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75th
Anniversary



GOShaw

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
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President's Message

By Jim Ferrari

The year 2011 was an auspicious one for the Georgia Ornithological Society. We began the year with a gala meeting on Tybee Island, celebrating our founding seventy-five years ago, in 1936. The very abbreviated version of the rest of the year is that your society funded scientific research and habitat restoration to the tune of about \$80,000 in grants, we helped send young people to birding camps in Colorado and Maine, we backed conservation efforts across the state, we supported both Camp TALON and the Georgia DNR's Youth Birding Competition, and we hosted meetings in Hiwassee and Jekyll Island. Whew! A busy year indeed.

Most recently, GOS met from October 6 to 9 at the traditional fall meeting location, Jekyll Island. While quite a few members participated in Thursday and Friday field trips, the program formally kicked off on Friday evening when Patti Newell, a Ph.D. student at the University of Georgia and a recipient of both our Howe and Terrell Graduate Student Research Grants, presented her research on "Species in Decline: The Case of the Rusty Blackbird." Patti tested multiple hypotheses—a "line-up" of potential suspects—for the 85-95% decline that this species has experienced since the 1950s. As is often the case, there appears to be more than one suspect, though a major culprit seems to be loss of wetland habitat in the South, where the birds overwinter. In addition, predation by accipiters may be hindering recruitment of juveniles to the population.

I spent my Saturday morning helping out at the Jekyll Island Banding Station, but our membership fanned out to Harris Neck NWR, Raccoon Key, and Sapelo Island, among other excellent locations, and saw great birds like Plain Chachalaca, Marbled Godwit, and many others. At last count, the tally for the weekend was 177 bird species. On Saturday evening, the keynote speaker at the banquet was author and photographer Richard Crossley. His talk, "Past, Present, and Future," focused primarily on his new book, the highly original *Crossley ID Guide*, which he described as a "half-way house between a field guide and reality." The presentation, richly illustrated with Crossley's hallmark storytelling photography, was very entertaining, even hilarious at times. But Crossley went beyond mere bird identification and challenged the audience to consider the future of birding in the U.S. and how new approaches and new media are needed to reach the next generation of birders as well as engage the public more meaningfully. I was particularly taken with his statement that learning about birds should be a "voyage of discovery" rather than an exercise in mastering a series of dry facts leading to identification.

Sunday, the final day of the fall meeting, was another day of fantastic field trips, in my case to Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area. My group encountered Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Roseate Spoonbills, and a swirling tornado of Tree Swallows before a drenching rain chased us home.

(continued on page 3)

CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|
| 1 | President's Message | 8 | Fall 2011 Meeting Bird List |
| 2 | Member News | 9 | Wally Dreyfoos Scholarship Winners |
| 5 | 2012 Greene Memorial Award Recipient | 10 | Richard Parks Scholarship Deadline |
| 6 | Interview with a Bird Researcher | 11 | Fall Meeting Speakers |

**Georgia
Ornithological
Society**

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

Welcome, New Members!

Fledgling

Emily Cornelius	Raleigh, NC
Viviana Gonzalez Astudillo	Athens, GA
Steve Grodsky	Athens, GA
Myung-Bok Lee	Athens, GA

Bachman's Sparrow

Patrick Addy	Buford, GA
Nikki Belmonte	Tucker, GA
Patricia Davis	Norcross, GA
Diane Shearer	Roswell, GA

Quail Covey

Jim and Diane Baldwin	Atlanta, GA
James and Allison Healy	Macon, GA
Jamie Hawk and Barbara Knust	St. Simons Island, GA
Mary Kimberly and Gavin MacDonald	Hazelhurst, GA
Kathy Shands and Joe Mulinare	Marietta, GA
Iris and Scott Schumacher	Atlanta, GA
Wayne Fonda Ussery	Decatur, GA
Edward and Roberta Weintraut	Atlanta, GA

Northern Goshawk

Rebecca Kerimbaev	Decatur, GA
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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

GOS WINTER MEETING
January 13-16, 2012, Tybee Island

GOS SPRING MEETING
April 20-22, 2012, Augusta

President's Message (continued from Page 1)

Despite the rain, it was a great weekend. Thank you to all of the people who make these meetings happen. Some of them work behind the scenes, reserving banquet space, paying the bills, tending databases, and organizing mailings, while others serve more conspicuously as field trip leaders, but all of them deserve our thanks for putting on the usual well-run and enjoyable meeting.

While most of the fall meeting was dedicated to birding and fellowship, we also took time during the Saturday evening banquet to hold our biennial society elections. Bob Sargent bowed out after eight remarkable years as president, and I was elected president. Cue the appropriate cliché (tough act to follow, big shoes to fill, etc.), but the fact remains that after Bob's dedicated and energetic leadership of the society, I approach my new role with some trepidation. Bob will indeed be a tough act to follow, and the shoes that need filling are indeed big. As concrete evidence of Bob Sargent's positive impact on the society, he was awarded the 2012 Earle R. Greene Memorial Award for his many years of service to GOS. The Greene Award committee managed to keep news of this award tightly under wraps, so those few of us who were clued in beforehand enjoyed seeing Bob caught off guard by the surprise presentation during the banquet. Another executive committee member who stepped down was Bill Lotz, who served with distinction for eight years as first vice president. Thank you, Bill. Dan Vickers, who has done yeoman service as second vice president, is the new first vice president. We welcome Ed Maioriello, a board member of Oconee Rivers Audubon Society, to serve as second vice president. Ellen Miller, former president of Atlanta Audubon, was elected secretary, though she had already been serving in that position after Darlene Moore resigned earlier this year. Continuing as treasurer is Jeannie Wright, who has kept us on the fiscal straight and narrow for many years. I am both excited and humbled at my election, and I look forward to working with the newly configured Executive Committee.

(continued on page 4)



Bob Sargent passing the President's gavel to the new president, Jim Ferrari, at the fall 2011 meeting at Saturday's banquet. Photo by Joel McNeal.

President's Message (continued from Page 3)

Though I have been active in GOS for about ten years and was the editor of the *GOShawk* for eight years, I'm still getting acquainted with other members of GOS. For those of you whom I have not yet met, I thought some background information might be in order. I have been an avid birder since college, when I spent a summer in Alaska volunteering as a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I was a member of a field crew conducting bird surveys of nesting Wilson's Warblers, Orange-crowned Warblers, and White-crowned Sparrows in a remote location on the Alaska Peninsula. It is virtually impossible not to catch the birding fever when you are on the blooming tundra, surrounded by bugling Sandhill Cranes and nesting Tundra Swans, with raucous Willow Ptarmigan underfoot and outlandish Harlequin Ducks bobbing along in the local rivers. It was this experience, surrounded all summer by a high-latitude menagerie of caribou, moose, bears, salmon, wolverine, and wolves—not to mention some pretty nifty arctic flora—that sealed my fate. I was to be a biologist. I went on to get a Ph.D. in Ecology from the University of Minnesota and have taught at Wesleyan College since 1996. After moving to Macon, I joined the Ocmulgee Audubon Society and several years later served as their president. Though my formal training is in forest ecology, not ornithology, I have managed to fuse these two interests in the past decade by studying fruit-eating birds. More recently, I started a multi-year project on vultures, an effort that I spoke about at the May meeting in Hiawassee. At Wesleyan, two of my courses are ecology and conservation biology, so I have a particular interest in bird conservation and habitat preservation. And, as both a parent and a teacher, it's probably not surprising that I am especially interested in environmental education for young people.

GOS is such a dynamic society, and we are active in so many different arenas—research, education, publication, conservation—that merely keeping up with all of our current programs will keep me plenty busy in the next two years. But I also hope to put my own stamp on some of our initiatives. In that regard, I am very fortunate to have all of the previous GOS committee chairs remain in place for my term as president, so I can benefit from their experience and wisdom as we move forward.

There is a lot in store for GOS members in 2012, beginning with the winter meeting on Tybee Island in January. The program includes two talks that promise to be excellent: on Friday evening, our own Malcolm Hodges will tell us about the Nature Conservancy's fire management program in Georgia, and on Saturday we will learn about the restoration of Whooping Crane populations from George Archibald, the co-founder of the International Crane Foundation. I am looking forward to meeting more of you at Tybee Island and raising our binoculars together in the field. Happy New Year, and I hope to see you soon.



Jim Ferrari and Barry Rhoades with a class of students on a field trip to Pine Mountain, Georgia. Photo courtesy of Jim Ferrari.

2012 Earle R. Greene Award Presented to Bob Sargent

By John Swiderski

Dr. Robert A. (Bob) Sargent received the Earle R. Greene Memorial Award (2012) in recognition of his outstanding service to GOS over the past ten years, including four terms as president. The award was presented to him at the 2011 fall meeting on Jekyll Island, which was his last as president. This is the 39th award since 1975.

When Bob was first elected our 32nd president in 2003, he had no inkling of what was to happen less than a year later. At the time, GOS had modest funding and offered one graduate research program annually. In 2004, Bob and GOS were made aware that the late, long-time member, Bill Terrell, had designated the Society to be the major beneficiary of his estate. Understandably, GOS was literally turned upside down with the sudden change of fortune. Bob and the Executive Committee worked to design and implement the best course of action. (See "President's Last Message," *GOShawk*, September 2011). With his leadership and inspiration and his willingness to serve longer than any other GOS president, Bob played a major role in a very successful transition. He also identified, recruited and encouraged many members to serve on new committees needed for the new programs, grants, and scholarships that were made possible.

Bob has stepped down, but he has not "retired," as he remains on the Executive Committee as past president. He also continues to work to improve our journal, *The Oriole*, as co-editor. It is interesting to note that only four others served more than one term as GOS president. They were Kenneth W. Clark (1995-99), Dr. H. Branch Howe, Jr. (1989-93), Dr. Frank McCamey (1979-83), and Dr. Eugene Odum (1943-46).

Bob was born in Salem, Massachusetts, and lived in a small town in New England, where he grew to love the outdoors and the Boston Red Sox, an affliction he still lives with. His family moved to Florida in 1991, and he has lived in that state and Georgia for most of his life. Birds came into his life courtesy of an avian biology course while working on his M.S. degree at the University of Florida. Following graduation he became involved in a bird research project at the Savannah River Plant, in South Carolina, and he went on to earn his Ph.D. in wildlife biology from the University of Georgia in 1996. Since that time, he has worked as the natural resources manager for Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins, Georgia. Somehow he also finds time to serve as a professor for the Georgia Military College, teaching night classes.

Bob and his wife Carol, also a respected Ph.D. (accounting), live in Macon, Georgia, where she currently teaches at Macon State College.



John Swiderski awarding Bob Sargent the Earle R. Green Award for his lifetime achievement in GOS. Photo by Joel McNeal.

Interview with a Bird Researcher: Gabrielle Robinson on Least Terns

By Patti Newell

One of the things I am always surprised about when I attend GOS meetings (and other bird meetings) is that folks are quite interested in me personally as well as in my research. They want to know where I'm from, how I became interested in birds, and what I plan to do in the future. I took some time to ask Gabrielle Robinson some of these questions about herself:

Where are you from, Gabrielle? I grew up in Springfield, Massachusetts.

What brought you to Georgia? I'm pursuing a Master of Science degree at the University of Georgia in the Warnell School of Forestry. My major advisor, Dr. Sonia Hernandez, offered me an assistantship in fall 2010 and I accepted immediately.

How did you get involved with bird research? I've been watching birds (yes, with binoculars and a bird book in hand!) since I was in grade school. This was not an influence of a family member; it was just something I was personally drawn to. So, upon finishing my B.S. in biology, it was only natural that I took up an internship working on endangered ferruginous pygmy owls in southeastern Arizona, and I've been working with birds ever since.

What other bird research projects have you worked with in the past? I've worked on a variety of avian research projects for a variety of state and federal agencies, universities, and research non-profits. Perhaps most notably, I've worked on Piping Plover and Least Tern research and management in both Massachusetts and in Nebraska, research and management on Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in Florida, research into the effects of persistent environmental contaminants on riparian breeding birds as well as the effects of water stress on their arthropod prey in southeastern Arizona, research on Satin Bowerbirds in northeastern Australia, and research on the critically-endangered Mariana Crow in Micronesia.



Gabrielle Robinson with a Least Tern chick at Pelican Spit near St. Simons Island. Photo courtesy Gabrielle Robinson.

What do you plan to do when you graduate? I plan to find a permanent job that puts me in charge of research and management of a particular population. Just management isn't enough, but just research isn't enough either; I think I will only be satisfied with a healthy combination of both. A dream job would be to work on plovers and terns, because these birds could be the poster children for almost every single conservation issue that I'm most passionate about. If I can't find a permanent job right away, I have no problem taking another temporary job until the right permanent offer comes along.

What are you most interested in? In general, my main concern is the conservation of species in decline. Specifically, I'm especially interested the sub-lethal effects of persistent environmental pollutants, the increasing impact of Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism on songbird populations, and the increasing impact of urban predators on nesting shorebirds. I think the issues I described above are some of the most important bird conservation issues we face in this country today (and some of these issues equally affect other classes of animals in other parts of the world as well). The issues I described all have one thing in common: they are a product of human influence (most often destructive) on the environment. Of course, other equally important issues along this vein that I did not mention include global climate change, invasive species, and habitat destruction.

(continued on page 7)

Interview with a Bird Researcher (continued from page 6)

What is the story with Least Terns? Least Tern populations are declining across their range. Both subspecies in the interior and western U.S. are federally endangered. On the East Coast, they are state-listed in many states but have not yet acquired federal protection (even though we don't even really know how many birds make up the breeding population here on the East Coast). We know that predation (especially from "urban" predators such as coyotes, raccoons, feral hogs, and foxes, whose populations are amplified by human development) and human disturbance are two major pressures affecting Least Tern productivity and survival.

But there is still a lot that we don't know about them, such as where they over-winter, how sea level rise may affect their breeding success now and in the future, and what (if any) effect the bioaccumulation of persistent environmental contaminants has on them.

How is your research going to help Least Terns? My research aims to determine how the bioaccumulation of persistent environmental contaminants (e.g., heavy metals, PCBs) affects Least Tern health and productivity. These contaminants are deemed "persistent" because they do not break down in the environment and they can be stored for long periods of time in an animal body, increasing in concentration over time in that animal. The presence of these contaminants (often introduced to the environment by industrial waste) is ubiquitous but is more heavily concentrated in certain areas such as those in close proximity to the point source of pollution and in certain species such as those at the top of the food chain. Least Terns, whose diet consists strictly of fish, reside at the top of the food chain along with marine mammals and humans. Because of their position in the food web, they are at greater risk of having dangerously-elevated levels of these contaminants in their bodies. My aim is to measure contaminant concentrations and the sub-lethal effects (e.g., immune suppression, decreased hatch rate of eggs, depressed growth rate of nestlings, etc.) of these contaminants on breeding Least Tern populations in Georgia in relation to their proximity to point sources of heavy metal and PCB pollution. The severity of pollution in local food sources is not currently an issue that is addressed when management decisions for Least Terns are made.

This consideration could be of special significance in areas where Least Terns are being encouraged to breed on man-made islands, which is increasingly the case as suitable natural beach habitat continues to disappear in the wake of human development. Another thing I am experimenting with "on the side" of my contaminant research project is the efficacy of different predator management strategies on Least Tern colonies here in Georgia, as our terns are exceptionally vulnerable to the "urban" predators I mentioned before.

What GOS grant were you a recipient of, and how did your GOS research grant help out your project and Least Terns? I received the H. Branch Howe, Jr., graduate student research award, and it saved my life! I developed my own research project, so I had to acquire my own funding for it when I got here to UGA. While I did end up receiving another grant that would cover all of my research expenses, that money was not going to be in place until part way through my first field research season. The Howe grant allowed me to make the necessary start-up purchases to get my field work underway on time; without it, I would have lost a lot of data during the first out of only two field seasons available to me for this project.

Do you have any advice for young people wanting to pursue a career with birds? Experience, experience, experience! In my opinion, the best thing you can do before you pursue your graduate degree is to get out there and do field work on as many types of birds in as many types of environments as possible. Meagerly-paid internships or volunteer positions may be your only option at first, but they are entirely worthwhile in helping you build your résumé, make connections and network with other professionals, and learn valuable skills that will help you when you go to design and carry out your own graduate research project. And of course make sure you really get OUT there: travel as much of your country and the rest of the world as possible; travel nurtures both personal and professional development, and its importance cannot be overstated, in my opinion.



Birds Tallied During the GOS Fall Meeting in Jekyll Island, October 6-9, 2011

List compiled by Bill Lotz

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	American Avocet	Loggerhead Shrike	Clay-colored Sparrow
Canada Goose	Spotted Sandpiper	White-eyed Vireo	Savannah Sparrow
Wood Duck	Solitary Sandpiper	Yellow-throated Vireo	Saltmarsh Sparrow
Mallard	Greater Yellowlegs	Red-eyed Vireo	Seaside Sparrow
Mottled Duck	Willet	Blue Jay	Song Sparrow
Blue-winged Teal	Lesser Yellowlegs	American Crow	Swamp Sparrow
Northern Shoveler	Whimbrel	Fish Crow	Summer Tanager
Plain Chachalaca	Long-billed Curlew	Tree Swallow	Scarlet Tanager
Wild Turkey	Marbled Godwit	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Northern Cardinal
Pied-billed Grebe	Ruddy Turnstone	Barn Swallow	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Wood Stork	Red Knot	Carolina Chickadee	Blue Grosbeak
Double-crested Cormorant	Sanderling	Tufted Titmouse	Indigo Bunting
Anhinga	Semipalmated Sandpiper	White-breasted Nuthatch	Painted Bunting
Brown Pelican	Western Sandpiper	Brown-headed Nuthatch	Bobolink
American Bittern	Least Sandpiper	Carolina Wren	Red-winged Blackbird
Great Blue Heron	White-rumped Sandpiper	House Wren	Eastern Meadowlark
Great Egret	Pectoral Sandpiper	Sedge Wren	Common Grackle
Snowy Egret	Dunlin	Marsh Wren	Boat-tailed Grackle
Little Blue Heron	Stilt Sandpiper	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Brown-headed Cowbird
Tricolored Heron	Short-billed Dowitcher	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	House Finch
Reddish Egret	Laughing Gull	Eastern Bluebird	House Sparrow
Cattle Egret	Ring-billed Gull	Veery	
Green Heron	Herring Gull	Swainson's Thrush	177 species
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Gray Catbird	
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Great Black-backed Gull	Northern Mockingbird	
White Ibis	Caspian Tern	Brown Thrasher	
Glossy Ibis	Black Tern	European Starling	
Roseate Spoonbill	Common Tern	American Pipit	
Black Vulture	Forster's Tern	Cedar Waxwing	
Turkey Vulture	Royal Tern	Ovenbird	
Osprey	Sandwich Tern	Northern Waterthrush	
Bald Eagle	Black Skimmer	Black-and-white Warbler	
Northern Harrier	Rock Pigeon	Tennessee Warbler	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Orange-crowned Warbler	
Cooper's Hawk	Mourning Dove	Connecticut Warbler	
Red-shouldered Hawk	Common Ground-Dove	Common Yellowthroat	
Red-tailed Hawk	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	American Redstart	
American Kestrel	Eastern Screech-Owl	Cape May Warbler	
Merlin	Great Horned Owl	Northern Parula	
Peregrine Falcon	Common Nighthawk	Magnolia Warbler	
Clapper Rail	Chimney Swift	Yellow Warbler	
King Rail	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Chestnut-sided Warbler	
Sora	Belted Kingfisher	Blackpoll Warbler	
Common Gallinule	Red-headed Woodpecker	Black-throated Blue Warbler	
American Coot	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Palm Warbler	
Black-bellied Plover	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Pine Warbler	
Wilson's Plover	Downy Woodpecker	Yellow-rumped Warbler	
Semipalmated Plover	Northern Flicker	Yellow-throated Warbler	
Piping Plover	Pileated Woodpecker	Prairie Warbler	
Killdeer	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Black-throated Green Warbler	
American Oystercatcher	Empidonax sp.	Eastern Towhee	
Black-necked Stilt	Eastern Phoebe		
	Great Crested Flycatcher		



Cardinal Grosbeak from John Burroughs (1877), Wake Robin

Reflections of Dreyfoos Scholarship Recipient Cathy Ricketts

By Cathy Ricketts

Cathy recently finished her master's degree on Clapper Rails at the University of Georgia.

On a windy October weekend, I was fortunate to attend the GOS Meeting on Jekyll Island, courtesy of the new Wally Dreyfoos Scholarship. This generous scholarship funded by Mr. Dreyfoos's family covered the cost of attending the fall meeting and allowed me to participate in a field trip on Saturday to Raccoon Key with other GOS members eager to see migrating birds and coastal residents.

We woke up to a less-than-ideal forecast for birding...rain and gusty winds... but as all of us waited on the dock to board the boat, the sky wasn't too ominous, rain was absent, and the winds were moderate. The ride to the island was entertaining, as the captain told stories and showed us local points of interest. We all got a good look at an Osprey perched in a tree along the shore. Just as we landed at Raccoon Key and began to walk toward the old house on the island, which serves as a gathering place for our groups, a sizable flock of Roseate Spoonbills and Wood Storks took flight. Quite the welcoming committee! After a quick orientation to the island, our field trip leaders, Steve and Rachel, began an enthusiastic tour along the levies of impoundments created by previous owners. One of the highlights of the trip was the many close encounters with shorebirds seen on the banks of these impoundments. We are all so used to needing powerful scopes to identify these characters; indeed, scopes were still helpful in this case, but many of the birds were within 10 feet! We saw Semipalmated Plovers, multiple species of sandpipers, and yellowlegs, to name a few. In other impoundments we found Mottled Ducks being watched by a Merlin and a Northern Harrier, American Avocets, and numerous herons and egrets. The rain eventually caught us, and we all walked back to the old house, where we ate our lunches. Luckily, the weather cleared, and we spent the remaining time chasing Palm, Prairie, and Yellow warblers around the trees near the house.



Cathy Ricketts at her field site at Nemours Plantation. Photo by Patti Newell.

Later Saturday evening was the banquet and featured speaker, Richard Crossley. I had a great time visiting with fellow birders during dinner and found Mr. Crossley's talk thoroughly entertaining. It was also my pleasure to meet and chat with Mrs. Dreyfoos and her son. Over all, it was a fantastic weekend and I sincerely thank GOS and the Dreyfoos family for the opportunity to experience it.

Passion: Reflections on the Fall 2011 GOS Conference

By Jordan Budnik

When this society decided that I would be sent to a GOS conference on the Dreyfoos Scholarship, I was both humbled and ashamed. I felt deep down in the core of my being that I had done nothing to truly earn the continued loyalty of the individuals who had awarded me this scholarship. But if there is any place to watch reality kick off its heels and sprint away from you, it would be Jekyll Island, and I had a gut feeling that this trip would be a life changer. The entire trip, I kept my eyes wide open for this elusive revelation, this glowing epiphany that I was sure lurked just around the next bend. Instead, I saw my first glimpse of Roseate Spoonbills, a gorgeous Northern Goshawk (which flew right in front of my car as I was driving), a Cape May Warbler, and enough Osprey to make a raptor enthusiast's (such as myself) greatest dreams come true. Yet even in the presence of such marvelous birds, I knew I had not quite found what I was searching for.

The night of the banquet found me and my other trip members hustling to get ready after our Cumberland Island ferry cut us a bit short on time. I stumbled into the banquet and snagged the only open seat left. After making small talk with my table, Bob Sargent approached me and quietly pointed out that the Dreyfoos family was sitting right across from me. Astounded that I had somehow overlooked their nametags, I launched from my seat and went over to thank them for the opportunity to attend the conference. It was then that the late Richard Dreyfoos's son, Wally,

(continued on page 10)

Passion (continued from page 9)

spoke the words I will never forget: "It was always important to Dad that young people should have the opportunity to follow their passions." At that moment, it clicked. Embrace the passion. I had gone to conferences, been on birding trips to California and Maine in the name of conservation, but I had not carried that passion past those trips. My life had returned to normal within a few weeks of each trip's close, and I had tucked away my passion in some unused corner of my mind. But looking at the widow and son of Mr. Dreyfoos, I understood what it meant to be passionate. Passion is love, beyond the love that one can share with a single person. A passion is a pursuit, a dream put in motion with a heavy dose of responsibility.

After the banquet and speeches of the night concluded, I returned to my hotel room, rolled up my sleeves, and penned a list of all I want to do—the events I want to play a part in, the changes I want to see happen. My lips are sealed for now, but rest assured I have since put my plans in motion and I look forward to sharing the results with each and every one of my fellow GOS members.



Jordan Budnik with Thud. Photo courtesy Jordan Budnik.

THE GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY Is Now Accepting Applications for the 2012 RICHARD PARKS SCHOLARSHIP FOR YOUNG BIRDERS

You can attend the Maine Audubon Society's "Coastal Maine Bird Studies for Teens" on spectacular Hog Island, on us!

The Georgia Ornithological Society will send two teens to Maine to take part in a special camp session June 24-29, 2012. Don't miss this chance to bird and explore this legendary island located in Maine's famous Muscongus Bay. Learn about seabird conservation from top ornithologists and add puffins, murrelets, and other coastal birds to your life list. The GOS will cover registration fees and up to \$500 reimbursement for travel expenses. Scholarship recipients arrange their own travel. Food and lodging is included in the camp registration.) For more information about Hog Island and the camp, visit <http://hogisland.audubon.org>

Read what last year's winners had to say about their Hog Island experiences:
<http://www.gos.org/newsletters/201109-GOShawkSep11.pdf>

How to apply: The applicant must be at least 14 and no older than 17 during the camp session and must be a Georgia resident. Complete the application form and write an essay (300-word minimum) about your interest in birds and birding, what you will do with the knowledge you will gain, and how you will spread your interest in birds to friends. Include three letters of recommendation with the application. Scholarship recipients are expected to write an article describing their experiences at camp for the *GOShawk* newsletter.

Deadline is February 18, 2012, for receipt of the application form, essay, and letters of recommendation. The winners will be selected on March 1, 2012. Application form available on the GOS website: <http://www.gos.org/grants/parks.html>

Mail your application to:
Reneé Carleton / 2012 Parks Scholarship
PO Box 225
Taylorsville, GA 30178

Fall Meeting Speakers

By Patti Newell

Richard Crossley was Saturday's keynote speaker at this fall's 2011 meeting. After a windblown day, everyone refueled with the excellent buffet provided by Villas by the Sea. Then we all settled down for the main event, a talk by Richard Crossley. We were all wishing the room had surround sound when he began his presentation by singing "You must have been a beautiful baby." It was the start of an energetic and enthusiastic presentation in which Crossley showed photos from his youth to the present day and told the story of how he came to be the excellent birder, author and photographer he is. He advised us to be better birders by using his guide. He emphasized facts are empty without being linked to concepts and context. A picture of a bird on a blank page makes a person focus on the wrong types of things, like color, size, and pattern that can change with perspective and lead to confusion. Crossley disapproves of these birds on white pages. In his guide, he provides context and encourages us to look at birds in relation to their surroundings. After he showed a rather muscular rendition of himself in a photo, he concluded his entertaining talk with a call to all of us to recognize that the future of birding and conservation lies in our youth. He suggested that we need to create television shows and movies with beautiful young people to send the message to America about birds and conservation.

Friday's talk by Patti Newell (yours truly) had somewhat of a more serious tone. It was about the decline in Rusty Blackbirds and was presented in the guise of a "murder mystery." Patti is a Ph.D. student in the Warnell School of Forestry at the University of Georgia and is the new editor of the *GOShawk*. She discussed her research and potential suspects for the decline in Rusty Blackbirds, pointing out Rusty Blackbirds are now North America's fastest declining songbird species. She noted that the modification or loss of wintering ground habitat is most likely responsible for the decline and that it will be critical to conserve and protect critical winter habitats in the southern states, including Georgia. Her Ph.D. work aims to provide recommendations to land managers for the necessary requirements for wintering Rusty Blackbirds. After the talk, Richard Crossley approached Patti with his feeling that she did not really answer the question about what is causing the decline. His frustration is matched by all those working with the species and trying to isolate the cause of decline so that we can better understand Rusty Blackbirds and can devise ways to help them.



Richard Crossley talking about the future of birding and his experiences as a birder and author. Photo by Joel McNeal.



Crow Blackbird from John Burroughs (1877), *Wake Robin*

GOShawk



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