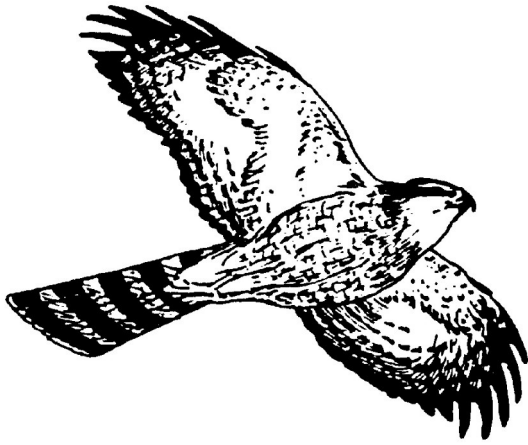


December 2012  
Vol. 39, No. 4



# GOShaw

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society  
[www.gos.org](http://www.gos.org)

## President's Message

By Jim Ferrari

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

The Friday evening speaker was Anna Joy Lehmicke, a Ph.D. student at the University of Georgia, whose talk was titled “Between Chevron and the Deep Blue Gulf: Seaside

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

(continued on page 3)

## CONTENTS

- 1 President's Message
- 2 Member News
- 5 Richard Parks Scholarship Announcement

- 6 Interview with Kenneth Clark
- 7 Nathan Farnau Appointed Conservation Chair
- 8 Importance of Youth Birding
- 10 Black Beard Island Observation
- 12 Fall Meeting Species List
- 13 Winter Meeting Announcement

**Georgia  
Ornithological  
Society**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

<i>President</i>	Jim Ferrari
<i>1st Vice President</i>	Dan Vickers
<i>2nd Vice President</i>	Ed Maioriello
<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>	Bob Sargent
<i>The Oriole, Co-Editors</i>	Bob Sargent Renee Carleton
<i>GOShawk, Editor</i>	Patti Newell
<i>GOShawk, Asst. Editor</i>	Mim Eisenberg
<i>Webmaster</i>	Jim Flynn

**Committee Chairs:**

<i>Checklist &amp; Records:</i>	
Giff Beaton	770-509-1482
<i>Conservation:</i>	
Nathan Farnau	404-849-3843
<i>Earle Greene Award:</i>	
John Swiderski	229-242-8382
<i>Earth Share of Georgia:</i>	
Mark Beebe	770-435-6586
<i>Editorial:</i>	
Bob Sargent	478-397-7962
<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>	
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)

Patti Newell, Editor  
180 East Green Street  
Athens GA 30602  
225-939-8112  
pattijean.newell@gmail.com

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

**Welcome, New Members!**

**Fledgling**

Mason Cline Athens, GA

**Bachman's Sparrow**

Heather E. Davis Macon, GA  
Michael C. Weaver Kennesaw, GA  
Georgia Graves St. Simons Island, GA  
Anna Joy Lehmicke Athens, GA  
Clark Jones Athens, GA  
Elizabeth Hunter Athens, GA

**Quail Covey**

Margaret Anne Carswell Macon, GA  
David and Meghan Hedeon Smyrna, GA

**Red-cockaded Woodpecker**

Jim Diedrick and Lee Anne Richardson Decatur, GA

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**GOS WINTER MEETING**  
*January 18-21, 2013, Tybee Island*

**GOS SPRING MEETING**  
*May 17-19, 2013, Hiawassee*

**GOS GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINES**

**Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grants**  
December 31, 2012

**H. Branch Howe, Jr., Graduate Student Research Grants**  
December 31, 2012

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

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

We were fortunate to have photographer and expert birder Kevin Karlson, coauthor of the ground breaking book, *The Shorebird Guide*, join us for the weekend on Jekyll Island. Kevin kicked off the weekend by leading a Friday afternoon workshop on “Shorebirds by Impression,” attended by 44 people. As a way of reinforcing the lessons from his workshop, Kevin helped lead field trips on Saturday and Sunday to Andrews Island Causeway, Gould's Inlet, and Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area. He also graciously signed books before the Saturday evening banquet, which was very well attended, with 90 people present. After the buffet dinner on Saturday evening, Kevin gave his keynote presentation, “Birds on the Wind: The Miracle of Migration.” The talk featured Karlson's outstanding photographs, an avalanche of jaw-dropping statistics about the migratory feats of birds, and periodic musical interludes. We came away with renewed appreciation for the wonders of bird migration as well as deep admiration for Karlson's skill as a photographer and a birder. At the end of the evening, he left us with a memorable message of hope as he displayed a final set of favorite bird photographs accompanied by a moving recording of “Over the Rainbow” played on the ukulele.

While Kevin Karlson's presentation was the highlight of the banquet, Saturday evening featured other activities as well. Several ornithologists presented research posters before the banquet. Thank you to Clark Jones, Bryan Nuse, and Andrea Ayala, all of the University of Georgia, for sharing their presentations with the GOS membership. Steve Holzman, a diehard supporter of the duck stamp program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), organized a raffle for purchasers of the 2012-13 duck stamp. He and Ashley Harrington sold duck stamps and raffle tickets, raising \$510 for the USFWS refuge system. As Steve is fond of pointing out, 98% of the proceeds from every duck stamp go directly to purchasing or leasing land for the refuge system, which includes many world-class birding locations across the country. We were also treated to a speech by an up-and-coming birder, ninth-grader Evan Barnard, a three-year veteran of GOS meetings (see page 8). Evan spoke about some of his experiences as a young birder and encouraged GOS members to consider mentoring a young person who has shown an interest in birds. He also made an appeal for the society to make more efforts to support youth birding in Georgia. Evan must have hit a nerve with the audience, because he received a standing ovation for his speech.

Over the course of the weekend, GOS members participated in field trips to a variety of locations: Altamaha WMA, Cumberland Island, Jekyll Island Banding Station, Glenville Water Treatment



Anna Joy Lehmicke at the GOS fall Meeting on Jekyll Island. Photo by Phil Hardy.

(continued on page 4)

## President's Message (continued from page 3)

Facility, Gould's Inlet and Andrews Island Causeway, Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, and Sapelo Island. While some visited their locations by car and on foot, others traveled by boat, e.g., to Altamaha Sound, Little Tybee Island, and Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge. The total number of species tallied over the weekend was 190, better than the previous two years, but just a hair above the average of 187 for the previous decade's worth of fall meetings on Jekyll. Some of the "best" birds were Short-eared Owl, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Red-breasted Nuthatch (this is an irruption year for the latter species). One of the most extraordinary sightings—an *Animal Planet* moment if you will—did not involve birds at all. Field trip goes on Blackbeard Island witnessed an alligator attacking and drowning an unfortunate white-tailed deer buck.



Kevin Karlson signing books at the fall meeting. Photo by Phil Hardy.

Another unusual sighting was of a banded Caspian Tern seen on Cumberland Island; it turns out, according to Charlie Muise, that the bird was originally banded on an island in Lake Ontario, nearly 1,000 miles away! While my own field trip to Sapelo was a bust for the Plain Chachalaca (except for a single tail feather by found Terry and Peggy Moore), the species was seen on Sunday near the dump, so at least one group succeeded in sighting this elusive species.

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

As I write this article, in early November, with memories of the fall GOS meeting still fresh, the Executive Committee is busy preparing for our next meeting, to be held in January on Tybee Island. As usual, we will be meeting over the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend, from January 18-21. Following the pattern we established some five years ago, our meeting will be held at the Ocean Plaza Beach Resort, right on the beachfront and close to all the birding action. This year's keynote speaker will be artist and author Julie Zickefoose, who will be speaking on "Lifestyles of the Small and Colorful: The Eastern Wood Warblers" at the Saturday evening banquet. She will also be signing books on the evening of the banquet, so be sure to bring along your copy of her recently published book, *The Bluebird Effect: Uncommon Bonds with Common Birds*, for her to sign. Finally, Julie will also hold a special workshop on Friday the 18<sup>th</sup>, titled "Enjoy Bird Feeding More." If you are not already familiar with Julie Zickefoose from her books or her regular contributions to *BirdWatcher's Digest*, learn more about her artwork and writing at her website: [www.juliezickefoose.com](http://www.juliezickefoose.com). I hope to see you in January!



**CALLING ALL BIRDERS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 14 AND 17**  
THE GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
Is Now Accepting Applications for the  
**2013 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!

***Application deadline is February 15, 2013***

The Georgia Ornithological Society will send two teens to Maine to take part in a special camp session **June 23-28, 2013**. 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, murres, 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/201209-September\\_2012\\_GOShawk.pdf](http://www.gos.org/newsletters/201209-September_2012_GOShawk.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 words 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.

*The application form, essay, and letters of recommendation must be received by February 15, 2013, to be considered. The winners will be selected on March 1, 2013.*

**Mail your application to**  
**Reneé Carleton / 2013 Parks Scholarship**  
**PO Box 225**  
**Talorsville, GA 30178**

***Application forms are available on the GOS website***  
***<http://www.gos.org/grants/parks.html>***

Editors Note: This is the first of what will be periodic articles by Phil Hardy of long-standing GOS members.

## **Please Meet Kenneth B. “Ken” Clark**

*By Phil Hardy*

My first meeting of Ken Clark was in October 2001 at the GOS fall meeting held in Savannah/Skidaway Island. During the banquet meal, my wife and I were seated with Ken and his wife Arlene. It wasn't Ken's full head of white, wavy hair and ever-present smile that made me remember him that day. It was the fact that Ken, like birds, could fly. During the meal and the “getting to know you chat” at our table, I learned that Ken flew one of my favorite airplanes: the Lockheed P-38 Lightning. From that moment on, I was a Ken Clark fan.

If a rolling stone gathers no moss, then neither would Ken. Born in Kansas City, Missouri, while his parents were en route from Montana to New Jersey, Ken would also call other states home as his father's career in the electric power industry burgeoned: Ohio, Indiana, Iowa and Washington. Graduating high school in Seattle in 1940, Ken was active in chorus and theater and was even offered a scholarship to a local theatre day-school and became a member of the company of the Seattle Repertory Playhouse for two years before entering military service in the Army Air Force in 1942.

Ken fledged by earning his aviator wings and a commission as a second lieutenant in October 1943. For six months he served as a flight instructor, where he says, “Becoming an instructor probably saved my life because that's when I really learned to fly airplanes.” Ken then called New Guinea home as he flew 100 missions in 300 hours of combat time, mostly in the Philippine Islands. He was one of the first eight fighter pilots to land in Japan at war's end, in Gen. Douglas MacArthur's Air Honor Guard.

Upon the cessation of World War II, Ken remained on active duty, retiring in 1974 as a “full-bird” colonel with 32 years of service to the United States. After military service, while on the staff for the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Ken traveled the length and breadth of Georgia before establishing his own consulting business. Ken lived on Lake Tobesofkee in western Bibb County, where he and Arlene tended three Paso Fino horses and where Ken's interest in wild birds began to take root. It was Arlene's love of animals and nature that caused Ken to develop an interest in birding in spite of the fact that Ken's maternal grandmother gave him his first bird field guide around the age of seven. As a child, Ken's pet, one-eyed chicken was perhaps a formative influence on his later interest in birds.

As a member of the Ocmulgee Audubon Society, Ken participated in field trips, where he embraced birding. Field trips with GOS to Jekyll Island solidified his interest, and Ken became a fully fledged birder. At a 1977 Christmas Bird Count at Lake Tobesofkee, he recalled an adult Bald Eagle fly-by right in front of his birding group that included then newbie Dr. Ty Ivey. That moment and Ken's mentoring provided the spark that helped launch Ty's career as a birder.

Ken has birded in Puerto Rico, southeastern Arizona, the Rio Grande Valley in Texas and in Michigan to see the Kirtland's Warbler. When asked if he had a favorite bird, Ken thought for a moment and then said, “It would have to be the Painted Bunting.” I can't say that I blame him. He has a good eye for color, even at 89 years young.

I asked Ken if he had a particularly memorable birding moment. He immediately recalled the

(continued on page 7)

**Ken Clark** (continued from page 6)

1996 joint meeting between the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) and GOS on Jekyll Island. JIBS (Jekyll Island Banding Station) was up and running, with several members checking out the many species of birds being caught in the mist nets there. At that time, the homeowner of the large house adjacent to the path that leads to the banding station protested rather vociferously about the cruel and unusual treatment of the wild birds. Ken, representing GOS and the then-president of the AOU, decided to make an appointment and call on the homeowner to explain that the work was indeed humane and scientific. Ken's charm and charisma must have worked because he says, "They became GOS members after our encounter that day." But the story doesn't end there. Their membership wasn't because they were suddenly GOS fans and interested in our work. Ken recalls, "They joined our organization to keep a watchful eye on banding practices and GOS in general!"

Ken served as president of the Ocmulgee Audubon Society for two terms and edited their newsletter for at least ten years. He served on the GOS leadership team for an equal period of time: four years as second vice president under Branch Howe, four years as president from 1995 to 1999, as well as two years, as past president, on the Executive Committee. During that time he undertook the unofficial role of historian, saw the office formalized on the Executive Committee, and continued to perform in that office until relieved by John Swiderski. Ken's organizational and planning skills served him well while heading up GOS. After Arlene's death in 2005, Ken moved from Lake Tobesofkee to Carlyle Place in Macon. There he met and married his current wife Leora (or "Lee," as she prefers to be addressed) in 2007. Ken still enjoys bird watching and golf. Ken chairs the Development Committee and helps organize patriotic programs for Memorial Day, Armistice Day and so forth at Carlyle Place. Lee is well known to Middle Georgia Community Theater patrons as an actress and director. She and Ken have appeared on stage together at Theater Macon and Macon Little Theater.

**Farnau Appointed GOS Conservation Chair**

*By Jim Ferrari*

Nathan Farnau has been appointed chair of the GOS Conservation Committee. Nathan has a B.S. in Marine Biology from Auburn University and is senior biologist with the Georgia Aquarium. A member of the GOS Checklist and Records Committee, Nathan is familiar with how GOS works; he is also a crack birder and an active member of Atlanta Audubon Society, helping to lead their trips for the past four years. Nathan has been birding since he was nine and has conducted field work on a variety of species, including ducks, egrets, shorebirds, and passerines. If you have a conservation issue that you'd like brought to the attention of GOS, please contact Nathan at [conservation@gos.org](mailto:conservation@gos.org). Welcome aboard, Nathan.

**Go Paperless!**

Want to save trees and reduce printing costs by receiving the *GOShawk* electronically? Contact Cathy Ricketts, the GOS membership chairperson, at [gosmembership@gmail.com](mailto:gosmembership@gmail.com), and let her know that you would like to receive the *GOShawk* by e-mail. Cathy will make sure that you go electronic starting with the March 2013 issue.

## The Importance of Expanding Youth Birding

By Evan Barnard

Riding in the back of a truck, bumping along down one of Sapelo Island's numerous dusty dirt back roads, I came to the very place that for two years in a row I had observed the utterly obnoxious black peacock-like Chachalacas. However, this year, I was left astonished. No Chachalacas were to be found, save for a lone dark feather that a group member found at a different part of the island. But there were plenty of other worthy finds that day, from Black-throated Green Warblers to Merlins, plus butterflies dotting the last of summer's blooms, and even a black racer peeking through the brush. While that feather may have been the only trace of that elusive game bird that day, there was no shortage of enthusiastic and entertaining GOS members to share the day, led by the infamous Mr. Hodges, a.k.a. the "Chachalaca whisperer."

After another majestic end-of-the-adventure boat ride back from the island, it was off to the GOS Saturday night banquet. Clutching our shorebird field guides, my brother Malcolm and I waited patiently to meet Mr. Karlson. A great photo op, then time for a much-needed and delicious meal.

I was a bit nervous as I was about to address all of the GOS members about the importance of expanding youth birding, a concept I feel is much needed. As I hoped, I was warmly received by all. I would like to share my speech with the members who could not attend and to remind those who were there about this important cause. Now is the time to get started on establishing the future of our wonderful organization. The following is what I shared at the banquet. I hope that we can all work together and make this a reality.

*Good evening! My name is Evan Barnard, and I am a ninth grader at Johns Creek High School. I am thankful to have the privilege to speak to you all this evening. Tonight I am here to talk about youth birding and how the Georgia Ornithological Society can be more involved in inspiring youth to become birders. Let me tell you how GOS has impacted me and my interest in birding. I have always loved birds and the outdoors. My parents were not birders, but we visited lots of national parks and other wildlife areas. On one of these excursions three years ago, my family and I took a fall trip to Sapelo Island. On the way back on the ferry, I saw a*



Evan Barnard giving his memorable speech on youth birding at the fall GOS meeting. Photo by Phil Hardy.

(continued on page 9)



**Youth Birding** (continued from page 8)

man wearing a Nature Conservancy and GOS name tag, so I decided to talk to him because I love The Nature Conservancy's conservation work. That man was Mr. Malcolm Hodges. Soon, he was showing me my first Roseate Spoonbill with his awesome binoculars. Mr. Hodges suggested that I get involved with GOS, and from that moment on, he and I have been excellent friends and he has been my birding mentor. I haven't missed a fall GOS meeting since then, and I have been going on his Sapelo trip for the last three Fall meetings, including today.

I can vividly remember my first GOS meeting. That Saturday, I went on Mr. Hodges's birding trip to Sapelo. I didn't even have good binoculars, but everyone shared theirs and also made sure I could see through their scopes. All the group members were very welcoming and gave me identification tips. The next day, I went to Altamaha and went birding with Jon Dunn. What could be better than birding with Mr. Hodges one day and Mr. Dunn the next? And tomorrow, I am fortunate to be birding with Mr. Karlson. Many GOS members, like Mr. Sargent, Mr. Muise, and others, have helped me as well over the past few years, and I always read the GOS newsletter and The Oriole.

I have also been involved in the Youth Birding Competition for the past three years. The first year, my brother Malcolm and I, new to birding, only identified 54 species. The second year, we worked diligently with our mentor, Mr. Hodges, and during that year's event we identified 130 species, taking second place in the high school division. To end a great day, Mr. Hodges was awarded the Mentoring Award for all the hours he spent teaching us.

I can definitely say that nature and birding have changed how I look at the world and what I can do to contribute. I volunteer for the Chattahoochee Nature Center, the National Park Service, and The Nature Conservancy, and am also doing science fair research on how roads affect habitats. I completed a project with a Braille nature trail up in Rome, Georgia, for The Nature Conservancy with Mr. Hodges, and I am now working to build a new Braille nature trail at James H. Floyd State Park so the visually-impaired can experience nature. In addition, I hope to be an ecologist, and am considering pursuing ornithology as a career.

All of this happened because of that fateful day when I met Mr. Hodges and became involved in GOS. So how many other budding youth ornithologists are out there who could benefit from having a great mentor and being involved in GOS? What could becoming involved with birding mean for them? GOS members have an incredible opportunity to reach out to kids across the state and share their knowledge and enthusiasm for birds and habitats. It is so important for kids to know that birding is a common hobby and that if they like birds they are certainly not alone. If I mentioned I liked birds at school, I would get teased and people started to call me "Bird" and "Bird-nard" and I started to think that birding was unpopular and I was the only one with that hobby. When I joined GOS, though, I found that I was not alone, and I also realized that whenever I went birding with this organization or others, I would always have friends who shared my interests.

There are plenty of kids interested in birding, and GOS can facilitate their involvement by reaching out. GOS can help increase the number of youth birders, especially within the organization itself. GOS could provide more opportunities like youth bird walks and increase the availability of

(continued on page 10)

**Youth Birding** (continued from page 9)

*wonderful mentors. It would be great if young birders could have more access to the help and support of their many new friends. There is a great difference between looking up a goldfinch in a field guide at home and learning the call of the Acadian Flycatcher, which I have come to know as the "Gesundheit" bird, in the field with experts. GOS can reach out to spread the word and connect youth with adult mentors and other youth. Finally, we can encourage youth to join GOS and even form local junior GOS clubs in their areas to foster more widespread interest in birding at an early age. Why is youth involvement important for GOS? We can educate the next generation of birders. We can ensure that the organization's goals are continued. We can bring youthful enthusiasm to GOS. If we can work together to get more kids involved in birding, then the next generation will continue GOS's mission. Thank you.*

**Interesting Observation While on a Field Trip to Blackbeard Island NWR**

*By Phil Hardy*

Two interesting observations were made on Saturday, October 13, 2012, while on a field trip to Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge off the Georgia coast. This was just one of many field trips organized by the Georgia Ornithological Society for its fall meeting held on Jekyll Island from October 11 to 14, 2012. Kevin Karlson was the keynote speaker Saturday evening during the banquet.

Our group of 14 birders departed the municipal docks at Darien, Georgia, well before sunrise on a large pontoon boat piloted by Capt. Phillip Kempton, who shared with us information about the Darien River, the barrier islands, and the importance that Georgia's coast and marshes have for the shrimp industry. He stopped the boat one time during the two-hour ride for us to study shorebirds resting on an oyster bed. While observing the birds, we witnessed an Osprey carrying a fish in its talons, obviously headed somewhere to devour his breakfast. Enter a Bald Eagle from above. The Osprey apparently had been harassed by these bullies before and wisely dropped the fish from his grip. With about two beats from his powerful, nimble wings, the eagle snatched the free-falling fish from mid-air like a center fielder would catch an easy pop fly. The Osprey hightailed it out of there to go fish again, while the eagle flew away with the spoils of war. This was my first observation of kleptoparasitism by a Bald Eagle of an Osprey. We were in the right place at the right time. But our luck continued. ...

We docked our pontoon boat at Blackbeard Island and were greeted by USFWS biologist Chris Depkin, our field trip leader. After a briefing we headed down a well maintained sandy road that entered into a maritime live oak forest heavily draped with Spanish moss, like clothes drying on a line. Birds were few but evident. The Gray Catbird convention on the island was interrupted by our meandering through their midst. They were everywhere!

At one point Depkin told us that just around the next turn were wax myrtle trees that usually held some warblers at this time of year. He said there was also a big alligator that lived in the area and that if we were quiet we might see him. Well, alligators aren't anything new for me, as I have them living in the lake in my back yard. But birders on our field trip from large metropolitan areas and more northerly climes probably don't get the chance to see one very often. Sure enough, we stealthily rounded the curve in the road, and there was the reptile out sunning. If he was an

(continued on page 11)

## Blackbeard Island Observation (continued from page 10)

inch long he was at least eleven feet and well fed, judging by his massive girth. Chris told us the gator was a male because females don't get that long. After everyone got long, lasting looks and plenty of photographs of the lizard, it decided to become shy and slipped under the thick, carpet-like layer of duck weed and a cornucopia of weeds and water plants. Only about three feet of its tail were visible.

We walked another thirty feet down the dike we were birding on and began seeing more cat-birds. Suddenly the water exploded with a mighty splash where we had observed the alligator. A bleating animal was bawling, as if to say "Somebody help me!" We quick-stepped it back to our previous spot to see a white-tailed deer being pulled under the surface of the water as the alligator attempted to drown it. The bleating continued as the antlers and head of the deer surfaced for life-giving air only to have the massive weight of the alligator pull it downward again. There was no "death roll" required; raw bulk and weight were all the alligator needed to subdue this meal. And then it was over. The now exhausted deer accepted its fate and slipped quietly under the carpet of green vegetation one last time, never to be seen again. That was where the alligator would store its prize until it was macerated enough to be devoured.

Some of the women on our field trip were obviously upset by the taking of a life in front of us. As one participant wiped a tear from her eye, I offered that these events occur every day and have for thousands of years, whether we are there to witness them or not. Was it any different than the Osprey that took the fish earlier that morning? The fish had a life too, just like the deer did. But there was something personal, something intangible about hearing the helpless bleating of the deer that made one want to come to its rescue. A life was being taken merely a few feet from us as we watched in horror and amazement yet virtually powerless to do anything about it or rescue the deer. If any one of us had attempted to give assistance to the deer, we could have been taken by the gator and/or mauled by the animal we were trying to help.

Eat or be eaten is the unwritten rule of nature. Just as the Purple Martins of spring devour dragonflies in my backyard, this alligator took similar-sized prey (for its body mass and size), such as deer and wild hogs that came to drink from its ambush point. As Bruce Hornsby once sang, "That's just the way it is." Life goes on one day at a time. If it doesn't, death occurs. Even in death, life is given to others in the animal kingdom. That's just the way it is.

As a bird watcher, I have been fortunate to witness many interesting things in the great outdoors. These two observations while on a field trip to Blackbeard Island NWR off the Georgia coast in 2012 were two of the most interesting and exciting ones those of us participating in that field trip will remember.



Birders on Blackbeard Island NWR that fateful day.  
Photo by Phil Hardy.

## Species seen at the GOS Fall Meeting on Jekyll Island, October 11-14, 2012

Compiled by Dan Vickers

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Black-bellied Plover	Northern Flicker	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Canada Goose	Semipalmated Plover	Pileated Woodpecker	Blackpoll Warbler
Wood Duck	Piping Plover	American Kestrel	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Mallard	Killdeer	Merlin	Palm Warbler
Mottled Duck	American Oystercatcher	Peregrine Falcon	Pine Warbler
Blue-winged Teal	American Avocet	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Northern Shoveler	Spotted Sandpiper	"Empid" Flycatcher	Yellow-throated Warbler
Northern Pintail	Solitary Sandpiper	Eastern Phoebe	Prairie Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Greater Yellowlegs	Eastern Kingbird	Black-throated Green Warbler
Ruddy Duck	Willet	Loggerhead Shrike	Yellow-breasted Chat
Plain Chachalaca	Lesser Yellowlegs	White-eyed Vireo	Eastern Towhee
Northern Bobwhite	Whimbrel	Yellow-throated Vireo	Clay-colored Sparrow
Wild Turkey	Marbled Godwit	Blue-headed Vireo	Field Sparrow
Pied-billed Grebe	Ruddy Turnstone	Red-eyed Vireo	Savannah Sparrow
Horned Grebe	Red Knot	Blue Jay	Nelson's Sparrow
Wood Stork	Sanderling	American Crow	Seaside Sparrow
Northern Gannet	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Fish Crow	Song Sparrow
Double-crested Cormorant	Western Sandpiper	Tree Swallow	Swamp Sparrow
Anhinga	Least Sandpiper	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Summer Tanager
American White Pelican	Pectoral Sandpiper	Barn Swallow	Scarlet Tanager
Brown Pelican	Dunlin	Carolina Chickadee	Northern Cardinal
American Bittern	Short-billed Dowitcher	Tufted Titmouse	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Least Bittern	Wilson's Snipe	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Blue Grosbeak
Great Blue Heron	Bonaparte's Gull	Brown-headed Nuthatch	Indigo Bunting
Great Egret	Laughing Gull	House Wren	Painted Bunting
Snowy Egret	Ring-billed Gull	Winter Wren	Bobolink
Little Blue Heron	Herring Gull	Sedge Wren	Red-winged Blackbird
Tricolored Heron	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Marsh Wren	Eastern Meadowlark
Reddish Egret	Great Black-backed Gull	Carolina Wren	Common Grackle
Cattle Egret	Caspian Tern	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Boat-tailed Grackle
Green Heron	Gull-billed Tern	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Brown-headed Cowbird
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Forster's Tern	Eastern Bluebird	House Finch
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Royal Tern	Veery	House Sparrow
White Ibis	Sandwich Tern	Gray-cheeked Thrush	
Glossy Ibis	Black Skimmer	Swainson's Thrush	
Roseate Spoonbill	Rock Pigeon	American Robin	190 Species
Black Vulture	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Gray Catbird	
Turkey Vulture	Mourning Dove	Northern Mockingbird	
Osprey	Common Ground-Dove	Brown Thrasher	
Northern Harrier	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	European Starling	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Barn Owl	Cedar Waxwing	
Cooper's Hawk	Eastern Screech-Owl	Ovenbird	
Bald Eagle	Great Horned Owl	Northern Waterthrush	
Red-shouldered Hawk	Barred Owl	Black-and-white Warbler	
Red-tailed Hawk	Short-eared Owl	Tennessee Warbler	
Clapper Rail	Chimney Swift	Connecticut Warbler	
King Rail	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Common Yellowthroat	
Virginia Rail	Belted Kingfisher	Hooded Warbler	
Sora	Red-headed Woodpecker	American Redstart	
Common Gallinule	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Cape May Warbler	
American Coot	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Northern Parula	
	Downy Woodpecker	Magnolia Warbler	
	Hairy Woodpecker	Yellow Warbler	



## Winter Meeting Preview Tybee Island, Georgia January 18-21, 2013



The keynote speaker will be Julie Zickefoose. Julie is a widely published natural history writer and artist. Educated at Harvard University in biology and art, she worked for six years as a field biologist for The Nature Conservancy before turning to a freelance art career. Her observations on the natural history and behavior of birds stem from more than three decades of experience in the field. She has presented illustrated lectures for nature organizations and festivals across the country, and exhibited her paintings at universities, museums, galleries, and in juried shows. Illustration credits include *The New Yorker*, *Smithsonian*, *Spider*, *Cricket*, and *Ladybug*. She has written and illustrated articles for *Country Journal*, and *Bird Watcher's Digest* has published more than 30 of Julie's articles and 17 of her cover paintings since 1986.

**KEYNOTE PRESENTATION: LIFESTYLES OF THE SMALL AND COLORFUL: THE EASTERN WOOD WARBLERS** Wood warblers are tropical birds that, over eons, learned to fly farther and farther north to breed. While it may spend three months on the breeding grounds, a wood warbler spends the other nine in transit and residing on the wintering grounds. In this illustrated lecture, Julie explores the enormous importance that migration has in shaping warbler lifestyles, foraging strategies, and even physiognomy.

Julie will also do a workshop presentation on Friday afternoon on **ENJOYING BIRD FEEDING MORE**. This short indoor presentation will demonstrate how to set up the ideal feeding station. Profiling many different feeders and foods, from hopper to hummingbird feeders, and sunflower seed to crushed eggshells, Julie will show us how to attract and keep the greatest diversity of birds in our yards and gardens. The workshop will be held on Friday, January 18th at 4:00 to 5:30 pm in the Conference Center. The cost for this workshop is \$10. Advanced registration is required.

The Friday night speaker will be **Abby Sterling, of Little St. Simons Island**, discussing her work with Wilson's Plovers and American Oystercatchers.

Again this year, GOS is sponsoring a **photo contest** at our Tybee Island Meeting in January. There are four categories to choose from:

**Birds from East of the Mississippi**  
**Birds from Outside North America**

**Birds from West of the Mississippi**  
**Real Life Angry Birds**

Meeting attendees will vote on a winner in each category, and Julie Zickefoose, our keynote speaker, will select a Best in Show from all categories. So get out there and shoot some photos, or go through your files and select the best. Entries must be received no later than January 6, 2013. For entry information, please contact [ellen.miller@allscripts.com](mailto:ellen.miller@allscripts.com). Entries will be auctioned off, with proceeds going to benefit the Youth Birding Competition.

**Conference Hotel Details:**  
Ocean Plaza Beach Resort  
1401 Strand Avenue  
Tybee Island, GA 31328  
[www.oceanplaza.com](http://www.oceanplaza.com)

Room Rate: \$79 Inland, \$99 Oceanside  
Tell the hotel you are registering for the GOS Winter Conference to get the special rate.  
Cut-off date for GOS rate: 12/18/2012  
Call for reservations: (912) 786-7777

# 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.