Road for a

(continued on page 10)

Coastal Marine Bird Studies *(continued from page 9)*

bird walk (highlights included the Ovenbird, the Broad-winged Hawk, and the Northern Parula, all lifers for me) and then to Madomik Road for another bird walk. On this second walk, I was able to see a Virginia Rail, which is a very beautiful bird and another lifer. I was also told it is very secretive, so we were lucky to see it. Our final evening program was about bird migration. I thought about a report I did in 8th grade on bird migration, which is when I learned that the Arctic Tern is the world's longest migrating bird (from the North to South Poles). I actually saw my first Arctic tern at this camp!

On Friday, we said good-bye to Hog Island and headed back to the Portland airport. Looking back on this trip, I realize just how fortunate I was to receive a scholarship to go to this camp. I was able to meet and get to know a great group of people who share with me the passion of birding and the study of ornithology. We will remain friends. Together we saw 99 different species of birds, and more than half of these were lifers for me! The rare species we saw included the Red-tailed Hawk, the Merlin, the Red Knot, the Parasitic Jaeger, and the Razorbill. I arrived at this camp wanting to learn more about bird calls, but I came away with so much more knowledge than I ever expected to obtain. The camp also gave me the idea of planning summer camp bird activities for my 8-year old sister and her friend. They will learn about five common backyard birds, and I am planning fact finding, drawing, and viewing activities. I hope to do this for a larger group of children in the future.

The Hog Island Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens was a great experience to me, and I would wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone interested in birding. I am very thankful to the Georgia Ornithological Society for this great opportunity.

My Experience at the ABA Young Birder Camp Colorado

By John Mark Simmons

When I first received word that I had won the scholarship to go to the ABA Young Birder Camp Colorado, I was so excited I could hardly contain myself. I wanted to start packing that day! After what seemed like three months instead of one, I was finally able to get on the plane for Colorado Springs. I had hoped that going through the airport and getting on the plane would go smoothly, and I was not disappointed. I was glad when I arrived at camp, knowing that I was finally away from the airport.

I started birding right when my plane was landing and got my first lifer of the trip from the plane window. A Western Meadowlark was sitting on a tiny post in the grass beside the runway. This was a curious place



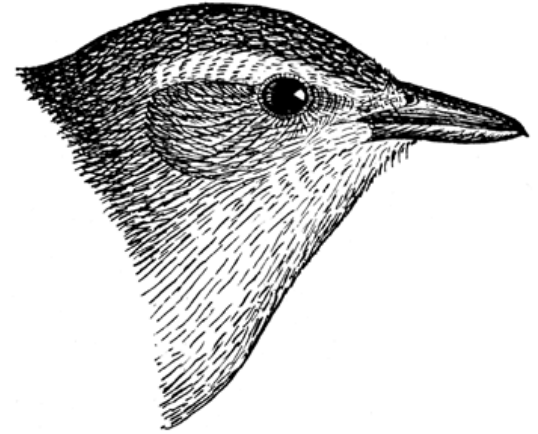
John Mark Simmons. Photo courtesy of John Mark Simmons.

for one but it certainly was a Western Meadowlark. At camp we unloaded, did some hiking, and learned something about the Indians who had lived there before. We did some birding before we went to bed, and I got several lifers from that. The first lifer I got at camp was a Warbling Vireo, then a Cordilleran Flycatcher, then Williamson's Sapsucker. The sapsucker was one of my favorite birds of the trip because of its colors. We got to watch them come to their nest cavity and feed the babies because the nest was right beside the lodge where we kept our stuff.

Time was one thing I really had trouble getting used to. Colorado time is two hours behind compared to my Georgia time. But for me the two extra hours allowed for more birding than usual. The first day was

pretty fun. We got up early and headed out as quickly as we could. This was the procedure every day of the week. Get up, eat breakfast, and pack your gear.

There were two non-birding-related parts of the trip that were my favorites. When three other boys from camp and I went on a bird walk early one morning, we saw a bear plunge into the lake, swim for a bit, then get out and walk slowly along the other side. The water between us and the bear was the only thing that kept us from running. Everyone back at camp was very excited to hear that we saw a bear. My second most favorite part of the trip was when we got caught in the hailstorm while on the mountain above the timberline at 12,400 feet above sea level in deep snow while we were looking for the White-tailed Ptarmigan. Even though it felt like we were targets in a firing squad of automatic BB guns, it was great fun. To experience what nature is capable of is really amazing. We didn't see the ptarmigan, but we did get to see a pair of Brown-capped Rosy Finches eating something on top of the snow.



Warbling Vireo (from *Useful Birds and Their Protection, 1907*, by Edward Howe Forbush, Boston: Massachusetts State Board of Agriculture).

Back at home I am not used to everyone always talking about birding. Even though I am a birder, not many of my friends are. The campers and I talked about birding in the car, at camp, and anywhere we went. It was really fun talking about birding all the time.

The ABA staff and camp counselors were great on the trip! Birding with them was really fun and inspiring. They gave us great information about birds and lots of other topics too. Bill Schmoker gave us tips about photography and also gave a mini science lecture here and there. Chip Clouse told us all about the places we went and what the terrain would be like, as well as helped us identify birds. I hope I can bird with them again.

There were difficult parts of the trip, but even those were fun. I'm so happy I got to go and also to meet some new friends. We stay connected on Facebook so we can talk to each other.

GOS provides the best scholarships out of everybody else. Many of the other students got scholarships that covered half of the cost, but GOS does it all. I look forward to becoming a member of GOS.

My total number of life birds for the trip is seventy-four, and the total number of species I saw for the whole week was one hundred and forty-six. I averaged about fifteen lifers a day for the whole week. I took a total of two thousand photographs and a couple of short videos.

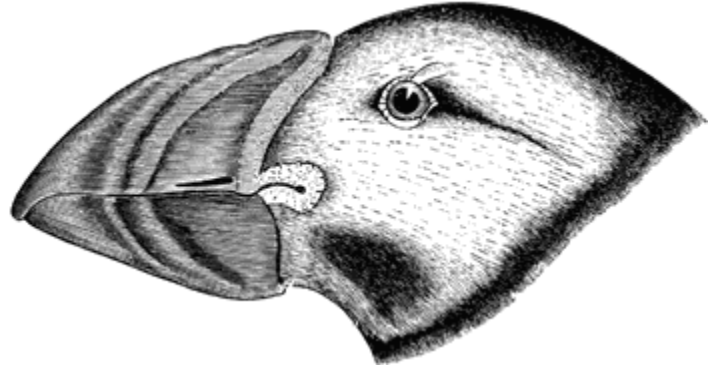
On the day we all left for home, I really didn't know if I wanted to go home or not. It was so much fun doing the birding, but I was weary and tired from the entire week of almost nonstop birding. It was one of the best trips I've ever done. I hope to go on many more. I just want to say thank you to the GOS for giving me this generous scholarship so that I could go to the camp. I will always treasure the memories from this important week of my life.



Once You Sleep upon an Island

By Riza Rozin

They say that once you sleep upon an island, you will never be the same. When I first arrived on Hog Island, a novice birder who thought a tern was something you did to move in another direction, I was overwhelmed. With my outdated camera and massive, unmarked bird guide, not to mention my over-packed suitcase weighing in at about 50 pounds, I immediately felt self-conscious about my beginner's status. When a camper pointed to a faraway speck on the horizon and proclaimed it a Merlin, my heart sank to the pit of my stomach as I realized I wouldn't know a Merlin if it perched on my face, and yet here was a boy who called it from what appeared to be a mile away!



Atlantic Puffin (from *Key to North American Birds*, 1884, by Elliot Coues, Boston: Estes and Lauriat).

My fears of being isolated never had a chance to take root. Almost as soon as my feet hit the soil of Hog Island, I was swamped by people welcoming me to the island. As I tried to drag my oversized suitcase up the root-covered paths, my to-be cabin mates, Maggie and Petra, hounded me until I allowed them to help me out. I suppose a small girl hauling an overstuffed red suitcase up an unforgiving trail is a pitiful sight. The warm kindness from my cabin mates soothed over my embarrassment caused by over packing. Also, being told that Maggie, as well as some other teens, were beginner birders just as clueless as I was (*A Black Guillemot? What the heck is that?*) proved to be a great confidence booster. I was not alone in my lack of knowledge!

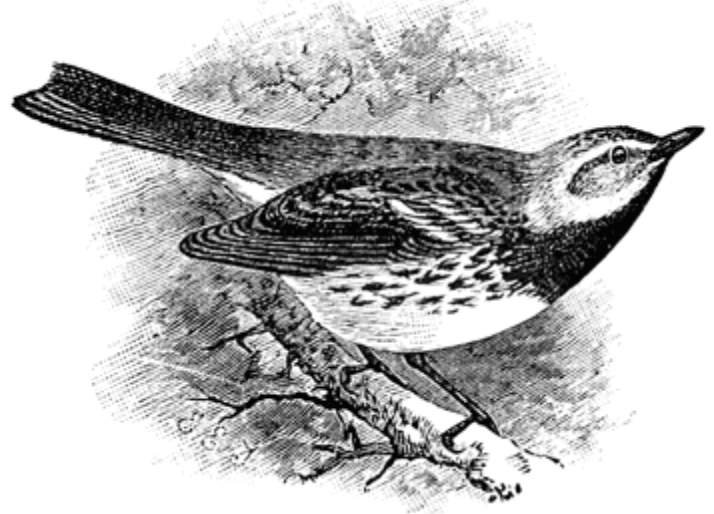
Soon enough, I was calling out birds and having the time of my life. From seabirds to songbirds and everything in between, my days were filled with feathered beauties. My daily adventures ranged from hikes to boat rides. Trips to the mainland were a particular pleasure, as they introduced me to birds not normally seen on Hog Island. On one such trip, I was thrilled to see a hovering American Kestrel swoop down on unsuspecting prey. The grace she exhibited in each wing stroke was breathtaking, and her flawless dive all but stopped my heart.

Another memorable experience, inarguably one of the most magical of my life, was the visit to Egg Rock. Egg Rock, site of the famous Project Puffin reintroduction, is a large rock inhabited by a variety of seabirds. On the rocky shoreline, with many deep, seaweed-filled tide pools, we sighted Common Eiders, Black Guillemots, Ruddy Turnstones, Arctic, Common and Roseate Terns, and the famous, lovable Atlantic Puffins.

The island itself rang with a raucous cacophony of shrieks and squawks. Immediately upon leaving the tidal zone, a welcome party of Laughing Gulls and Common Terns flung themselves at us, wailing and striking and flinging excrement at us all the way. In addition to dodging the attacks made by the adult birds, we had to watch where we stepped. Small plastic flags, color-coded based on species, marked the nests of the ground-laying terns. Unlike all of our peaceful bird walks previously, this was an obstacle course as we attempted to dodge feathered missiles from above and avoid the precious nests on the ground.

The screeching army of defending birds was very unlike the actions of many other animals I had encountered. Most wildlife fled upon the approach of humans, but these birds, their bodies scarcely bigger than my binoculars, attacked with a fury that far surpassed their small frames. It was a truly fascinating experience, these animals showing no fear of mankind.

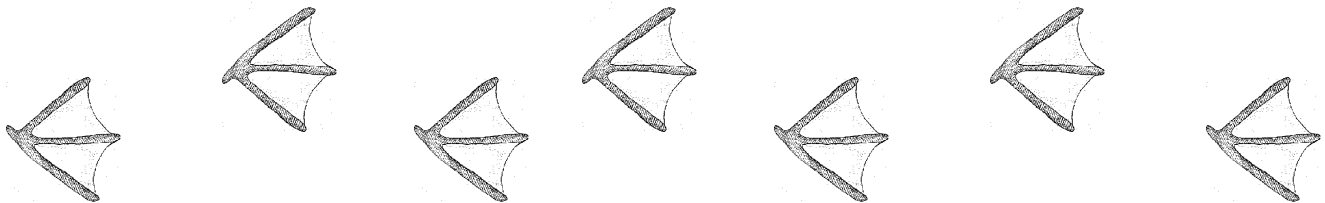
The best part of the trip was when I was privileged enough to sit inside one of the research blinds. A nesting pair of Roseate Terns flitted around each other in a kind of dance. Common Terns, Puffins and Black Guillemots flew here and there past me. My favorite part, however, was the nest of Laughing Gulls directly in front of me. They emitted a constant chuckle from their patch of grass, a gentle “oh-hoho” as though they were sharing an inside joke. When a strange bird flew overhead, their gentle tittering would climax to a mad cackling. When the threat was passed, they resumed their gentle chortles.



Black-throated Green Warbler (from *Encyclopaedia - A Dictionary of Universal Knowledge for the People, 1881*, by William & Robert Chambers, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co.).

Another trip highlight was bird banding with Kimberly Kaufman. As the mist nest was set up, a plucky Black-Throated Green Warbler charged his way into it. Imagine my thrill at being able to release it! Cupped in my hands, the tiny bird gazed around serenely. He could have flown at any moment, but instead perched comfortably, with a quizzical expression on his avian face. How many years, or seconds, passed as he sat in my hands, I do not know. But in those moments, there were no other things in the world than the warbler and the big grin on my face. And even after he had flown off of me, back to the sky, the warmth of his body was left on my palm.

I know that as long as I live, these experiences will stay with me. The screech of terns, the cackle of gulls, the sweet song of the warblers, they are sounds that will always echo in my ears. My trip to Hog Island was one of the greatest in my life. Before I left for Maine, birds were a pleasant thing to admire, but now they are a magical inspiration that I will always hold dear. In my heart, I will always fly on the wings of those who inspired me. Thank you, GOS, for giving me the time of my life.



GOS GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINES

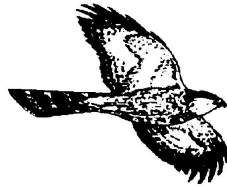
Bill Terrell Graduate Student Research Grants
December 1, 2011

Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grants
December 1, 2011

H. Branch Howe, Jr., Graduate Student Research Grants
December 31, 2011

For information about the society's grants, visit <http://www.gos.org/grants/grant.html>

GOShawk



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CULLODEN, GA
PERMIT NO. 7

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
PO Box 122
Culloden, GA 31016

Return Service Requested



Printed on Recycled Paper

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please complete the form and mail with your payment to: Georgia Ornithological Society Membership, 108 W. 8th St., Louisville, GA 30434

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Annual membership rates for individuals and families:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Bachman's Sparrow (Individual Membership) | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Quail Covey (Family Membership) | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Patron) | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Fledgling (Students only) | \$15 |

Life Membership Rates for individuals:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Northern Goshawk | \$450 |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------|

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