

December 2014  
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# GOShaw

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society  
www.gos.org

## President's Message

By Steve Holzman

I'm writing this the day after my second CBC of the season. I think most of you know that acronym. Audubon's Christmas Bird Count is the official title, and for 115 years, birders have been fanning out across the country to count every bird they see or hear in a 15-mile-diameter circle. Not only is the CBC a holiday tradition for many of us, but more than 200 studies have been published using CBC data. For example, in the 1980s CBC data showed a significant decline in the population of American Black Ducks. Conservation measures, including harvest restrictions, were put in place to stem that decline. In 2009, CBC data helped document how climate change was reshaping the ranges of several North American birds. In addition to the citizen science aspects of the CBC, these annual bird counts help us connect with old friends, make new ones, and get a well-deserved break from the hectic nature of the holiday season—not to mention helping us expend some calories before all the cookies show up at our holiday parties. GOS members both lead and participate in many of these counts. You'll be getting this after the current CBC season is

over, but I encourage you to visit the GOS webpage to find a CBC near you so that you can put it on your to-do list for next December.

GOS will be meeting in Savannah in January and in Hiawassee in May. I hope you can join us. We have some great speakers lined up, and of course the birding is always awesome. You can also pick up one of our great new shirts at our January meeting. Woody Hickcox has produced a beautiful painting of an American Oystercatcher that will grace the back of these new shirts. Congratulations to Woody for winning our T-shirt design contest.

I saw all the members of the Georgia Checklist and Records Committee while doing a CBC on the coast. They let me know that the GCRC voted to remove Ross's Goose, Glaucous Gull, and Manx Shearwater from the review list and to add Black Rail. This means they are no longer asking you to submit your sightings of the former to the committee, but they would like to receive your rare bird report forms if you are lucky enough to hear or see a Black Rail. Right now we have no knowledge of any breeding Black Rails in the state. This is a rapidly declining

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Ornithological  
Society**

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**Committee Chairs:**

<i>Checklist &amp; Records:</i>	Giff Beaton	770-509-1482
<i>Conservation:</i>	Nathan Farnau	404-849-3843
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<i>Education:</i>	Renee Carleton	706-238-5892
<hr/>		
<i>Georgia Rare Bird Alert</i>	Jeff Sewell, Compiler	770-493-8862

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Patti Wohner, Editor  
423-999-9019  
pjwohner@gmail.com

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

**Welcome, New Members!**

**Quail Covey**

Jayne, Craig, Calvyn, Carolyn,  
and James Hatcher

Marietta, GA

**Bachman's Sparrow**

Maureen Krivo  
Christine Kozlosky  
Jessica Searcy  
Bill Everitt  
Terry Miller  
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Kennesaw, GA  
Athens, GA  
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Joel Owen  
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Marion Dobbs  
Charles, Tracey, and Allen Muise

Athens, GA  
Memphis, TN  
Athens, GA  
Athens, GA  
Watkinsville, GA  
Snellville, GA  
Athens, GA  
Rome, GA  
Barnesville, GA



Guest speakers at the 2014 fall meeting at Jekyll Island. Elizabeth Hunter and Laura Erickson. Photo courtesy Phillip Hardy.

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

species in need of documentation and conservation. The Georgia DNR is actively looking for the species in Georgia, and GOS has offered help where needed.

This past fall I saw a great presentation by Dr. Douglas W. Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home*. His talk about native plants and birds really hit home. Sometimes we forget about those little crawlies that munch the leaves in our yard. Butterfly and moth caterpillars provide the nutrition that nestlings need to make it to fledging. When we plant non-native shrubs and trees in our yards we limit the food available to the birds. The difference in numbers of caterpillars found on native vs. non-native plants is dramatic. This spring, consider replacing some of your non-native plants with native trees and shrubs. Consider letting those oak and black cherry saplings grow. Instead of another autumn olive or forsythia, consider adding a native viburnum or crabapple. Visit Dr. Tallamy's webpage at <http://udel.edu/~dtallamy/host/> to see how native plants rank in terms of lepidopteran use.



*Helianthus* spp. sunflowers support more than 75 species of native Lepidoptera. Photo courtesy Google.

Thanks for supporting GOS over the years, and please consider renewing for 2015. We need your support and would miss you if you left. If you are one of those birders who chases after rarities, or sits at the breakfast table watching the chickadees take one sunflower seed at a time, or simply enjoys reading about birds and their fascinating lives, GOS is the place for you. See you in Savannah or Hiwassee.

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**Reminder to Vote in the Georgia Ornithological Society 2015 Photo Contest**

By Steve Holzman

Please visit the GOS Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/174830845096/>) to vote for the best photo in each of the three 2015 categories:

1. Birds from my backyard habitat (Georgia)
2. Birds in winter (any region of the United States)
3. Humorous bird photos (any region of the United States)

Photos will be posted to the GOS Facebook page for voting through January 3 2015. The number of Likes will determine the winner in each of the three categories. The winning photo from each category will be printed and shown at the GOS Winter Meeting in Savannah, where voting for Best in Show will take place. You must be present to win Best in Show.



Eastern Bluebirds on an icy morning. Photo from entries on GOS Facebook Page.

## Camp TALON Turns Five

By Bob Sargent

Camp TALON (Teen Adventures Learning Ornithology and Nature) number five crashed onto the Georgia coast in the first week of June. This year's camp included 16 bird-crazed teens (the maximum we could take), the usual overstuffed daily itinerary, a small army of gifted volunteer teachers, and Julie Duncan and myself, the two weary but thrilled organizers, primary teachers, and sometime drill sergeants. Most of us gathered, as usual, at a K-Mart in Macon to catch the bus at midday on June 1<sup>st</sup>. The repeat campers (eight of the 16 teens) immediately sought out one another in the parking lot, swapping birding tales and explaining their listing goals for the week. The new campers on the block could easily be spotted by the untrained eye as they stood silently by their parents like flightless nestlings, perhaps a bit apprehensive about what was in store for them. Five minutes after we boarded the bus, all of the bonds had formed; the birders clustered in a lek at the back of the bus, and the driver and I (and one shy camper) were left alone at the front, each side eyeing the other. Applying one of the lessons I learned early as a kid on a ranch—go ahead and take the bull by the horns—I weaved my way down the center aisle toward the lek as the bus jangled down the cobblestone rough and nauseatingly long I-16, handing out hats and bird books and journals and pencils and checklists. I gave the group a brief introductory spiel, popped *The Life of Birds* into the DVD player, and settled into a seat behind the driver to catch the only breather I expected to get for the next five days.

We arrived at Epworth by the Sea on St. Simons Island by 4:30 pm, stowed our gear in the cabin, grabbed a bite to eat, and then headed to Jekyll Island for some birding. As we headed for the island, the birders spotted four American White Pelicans at the Marshes of Glynn—a terrific start. The evening tides weren't favorable for shore-birding early in the week (i.e., dead low tide was 6:00 to 7:00 pm), so we birded upland areas after dinner and put off going to the beaches until near sundown. There wasn't much activity at the amphitheater pond, though we did manage to find both night-heron species. We headed to the campground, approaching it from the bordering dirt road, as there was simply no way that we were going to drive the 40-passenger bus through the camp. As we poured out the bus and headed for the feeder station campsite, we were brought up short by some familiar faces staring our way from the campsite closest to the road—the Muise family. Charlie and the teens exchanged greetings, but the conversation came to an abrupt halt when we noticed the Painted Buntings perched on the feeders. Later that evening we walked out on the beach via the 4-H Center. There were no birds in sight, and the reason why was quickly apparent: the wind was howling from the north, and the sand on the upper beach was pelting us like hail. Nobody pleaded to turn back, maybe because it was the first night and all of the gas tanks were still full, so off we went, walking rapidly toward South Beach, hoping to see something that resembled a bird before the sun sank in the west. At dusk we could just make out the faint outline of a large flock of Royal Terns huddled near the southwest corner of the island, as well as a handful of intrepid skimmers flailing against the wind as they fought their way up the beach.

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### Go Paperless!

Want to save trees and reduce printing costs by receiving the *GOShawk* electronically? Contact Shannon Fair, 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. Shannon will make sure that you go electronic starting in 2015.

## Camp TALON Turns Five *(continued from page 4)*

The first full day of camp found us riding in the back of pickup trucks on Little St. Simons Island (LSSI), which were piloted by Laura and Rachel, two of the island's splendid team of naturalists. As usual, the maritime forest on this island paradise was brimming with Yellow-throated Warblers, Northern Parulas, Great Crested Flycatchers, White-eyed Vireos, and Summer Tanagers, and sightings or snatches of songs of Painted Buntings quickly became routine. But the day didn't totally belong to the birds; five minutes into the trip to Sancho Panza Beach, everybody was bailing out of the trucks to watch Rachel corral a feisty Yellow Rat Snake. This was just the start of a respectable list of "herp" sightings and "soundings" we compiled that week. The frogs in particular orchestrated a fine chorus, especially the ubiquitous Pig Frogs at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (Okefenokee NWR). The campers were treated to the sight of 20 Roseate Spoonbills at Myrtle Pond and had several opportunities to photograph Least Bitterns, Black-necked Stilts, and Mottled Ducks at that pond. The shorebird diversity on the beaches was excellent considering the late date for migration, as we saw Red Knot (just one), Marbled Godwits, Whimbrel (one), Ruddy Turnstones, Dunlins, and Semipalmated Sandpipers, along with species that nest on the coast, such as Wilson's Plovers, Least Terns, and Gull-billed Terns. We stopped for lunch at the "barn," where the campers listened to talks about maritime debris (plastic, cans, and other problems that accumulate on beaches) and about learning bird songs. Monday afternoon found us on Main Beach, where we picked up a few more shorebird species and talked about the biology of Horseshoe Crabs.

Tim Keyes joined us Monday evening for some birding on St. Simons Island, starting at the pier, where he immediately found a pair of Gray Kingbirds and their active nest in a tree in the parking lot. We pointed a scope at the tree, and were completely absorbed in kingbird ecstasy when we realized that the people eating dinner on the deck of a nearby restaurant and bar (in line of sight of the scope) were staring back at us, probably assuming that we were pointing the scope at them. One of them bounded down the restaurant stairs and headed for us at a trot. I braced myself for an earful, but in the next breath was tickled to find that the restaurant patron was a UGA grad student who wanted in on the birding action. We made a couple of other stops before checking out Bloody Marsh, where we blundered into one of the week's best highlights: two adult Clapper Rails shepherding seven black fuzzy chicks in the marsh (25-30 feet away) below the jogging trail on Ocean Drive. The adults decided to get a start on the next brood while we were standing there, and, of course, half of the teens had their cameras ready. I shudder to think about where those photos will appear. The tide was too far out when we arrived at Gould's Inlet, but we spotted a couple of Black Scoters feeding offshore, and the teens found plenty of things to amuse them, such as the bulldog chasing a skimmer back and forth across the sandbar (grrr!) and the woman in the bathing suit who spent most of an hour shooting "selfies" with her phone camera. I wandered over to talk to a



Heading off to Little St. Simons Island. Photo by Julie Duncan.

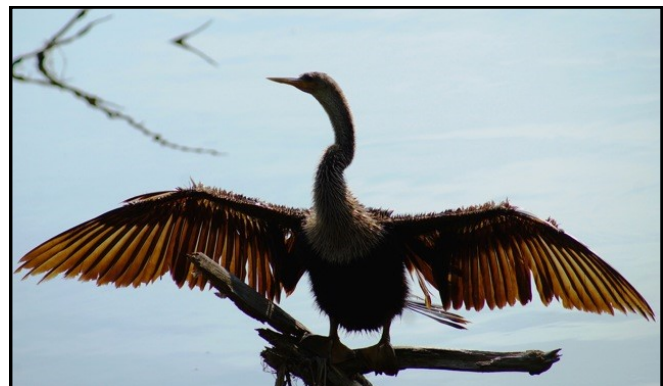
*(continued on page 6)*

## Camp TALON Turns Five *(continued from page 5)*

stranger who was pointing his phone at the sky, figuring this was going to be the night for bizarre behavior. He was using an application called “Skyview” to locate the spot on the horizon where the International Space Station would appear in the next 15-20 minutes. Sure enough, the station rocketed over the horizon right on the mark and on time, and blazed overhead like a comet as all of us stood there with our mouths open. I asked him to show us something else, and moments later the campers were using my scope to study the rings of Saturn. Isn’t that the way it always is with birding? Even when the birds aren’t cooperating, there’s always something to look at and somebody in the group ready to teach you something new.

Tuesday morning we tried out a new destination for the camp: Okefenokee NWR. We stopped at a gas station near I-95 to pick up Dr. John Kricher and his wife, Martha Vaughan, our special guests for that day. The staff at the refuge could not have been more helpful; in fact, they loaned two of their interns to us for the morning, so we literally experienced a guided visit. We walked a short nature trail near the Folkston entrance visitor center, drove the eight-mile Swamp Island Drive, stopped to inspect a Red-cockaded Woodpecker cluster and a recently-burned longleaf pine forest, and hiked the 0.75-mile-long new boardwalk out to the 50-foot observation tower. Among the many birding highlights were the calling Northern Bobwhite near the visitors’ center, a lone Swallow-tailed Kite soaring over the nature trail, the singing Bachman’s Sparrow at the first longleaf stop, a Barred Owl perched in the trees just a stone’s throw from the teens and their cameras, the six-foot alligator floating just two feet from the boardwalk where we stood, and the singing Prothonotary Warbler perched 10 feet up in a cypress tree next to the boardwalk. Back at Epworth by the Sea that afternoon, we were entertained by John Kricher’s provocative presentation about bird migration and conservation, after which I did my best to follow him by teaching the teens about bird morphology and anatomy. I should explain here that Camp TALON wasn’t created just to promote birding; the camp’s focus is all about promoting in young people an appreciation and understanding of nature. We want the campers to be obsessed with birds, of course. But more important, we want them to be fascinated with ornithology, biology, and ecology—to develop an understanding and appreciation for science and conservation. So along with a great deal of birding and the presentations I mentioned previously, this camp’s itinerary featured talks about endangered species conservation, prescribed fire, island ecology, food habits, habitat diversity and zones, invasive species control, the history of birding, marine debris, tides and phases of the moon, journaling, and banding.

On Tuesday night we headed for the observation towers at Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area, stopping first at the boat ramp so that we could bird the roads on the west side of Highway 17. Bad decision. The deer flies apparently had our itinerary too, because they laid siege on the tallest members of our group (poor 6’7” Marshall never had a chance) the moment we were out of sight of the road. The teens fled past me on their way to the bus as though they were being pursued by sharks. A Killdeer was sitting on a nest in the gravel walkway that leads to the tower near the Butler Island barn, and all of the towers were covered up with perched Black-Bellied Whistling Ducks. A flock of 40 of these ducks spent most of the next hour frequently circling our position, whistling and flashing their white wing patches.



Young Anhinga. Photo by Sam Murray.

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**Camp TALON Turns Five** (*continued from page 6*)

Just as Monday is our traditional LSSI day during camp week, Wednesday is the day we get to spend on Sapelo Island in the company of Malcolm Hodges, Georgia's ecological wunderkind. Of course, he abided by rule number one in the "Where to Find Birds" handbook and promptly took us to the dump. It was a great stop for flycatchers, as well as for Yellow-throated Vireo, and one of the campers (Patrick Maurice) caught a fleeting glimpse of what would turn out to be the only sighting of a Plain Chachalaca that day. We visited Cabretta and Nannygoat Beaches, of course, where we found Common Ground-Doves in the dunes, a Common Tern hanging out with Royal Terns, Wilson's Plovers, and (oddly enough) five Red-breasted Mergansers perched on a beach, watching the surf roll in. Painted Buntings seemed to be as common as Wax Myrtle bushes (well, maybe not quite) on the island, and Malcolm took advantage of every opportunity to eloquently explain to the campers the connection between habitat diversity and avian diversity. At 4:30 pm we crowded onto the ferry for the return trip to the mainland and those who weren't leg-weary sidled up to the railings to get one more glimpse of a tern, gull, or swallow, only to be blown away by the sight of perhaps 20 Bottle-nosed Dolphins feeding alongside the boat.

Wednesday night the teens gathered in the classroom at Epworth, nervously awaiting their chance to show what they had learned since Sunday. The schedule that evening included grading the journals they had been working on since Sunday night, a multiple-choice exam on ornithology and ecology, and a combined song and bird photo identification exam. Everybody won prizes, and Angus Pritchard managed to get perfect scores on both of the exams. Sarah Tharpe of Florida's Apalachee Audubon Society received the top grade on the journals, and so she won a new pair of binoculars for her efforts.

They groaned when Julie and I dragged them out of bed at 5:00 am on Thursday, the last day of the camp, but we start early that day because it's the traditional day for the mist-netting show at Harris Neck NWR, and we needed to empty the cabins and stop at a Waffle House along the interstate for breakfast (Epworth's cafeteria opens at 7:00 am). The yellow restaurant atmosphere seemed to brighten their sleepy faces, and traces of "crabbiness" vanished altogether at 8:00 am, when they helped Peter Range remove four Painted Buntings and two Northern Cardinals from the mist-nets at the refuge. The birders sat on benches arranged in an arc in front of Pete's banding table, while he explained the art behind aging, measuring, and banding birds, often dipping into his reservoir of banding stories that spans nearly four decades and tens of thousands of birds held in the hand. Nobody was sleepy anymore. Dot Bambach and Mary Ellen Urbanski then took the birders behind the wading bird rookery at Woody Pond, where they explained nesting and food habits, water cycles and food shortages, the management of endangered species, and a host of other topics about the birds, especially about Wood Storks. As the teens stood there snapping photos and absorbing the words from Dot and Mary, a Snowy Egret nestling toppled from one of the shrubs growing on an island in front of us, fell next to a medium-sized alligator basking beneath the rookery, and promptly became part of the food chain. Gasps escaped from the teens' throats as they realized what had happened. Moments later I spotted a Broad-winged Hawk flying over the pond, which is unusual for that region of the state in June, so it seemed like a nice exclamation point to put at the end of that stop. In an hour we descended on a pizza place in Richmond Hill, and by early afternoon we were once again feeling the cobblestone-pounding pain of I-16 as we returned to Macon. "It always seems to fly by so fast, but then I remember how much we saw and did," one of the repeat campers said to me.

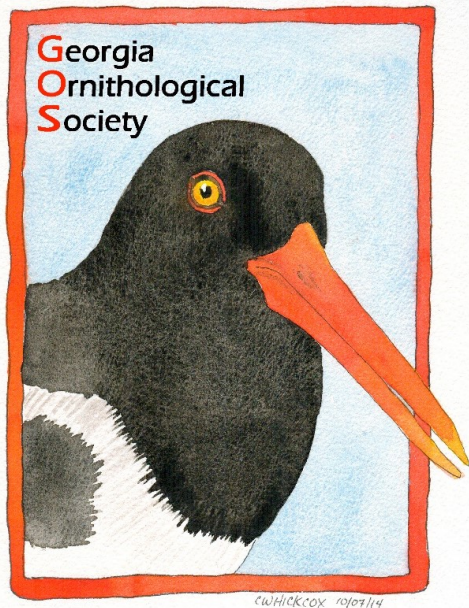
I can't begin to adequately thank all of the people who made this camp such an invaluable experience: Laura and Rachel, our guides on LSSI, and Stacia Hendricks for making that

*(continued on page 8)*

## Camp TALON Turns Five (continued from page 7)

memorable day happen every year; Tim Keyes for literally detouring from a trip to the airport to join us for a couple of hours; John Kricher and his wife Martha for spending most of the Okefenokee day with us; Malcom Hodges for another outstanding Sapelo day; Peter Range, Dot Bambach, Mary Ellen Urbanski, Drake (student volunteer), and Kimberly Hayes of Harris Neck NWR; Cliff Howard, our "patience of a saint" bus driver; Nikki Belmonte, Melanie Furr, and the board of directors of Atlanta Audubon for their dedicated support of this camp; Rusty Garrison and the other Georgia DNR staff at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center for their support, both financial and logistical; Steve Holzman and the other members of the GOS executive committee for their continued unflinching devotion to this camp; and Julie Duncan, who insisted on organizing and co-teaching the camp again even though she no longer works as a camp planner for DNR. You are a glutton for punishment, but a godsend, too! Finally, I thank the teenagers who keep filling up the camp and insisting that we create more such camps. It's quite a chore putting this event together each year, but you young birders make it all worthwhile. The future of ornithology and of this camp is in great hands with you. Keep birding, and I'll see you on the coast again next year.

## New GOS T-shirts and Hoodies



Woody Hickcox, the 2014 T-shirt design contest winner, produced a beautiful painting of an American Oystercatcher.

For photos of all colors and styles, check out <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10152985954901584&set=pcb.10152920455100097&type=1&theater>

Pick up a new T-shirt, long-sleeved shirt, or hoodie sweatshirt at the January meeting (with no added shipping cost) or you can get one by sending an order to Steve Holzman at 349 Jefferson Rd., Bishop, GA 30621 before January 20th. Check should be made payable to GOS.

Prices including shipping are:

<b>women's T-shirt:</b>	\$22 (light blue, pistachio)
<b>unisex T-shirt:</b>	\$22 (tan, prairie dust, stone blue)
<b>long-sleeved T-shirt:</b>	\$30 (dark heather, sapphire blue, sand, chocolate)
<b>hoodie sweatshirt:</b>	\$36 (denim blue, tan)

Prices at the January meeting do not include shipping and are \$15 for a short-sleeved T, \$20 for a long-sleeved T, and \$25 for a hooded sweatshirt.



Women's T-shirts available in three different colors. Photo courtesy Steve Holzman.



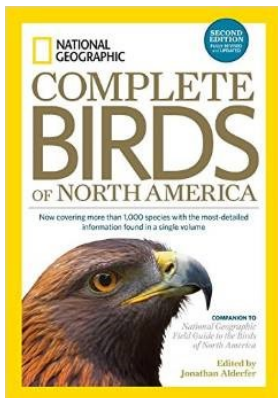
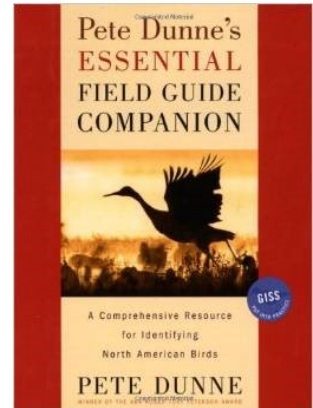
## Your Birding Library: Supplemental ID Guides

By Grant McCreary

Field guides are getting ever better: more birds, more illustrations, more field marks. Easily 90% of the birds you see can be identified using standard field guides alone. But that's not enough for us, is it? There's always a bird that just doesn't quite fit or that you saw too briefly or was too far away. And, of course, there are always gulls and flycatchers! For those cases when field guides just don't cut it, there are supplemental identification guides that should be able to help. They provide details well above and beyond that which can fit in a designed-to-be-portable field guide. Here are the three best (non-family-specific) guides that should be on your shelves.

***Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion* (2006),**  
by Pete Dunne

An unparalleled wordsmith, Dunne uses his skill to summarize the important particulars about each of the regularly breeding North American birds. I can't tell you how many times this book has pointed out something that clinched an ID for me. This is the rare ID guide that has no illustrations. But it doesn't need them; they would only get in the way of the perfectly tuned, and often amusing, text.

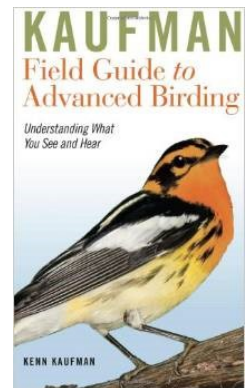


***National Geographic Complete Birds of North America, 2nd Edition* (2014),**  
edited by Jonathan Alderfer

This is basically an extended, more up-to-date version of the latest NatGeo field guide (the 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2011). It has all the excellent features of the field guide, such as virtually every bird that has ever been seen in the region and the most detailed range maps of any guide (including subspecies ranges in many cases). To this it adds greatly expanded text, even more maps, sidebars dealing with difficult identifications, and new species to the area (whether from vagrants or taxonomic changes).

***Kaufman Field Guide to Advanced Birding* (2011),**  
by Kenn Kaufman

Kaufman's focus isn't necessarily on how to identify birds but on how to *learn* to identify birds. Unlike the previous two books, it doesn't contain individual species accounts. Rather, it starts with an introduction to field ornithology, covering general principles that birders need to know. Then it looks at groups of birds that are notoriously difficult to identify, such as shorebirds, gulls, flycatchers, and sparrows. This is worth getting just for the 40 pages on *Empidonax* flycatchers!



### Others worth having

***Birding in the American West: A Handbook***, by Kevin J. Zimmer (2000). No, this isn't a mistake. Even though this focuses on western birds, its section on difficult identifications is still very much useful to birders here in the east.

***Identify Yourself: The 50 Most Common Birding Identification Challenges***, by Bill Thompson III (2005). An excellent treatment of ID challenges for intermediate and eager beginning birders.

***Rare Birds of North America***, by Steve N. G. Howell, Ian Lewington, and Will Russell (2014). Okay, you're unlikely to run into many of these 262 birds in Georgia, but this is a great reference if you ever go chasing after vagrants or hope to find one yourself.

## Please Meet Caroline Wyatt

By Phil Hardy

Today I would like to introduce you to GOS member Caroline Wyatt. Originally from West Virginia, this Floridian stumbled into bird watching completely by accident. Her story is not only amazing, but the number of birds she has seen will stagger you.

Caroline was born into a military family. Her father was transferred from one military base to another during the 1940s while World War II was being fought. West Virginia was home until she was 5 or 6 years old. "I remember attending eight different elementary schools in an eight-year period," she told me. Her mother was from Indiana, where Caroline attended all four years of high school. As a youth, Caroline loved the outdoors. She absolutely loved Girl Scouts, summer camps, and just being a tomboy. Although birds were not yet an important part of her life as a child, she did obtain a bird proficiency badge during her Girl Scout days.

Caroline attended Capital University, Indiana University, and Auburn University. Her first husband was in the Navy, and while stationed in Hawaii she even attended classes at the University of Hawaii. A major in theater was her goal, but she didn't graduate. However, her studies and experience helped establish a community theater at Amelia Island, where she now resides when she isn't traveling the world in search of birds.

After Caroline's first husband's untimely death, she met and married a man from Rome, Georgia. He was somewhat older and ready to retire. A friend had mentioned to them that they should investigate Amelia Island Plantation as it was just then under development. After attending a golf school in southern Florida, the couple decided, reluctantly, to check out Amelia Island on their way back home. "I can remember the sights and unpleasant smells around Jacksonville, and I thought Amelia Island was just too close for comfort," mentioned Caroline. The couple thought they would at least stop by to investigate any possible investment opportunities that may exist. They ended up buying some different properties and eventually built a house. Caroline's second husband loved to fish, and, of course, the area is a fisherman's paradise. Unfortunately, Caroline was once again widowed in 1995.

"So, Caroline, how did you get into birding?" I asked. It was almost by mistake I found out. "In 1982 my mother and I went to Africa for six weeks. We visited Zimbabwe, Kenya, the Seychelles Islands, Tanzania, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Egypt. Our main objective was to see the mammals of Africa and immerse ourselves into the different cultures. We began our tour in one of the most beautifully situated cities in the world—Cape Town, South Africa. While visiting the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, I saw my first Malachite Sunbird feeding on a protea blossom."



Malachite Sunbird. Photo by Beau Kahler. Visit <http://www.beukahler.com>.

Little did Caroline know but this sighting was about to profoundly change her life. How many of us can claim a spark bird like the Malachite Sunbird of Africa? I can only imagine what the experience was like seeing a brightly shining green bird on a sunburst yellow bloom.

(continued on page 11)

**Please Meet Caroline Wyatt** (*continued from page 11*)

Upon her return home to Florida, Caroline came to the horrible realization that she didn't even know the birds in her own backyard, which, by the way, is on a beautiful salt marsh and a tidal creek that feeds the Amelia River and the Intercoastal Waterway. Fortunately for Caroline, shortly after her African adventure, a lady from Cincinnati moved to Amelia Island and they became friends. Caroline's new friend had been birding for forty years. "She became my teacher," said Caroline, "and because of her I joined Florida Audubon." Caroline began birding the coastal areas of Georgia that are almost in her backyard: Jekyll Island, St. Simons Island, Altamaha NWR, and Harris Neck NWR. She met GOS member Lydia Thompson, who, among others, was instrumental in telling Caroline about the Georgia Ornithological Society. Wyatt joined GOS in 1997.

In 2006 Caroline returned to Kenya for a birding adventure. At that point in time her total bird count for the entire continent of Africa was only 13 species. "We saw more than 500 species on that one trip! It was absolutely mind boggling and so very exciting," recalled Caroline. Two years later, in 2008, Caroline returned yet again to South Africa and experienced *déjà vu*. While visiting Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens she saw a Malachite Sunbird feeding on a protea blossom. Could this be the exact same bird she observed on her first trip to Cape Town? Probably not. "Experiencing this bird feeding on the same protea blossom was one of the all time highlights of my birding experiences," said Caroline.

Caroline has made two trips to Antarctica. The first one was in 1996, to the Antarctic Peninsula from Ushuaia, Argentina, with a friend from Atlanta who was married to a Georgia Tech graduate. "My friend was tired of Tech football and basketball games, so she joined me on the Antarctic adventure, although she was not a birder," mentioned Caroline. "She loved the smelly Elephant Seals, for some reason." Caroline's second Antarctic adventure began in Hobart, Tasmania. "We birded for about five days in the Australian state of Tasmania, seeing all of the endemics. We then boarded a Russian icebreaker on a voyage to the Ross Sea and to the Ross Ice Shelf. If you have never been aboard an icebreaker ship, it is an incredible experience," mentioned Wyatt. "The ship carried two helicopters. They would depart in the mornings to observe the 'breaks' in the ice and then input that information into navigational charts to plot our day of ice breaking." Caroline told me that her target bird on that trip was the Emperor Penguin. Yes, she was successful in seeing it. "There are two species of penguins that I have not seen. For me to see them would mean a return to the Southern Ocean, which is one of the most brutal seas in the entire world," said Caroline. The environment is harsh for mankind, yet penguins feel at home there. By the way, penguins are Caroline's favorite birds.

Caroline has birded all continents of the world, including extensive birding in Asia that includes Japan, the Philippines, New Guinea, Borneo, Indonesia, the Malay Peninsula, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bhutan, India, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. "My trip to China was cancelled by the Chinese due to trouble on the Tibetan plateau. The government revoked our visas. If I had been able to take the trip I would have been at the Woolong Panda Center, the epicenter of an earthquake that shook Western China," said Caroline.

In June of 2014 Caroline returned from a trip to Estonia, Latvia, Finland, and Arctic Norway. "A big highlight of the trip was seeing the Purple Sandpiper in Finland on their way north to breeding grounds in Arctic Norway," remembers Wyatt. "The Purple Sandpiper visits Amelia Island during our winter, probably the farthest south that it can be seen in the U.S. It visits the jetties at Fort Clinch State Park."

Caroline has been very fortunate to have visited and bird many countries in the world. In addition, she has explored many locations in the United States. "I still have so many places I want to visit," she said. "In October 2014 I will return to Australia for my sixth time. And like the U.S., Australia is so big." I suppose one couldn't see all of Australia even if they were to make six or seven trips!

At 78 years young, Caroline said she enjoys the study involved in preparing for her trips as much as the trip itself. She uses the AviSys software to keep track of her very impressive bird numbers. "I'm at more than 5,300 species worldwide and more than 700 for North America." In addition to birds, Caroline also keeps tabs on the mammals she sees.

(*continued on page 12*)

## Please Meet Caroline Wyatt (continued from page 11)

When I asked Caroline about what changes in the birding world she has observed in recent years, she quickly noted the technology. “Literally within minutes of seeing a rare or unusual bird, a birder can post the sighting on websites and listservs. Almost instantly the word can spread like wildfire,” she said.

As of this writing (July 2014) Caroline is in the planning stages of a birding trip to the Atlantic Islands of the Canaries, Madeira, the Azores, Cape Verde, Sao Tome, and Principe. “All of these islands have their own endemics,” Wyatt told me. Given her busy travel and birding schedule, you will be very lucky to see Caroline even with the best of optics. I wish you good birding and good luck Caroline!

And now you have met Caroline Wyatt.

## Book Review: *H is for Hawk* by Helen Macdonald

By John Mark Boling

Already a #1 bestseller in England and longlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction, Helen Macdonald's *H is for Hawk* (Grove Press; March 2015; \$25.00 hardcover) is the remarkable story of one woman's resolve to raise and train the most bloodthirsty of birds, the goshawk.

When Helen Macdonald's father died suddenly on a London street, she was devastated. An experienced falconer—Helen had been captivated by hawks since childhood—she'd never before been tempted to train one of the most vicious predators, the goshawk. But in her grief, she saw that the goshawk's fierce and feral anger mirrored her own. Resolving to purchase and raise the creature as a means to cope with her loss, she adopted Mabel and turned to the guidance of T. H. White's chronicle *The Goshawk* to begin her journey.



By turns heartbreaking and hilarious, this book is an unflinching account of bereavement, a unique look at the magnetism of an extraordinary beast, and the story of an eccentric falconer and legendary writer. Weaving together obsession, madness, memory, myth, and history, *H is for Hawk* is a distinctive, surprising blend of nature writing and memoir from a very gifted writer. As Erica Wagner wrote in *The Economist*, it is "a well-wrought book, one part memoir, one part gorgeous evocation of the natural world and one part literary meditation . . . lit with flashes of grace, a grace that sweeps down to the reader to hold her wrist tight with beautiful, terrible claws. The discovery of the season."

Helen Macdonald is a writer, poet, illustrator, historian, and naturalist, and an affiliated research scholar at the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses. She also worked as a research fellow at Jesus College, Cambridge. As a professional falconer, she assisted with the management of raptor research and conservation projects across Eurasia.

"What [Macdonald] has achieved is a very rare thing in literature—a completely realistic account of a human relationship with animal consciousness. . . . Her training of Mabel has the suspense and tension of the here and now. You are gripped by the slightest movement, by the turn of every feather. It is a soaring performance, and Mabel is the star." —John Carey, *Sunday Times*

"A deep, dark work of terrible beauty that will open fissures in the stoniest heart. . . Macdonald is a survivor. . . She has produced one of the most eloquent accounts of bereavement you could hope to read . . . A grief memoir with wings." —The Bookseller

"I can't remember the last time a book made me feel so many different things in such quick succession. It's difficult to be with grief. It's exhausting; your life-grabbing instinct is to get away from it, which is what makes it so lonely for those in its grasp. . . . But then she would head out with Mabel on her arm, and it was as though the clouds had cleared, every sentence a blessing, like the sunshine of early spring." —Rachel Cooke, *The Guardian*

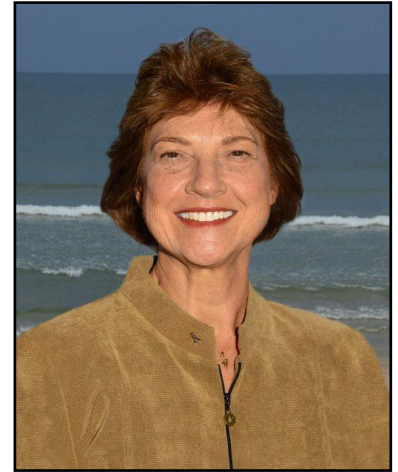
## Winter Meeting Reminder January 16-19, 2015, Savannah, Georgia

### FRIDAY NIGHT'S PRESENTATION:

#### ***Confronting the Link between Songbird Predation and Schizophrenia***

Dr. Judith Milcarsky, DVM Daytona Beach, Florida

Judith Milcarsky grew up in Orlando, Florida. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in laboratory technology from Auburn University in 1982 and earned a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from the University of Florida in 1986. Dr. Milcarsky has had a mobile, small-animal practice in Daytona Beach for more than twenty years. For the past decade, she has publicly addressed the association between feral cats and the fatal disease that is rabies. A 2013 business partner relationship with a local high school launched public health concerns for both elementary school children and the homeless population, and confronted the link between *Toxoplasma gondii* (a parasite found in cat feces) and the serious mental illness, schizophrenia. In July 2014 she became one of the lead investigators for a nationwide study, The Silver Leash Project—a collaborative investigation with the USDA—to determine if owned dogs can be a sentinel for environmental contamination with *T. gondii*.



### SATURDAY NIGHT'S KEYNOTE PRESENTATION:

#### ***Expanding Your Personal Range Map – Exploring the Outer Limits of Birder Ecology***

Dr. J. Drew Lanham, Clemson University, South Carolina



J. Drew Lanham, a native of Edgefield, South Carolina, is a Certified Wildlife Biologist, holds a B.A. and M.S. in Zoology and a Ph.D. in Forest Resources (Wildlife Ecology) from Clemson University, where he is currently a Master Teacher and Alumni Distinguished Professor, teaching and conducting research in the area of wildlife management, land and conservation ethics, hunting ethics/philosophy and field and conservation ornithology.

Drew is an emerging author, writing creatively about conservation and nature through essays and poetry. He has contributed to several anthologies, including a retrospective on one of the great naturalists of the colonies entitled *Bartram's Living Legacy: The Travels and Nature of the South* (Mercer University Press, 2010); about deer hunting in *Outdoors Adventures in the Upcountry* (Hub City Books,

2010); and on travels to South Africa in *The Colors of Nature* (Milkweed Editions, 2011). He is published in magazines including *Orion*, *The Wildlife Professional*, *Forest Landowner*, and *Palmetto Wild*. Dr. Lanham's first solo work, *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature* (Milkweed Editions), is due to be published in 2015.

A lifelong birder, Drew inspired and leads the Palmetto Pro Birder program in an effort to enlist more citizen scientists into the "army of conservationists." He leads tours in the Jocassee Gorges; the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival in McAllen, Texas; The Biggest Week in American Birding in northwestern Ohio; and at the Tucson Wildlife Festival in southeastern Arizona. He has birded abroad in South Africa and in the Peruvian Amazon and counts birds listed in 38 states. His favorite birds are the ones with feathers. He prefers to bird with an intense focus on not just identifying birds but telling their stories so that birders become conservationists. Drew's blog at [wildandincolor.blogspot.com](http://wildandincolor.blogspot.com) provides insight into his passion for birds, conservation, and nature. He is also a contributor to the Birding Is Fun blog and recently was welcomed to the Nature Travel Network. He lives in Seneca, South Carolina, with his wife, Janice Garrison-Lanham. They have two adult children: daughter Alexis and son Colby. They share their lives with an indoor cat named Zeke, and two dogs, Kate and Avery.

## Birding at 15,000 Feet: A Colorado Chronicle

By Evan Barnard

The adventure began at the Denver airport baggage claim area, where I first met some of my instructors and fellow campers. We immediately found the first bird of trip, the Western Kingbird, in the airport parking lot. Then it was off to the YMCA of the Rockies. We passed many Swainson's Hawks on power lines and prairie dogs at their burrows, then stopped at Barr Lake for some "Western" Willet action. As we climbed to higher altitudes, I had the incredible chance to see two elusive White-throated Swifts. Seeing a Green-tailed Towhee and Black-billed Magpie as we arrived at the YMCA, I immediately realized that for me, literally every bird was a lifer. That first evening we all met up for introductions and to share and laugh at terrible bird puns.

The next day started off with some montane birding. We walked along a gushing stream, spotting an American Dipper diving into the rapids, only to come right back up and dive again. Then the bird rested on a large boulder in plain sight, immediately becoming the subject of about 20 young paparazzi. That morning hike yielded a good number of birds, including Mountain and Black-capped Chickadees and an impressive Red-naped Sapsucker, not to mention fantastic lichen and sociable ground squirrels. We visited the YMCA campus banding station that afternoon. The station's bander, Mr. Scott Rashid, taught us about banding a myriad of different species. In our short time at the station, Mr. Rashid caught and banded two House Wrens, two Cassin's Finches, two Broad-tailed Hummingbirds and one Rufous Hummingbird, a Black-headed Grosbeak, and three Pine Siskins. He also caught and recorded a pre-banded House Finch. I held a House Wren gingerly in my hands and then released him. Mr. Rashid held up a Cassin's Finch and a male House Finch next to each other for comparison, as they appear similar, but the distribution of red coloring is different. We also got to see the hummers up close and spotted a Cordilleran Flycatcher and Band-tailed Pigeons. That evening, Bill Schmoker gave a fascinating presentation about the different types of habitat in Colorado, based on latitude, longitude, and elevation, and the types of birds that live in each habitat.

Thursday was Alpine and Sub-alpine Day. It was a gorgeous day, with beautiful scenery as we ascended. At one point, Jenn Brumfield offered a dollar to the first person to spot a Yellow-bellied Marmot. I spotted the first one, securing the dollar bill and bragging rights. Suddenly the vans pulled over to the side of the road. I quickly realized that a Brown-capped Rosy-finch was just meters away in front of us, giving us a brief view of one of our target birds for the week. We reached our trail, Medicine Bow Curve, at the highest elevation we would reach during the camp. Even though most of the plants and wildflowers were less than a few inches tall, the environment at that altitude has allowed the plants to survive there for decades. We soon found two White-tailed Ptarmigans. As we listened to Hermit Thrushes in the distance, we all took many pictures of the ptarmigans parading about in their summer plumage. Listening carefully, we could hear them clucking softly as they strutted around like over-insulated chickens. After the photography and digiscoping opportunity, we went to the Alpine Visitors Center, where we had a brief but terrific look at a juvenile Red Crossbill. Our next stop was at an overlook above a downhill expanse of snow. As we ate lunch, we enjoyed great views of rosy-finches, Mountain Bluebirds, and siskins, and even overhead views of a Golden Eagle and Common Ravens. Adult and juvenile elk were resting on the rocky slope opposite where we stood. As we made our way back down to the sub-alpine altitudes, we made stops along the way to get looks at adorable little pika. At those higher altitudes we observed a Horned Lark, American Pipit, and White-crowned Sparrow, but it was the incredible Clark's Nutcrackers that soon became my new favorite species. Finally, we made it back to the YMCA, splitting up for field sketching and photography sessions. That night David La Puma spoke to us about radar birding, where weather radar is used to predict where hotspots will occur at a future time.

On Friday, we did more montane birding in Rocky Mountain National Park. There were excellent opportunities to learn about the ecology of the montane region, such as learning about particular flowers and trees, and of course learning about birds. Notable birds of the day included the Dusky Flycatcher and Western Tanager. We were treated to an evening program by David La Puma about Project SNOWstorm and Snowy Owls. He showed us two dimensional maps of the paths the birds had taken,

*(continued on page 15)*

**Birding at 15,000 Feet: A Colorado Chronicle** (*continued from page 14*)

as well as very detailed, time-accurate, three-dimensional models of where particular birds were at corresponding points of time. He also brought some of the GPS units that are put on the backs of the Snowy Owls, some of which were much larger than I expected for a small owl.

The next day was the Camp Big Day. We all woke up very early to get to the Pawnee National Grasslands before sunrise. It was an amazing day for lifer birds AND animals in the Pawnee: amazing birds like the Mountain Plover, Curve-billed Thrasher, Lark Bunting, Common Nighthawk, Burrowing Owl, and even *courting* McCown's Longspurs. Add in pronghorn sheep, an American Badger, locusts, horned lizard, and swift fox, and that's only the beginning of my list. After the grasslands we went to Fossil Creek and observed many Western Grebes and an elusive Clark's Grebe during a downpour of rain. Back at Estes Park, we scored a MacGillivray's Warbler perched next to the banding station. We ended the day comparing our lists, for a total of 89 species of birds.

Sunday was the Foothills Birding Day. We went birding around Lyons, spying nesting bushtits and two prairie rattlesnakes. We walked along an old strip of road leading to a dilapidated bridge, stopping for a celebratory picnic. I finally got more than a glimpse of a Lesser Goldfinch as I walked down the road. In the sunlight the yellow of its plumage truly had a golden glow. That afternoon we once more split up into skill sessions. That night was the wrap-up and a time for goodbyes. We promised we would all see each other again one day.

My week in Colorado was definitely one of the best, if not the best, experiences of my life. I express my greatest gratitude to the instructors and other campers, with whom I bonded and will never forget.

The Georgia Ornithological Society has given me an opportunity to experience birding at a whole new altitude. I am extremely grateful for being awarded the GOS scholarship that made this trip possible. Incredible birding opportunities such as this provide the inspiration and education young birders need to develop their skills and build the next generation of GOS members.



Clark's Nutcracker from the sub-alpine region.  
Photo by Evan Barnard.

## Species List from Fall 2014 Meeting in Jekyll Island, Georgia

Compiled by Larry Carlile

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

**184 Species Observed**



# GOShawk



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