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# GOShawk

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

## President's Message

By Steve Holzman

Another summer in the South is winding down. Activity at the feeders is picking up with this year's batch of fledglings figuring things out. The action at the bird bath is peaking at about 4:00 pm, as birds attempt to escape the heat. Shorebirds are already making their way south and turning up at those hotspots all of us check every year. Soon, the confusing fall warblers will be confusing us with their less than dramatic plumage. The seasons turn, and we all get to watch another fall migration descend upon Georgia.

This brings me to our fall meeting, October 2–4 at Jekyll Island's Villas by the Sea. You'll be joining us, won't you? Our Friday speaker, Felicia Sanders, will be detailing 10 years spent monitoring American Oystercatchers in the Cape Romain area of South Carolina. On Saturday, Sharon "Birdchick" Stiteler will discuss her experiences doing what many of us dream of: getting paid to bird. Perhaps some of us should take notes. Of course, there will be a great selection of field trips along the coast from Savannah to Jekyll Island, and I am sure some members will be picking up a lifer or two.

This year, GOS is attempting online registration. By the time you read this, I'm hoping the bugs will all be worked out and that most people will be pleased with the experience. More and more of you have been telling us you want online payments and membership renewals, and we are listening. This year also marks the first time you can renew your membership online and even purchase GOS swag using your PayPal account or credit card. Do you have your 2015–2016 Duck Stamp yet? Be sure to visit us at our newly revamped website, [gos.org](http://gos.org), and let me know what you think. It's been a long time coming, and we're hoping it is a positive experience for all.

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of the month prior to publication.  
Submission by e-mail is appreciated.*

**Welcome, New Members!**

**Quail Covey**

Perry Hidalgo, Graydon Hidalgo, Penny Hidalgo, and Deborah Prosser	Dacula, GA
Tammy Nevins	Marietta, GA
Rebecca and Kevin Lang	Athens, GA
Larry and Marianna Williams	Trenton, GA

**Bachman’s Sparrow**

Craig Sullivan	St. Simons Island, GA
William Pixler	Atlanta, GA



GOS members on the Altamaha Sound field trip. Photo courtesy of Steve Holzman.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**GOS FALL MEETING**  
*October 2-4, 2015, Jekyll Island*

**GOS WINTER MEETING**  
*January 15-18, 2016, Tybee Island*

**GOS Grant Application Deadlines**

Bill Terrell Graduate Student Research Grants, December 1, 2015

Bill Terrell Avian Conservation Grants, December 31, 2015

H. Branch Howe, Jr., Graduate Student Research Grants, December 31, 2015

Norene Boring, Undergraduate Student Research Grants, September 15, 2015

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


Register **NOW** for the fall meeting on Jekyll Island

Click **HERE** for current sightings in Georgia

Become a **member** today.

Screen capture of the new GOS website at gos.org.

Did you know that our website now also features archived editions of this newsletter going back to 1960? It's a much more entertaining way to spend an hour than watching those same old cat videos over and over again. Okay, maybe I'm exaggerating, but you can find some great little nuggets in the archives. The October 1964 newsletter had a section called "WITH OUR TRIPPING FRIENDS," featuring information on who went where looking for birds out of the state or out of the country. That feature of the newsletter probably had a different focus in 1968. Who was the fall speaker in October 1975? None other than Chan Robbins. Head over to gos.org and take a gander.

GOS has just printed a new brochure, "These Plants Are for the Birds." It features some of the top plants for fruit-eaters, insect-eaters, and nectar-feeders. If you'd like to get a few to display at a local nursery or nature center, please drop me a note. We need to get more bird-friendly habitat created, even if it is just in our own yards. I'm hoping to add a gardening section to the website soon and would love to hear what works for you. Please contact me at [president@gos.org](mailto:president@gos.org).

Enjoy the fall, and hopefully we'll see you on Jekyll.

## The Georgia Ornithological Society's Fall Meeting

**When:** October 2–4, 2015

**Where:** Villas by the Sea Resort  
and Conference Center  
1175 Beachview Drive  
Jekyll Island, GA 31527

**Who:** Friday Speaker, Felicia  
Sanders, South Carolina DNR

Saturday Keynote Speaker,  
Sharon “Birdchick” Stiteler

**What:** Great field trips and  
camaraderie

**How:** [gos.org/2015-fall-meeting](http://gos.org/2015-fall-meeting)



The marsh near Little St. Simons Island. Photo courtesy of Rachel Holzman.

### Listing

By Steve Holzman

Some of us do it to remind us of past birds seen, triggering a memory or two. Some of us are competitive and do it because we want to be “Number 1.” Some of us reject it in all its derivations, and that’s fine too. There’s no one right way to enjoy birds. This piece, however, is for the state listers in the group. Back in March 2006, the *GOShawk* published the names of birders with the top 35 state lists in Georgia ([gos.org/newsletters/200603.pdf](http://gos.org/newsletters/200603.pdf)). At the time, Jeff Sewell held the top spot with 376. We would like to update that list for March 2016 (10 years later). As in 2006, the top 35 submissions will be highlighted. Submit your list to the editor, [goshawk@gos.org](mailto:goshawk@gos.org), in January 2016 and see how it stacks up against others. Of course, the personal list you maintain should include any birds you see fit, but we must consider some rules when we wish to compare our lists with others. In order for there to be some measure of consistency across lists, please only add up those birds you’ve recorded that appear on the



Georgia Regular List. The Regular List serves as the main list where firm documentation is established for species occurring in Georgia. This list can be found on the webpage: [gos.org/2015-checklist](http://gos.org/2015-checklist). It does not include such species as Monk Parakeet, Trumpeter Swan, and Mute Swan. Although Whooping Crane is on the list, the recent sightings of the reintroduced population migrating between Wisconsin and Florida is not considered an established population and shouldn’t be included on your state list. Next January, if you are in the top 35, with your permission, we will print it in the March 2016 *GOShawk*.

Olive-sided Flycatcher, August 23, 2015. Species #357 in Georgia for Steve Holzman. Photo courtesy of Rachel Holzman.

## Please Meet Robert L. (Bobby) Crawford

By Phil Hardy

The year 1947 saw Jet Pilot win the Kentucky Derby, Notre Dame win the NCAA Football Championship with a perfect 9-0-0 season, the microwave oven invented, Chuck Yeager travel faster than sound, and Bobby Crawford born in Thomasville, Georgia. Bobby graduated from Thomasville High School in 1965 and then from the University of Georgia in 1969 after transferring from Mercer University in Macon. If Bobby's name sounds familiar to you, it should in Georgia birding circles.

Although Crawford had the usual childhood interest in nature, it wasn't until he was on a Boy Scout camping trip at the age of 14 that a fellow scout showed him birds drawn by Roger Tory Peterson in a 1947 field guide, and that got his attention and interest.

Birds became a part of Bobby's career as he worked as a biologist at Tall Timbers Research Station from 1970 to 1985 and intermittently through 2012. He also worked in the insurance industry, at a public library, and served in the Georgia Army National Guard from 1970 to 1976.

Thomasville proved to be a fortuitous location for Bobby since the late Herbert L. Stoddard lived in next-door Grady County, and Henry M. Stevenson, a professor at Florida State University, lived just minutes to the south in Tallahassee. These two nationally renowned ornithologists set a high standard for integrity, encouraging a group of Thomasville men to develop an interest in native birds as well as to establish a network of feeder watchers.

How Bobby met Herbert Stoddard is interesting. In April 1963, Bobby observed a strange looking bird at one of his feeders. He promptly shot the bird and tentatively identified the specimen as a Black-headed Grosbeak. At that time, there were no published records for this species in Georgia, so Bobby took the bird to Stoddard, who confirmed Crawford's identification. Stoddard then proceeded to give 16-year-old Bobby quite a stern lecture about shooting birds without a permit. After Stoddard drove home this salient point, he then invited Bobby inside for a tour of his home, laboratory, bird library, and feeder window. They occasionally saw each other through 1966, with Stoddard always being friendly and encouraging, recalls Crawford. And if meeting and knowing the dynamic duo of Stoddard and Stevenson wasn't enough, Bobby met Dr. Robert A. Norris through Mr. Stoddard at Tall Timbers, Norris was equally patient and helpful to the young upcoming birder.

Bobby's mentor in Thomasville was Jack Dozier, three years his senior. The pair spent many happy hours recording the birds of Thomas County. They kept meticulous notes and records of the birds they saw. Dozier encouraged young Crawford to join GOS in 1962, at the age of 15.

Crawford and Dozier made several birding trips out West, with the first trip being to Rockport, Texas, over the Christmas holidays in 1964. "We were seeking the Whooping Cranes in Aransas NWR," recalls Bobby. "The trip was memorable because, at the age of 17, I had never been that far from home...on a BUS," says Crawford.

At age 18, Bobby spent the summer working a job at Mt. Ranier National Park. "It really bumped up my life list," recalls Bobby.

In 1971, Bobby spent 26 days with future GOS member, Paul Sykes, and two other men traveling around the West as they went for a Big Year. Bobby remembers they drove, camped

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**Please meet Robert L. (Bobby) Crawford** *(continued from page 5)*

out (at times on the side of the road), and birded, and then birded some more.

In 1974, Jack Dozier, Noel Wamer, and Crawford drove to Brownsville, Texas, and then 250 miles into Mexico for birding. Bobby remembers how cramped three men and their luggage were in his compact Ford Pinto. And on a memorable trip in 1976, Dozier and Crawford stumbled into a drug-related murder while camping at Big Sur. A woman involved tried to ensnare the birders in the mayhem, but they managed to escape. “We couldn’t get out of there fast enough,” recalls Crawford.

“About 35 miles northeast of Douglas, Arizona, on Route 80, there is a tall stone monument marking the site where the Apache warrior, Geronimo, surrendered to the U.S. Army. Dozier and I stopped there on June 4, 1976, while on a birding trip that ended up in California, because there was a picture of the monument in a book we had, *A Birder’s Guide to Southeast Arizona*, by Jim Lane. Birding’s popularity was taking off by the early ‘70s, and Lane had published several books on various hotspots,” said Bobby. While the two walked around the area of the monument with their binoculars, a car pulled into the parking area. Four or five people got out of the car, all wearing binoculars. The driver asked Dozier and Crawford, “Have you seen any good birds?” “No,” came the reply from Crawford, as he explained they had stopped because of the picture in the book they had. “As a matter of fact,” said Crawford, “you should really have this book if you are birders, because it gives good directions to great hotspots.” Crawford walked over to their car to fetch the book and brought it to the man who had been driving the other vehicle. “It really is a great book,” emphasized Crawford. “The man looked amused,” remembers Bobby, who then thanked him for the compliment and introduced himself as Jim Lane, the author.

At Tall Timbers, Bobby continued the late Herbert Stoddard’s WCTV bird casualty study, primarily searching the tower grounds each day at dawn looking for and recording dead birds



Robert “Bobby” Crawford with his Earle R. Greene Award.  
Photo courtesy of Robert Crawford.

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**Please Meet Robert L. (Bobby) Crawford** (continued from page 6)

killed by collisions with the tower. At the station, W. Wilson Baker was a good friend of Bobby and taught him how to do a screech owl imitation to call up birds. Bobby published some compilations of tower kills for Tall Timbers, and in 2004, he published *The Great Effort*, a history of Mr. Stoddard's WCTV study. In 2014, Crawford authored a history of Tall Timbers called *The Legacy of a Red Hills Hunting Plantation*, published by the University Press of Florida, which is available on amazon.com.

Bobby's sightings and records of birds in Thomas County were published in *The Oriole* beginning in 1971 and culminated with "The Birds of Thomas County, Georgia: revised through 1997." During the past 45 years, only three other GOS members have published similar efforts: Milton Hopkins, Tommy Patterson, and Giff Beaton.

I asked Bobby what he thought were some of the biggest birding changes he had observed during his lifetime. "I suppose the biggest change in birding has been its growth. Birding was unusual in the early 1960s, and Peterson's was the only serious field guide for birds," said Crawford, who humorously referred to the book as "The Gospel According to St. Peterson." "Now there are dozens of guides available and millions of users. Digital cameras with electronically stabilized telephoto lenses have revolutionized bird photography and thus documentation. Just one place, High Island, Texas, exemplifies this growth because it has been transformed since my first trip there in the mid-'70s. Back then, there were just two hardwood motte sanctuaries with primitive trails, no facilities, and few visitors. Now there are more protected woodlands, bleachers, water drips, feeders, kiosks selling birding books, T-shirts and patches, restrooms, boardwalks, tour groups, and many birders," said Crawford.

Crawford continued, "I bumped into Roger Tory Peterson at High Island in 1982. Peterson was on a fund-raising 'Big Day' along the Texas coast. He was escorted by a well-known birding tour operator who will remain unnamed. While those guys bustled around the sanctuary, I heard the call of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Since this was late April, I asked the tour operator if it was getting a bit late for a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker to be on the Texas coast. He didn't answer my question but instead ran off calling 'Roger, Roger, there's a sapsucker here.'" In just a few minutes, Crawford heard the tour operator say, "Roger heard the sapsucker," so the species was added to the birding list for the day. "I got no thanks or recognition from the tour operator," recalls Crawford.

When asked what birding locations he likes the best, it was a toss-up among three states, with Arizona coming out number one, followed by Colorado and Texas as second and third. Crawford has only recently returned from his third trip to Alaska.

"My current life list for North America is 653 species," says Crawford, "while world wide, including Mexico and Europe, the number jumps to 756."

Bobby served as 1st vice president of GOS under Norene Boring, as well as Chairman of the Editorial Committee during the 1970s. He also served as the editor of *The Oriole's* "From the Field - South Georgia" from 1976 until 1979. Most recently, Bobby Crawford was recognized for his ornithological achievement in Georgia when he received the Earle R. Greene Memorial Award at the 2014 winter meeting in Tallahassee, Florida. Congratulations, Bobby. The award is well deserved.

So now you have met Robert L. "Bobby" Crawford.

## Your Birding Library: Family Guides

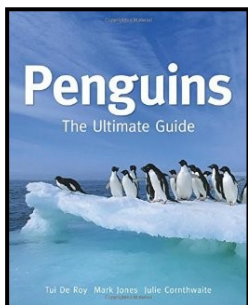
By Grant McCreary

There are many great identification guides that focus on certain families of birds. You probably have a few to help you out with groups like shorebirds, raptors, and warblers. But there are other bird-family books that are all too often overlooked by birders. They don't emphasize identification, but rather help you get to know the birds themselves—how they live and, yes, their personalities. As a bonus, many of these books are filled with gorgeous photographs or other illustrations. Here are my favorites, in taxonomic order.

### ***Save the Last Dance: A Story of North American Grassland Grouse* (2012)**

By Noppadol Paothong and Joel Vance

The five species of lekking grouse covered here are among the most amazing birds on the continent. They are also rare and relatively little known, attributes which the authors hope to change with this large, beautiful book. Whether you flip through to marvel at the superb photos or, better yet, read the whole book, you'll find yourself drawn to the prairie to see these dancing birds for yourself. (I recommend Colorado, where you can see all five.)



### ***Penguins: The Ultimate Guide* (2014)**

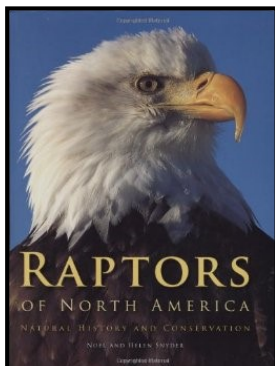
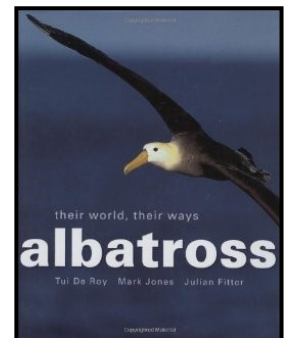
By Tui De Roy, Mark Jones, and Julie Cornthwaite

Split into three sections—an overview of the penguin family, a selection of short essays by different authors, and individual species accounts—this book has just about anything you'd want to know about these adorable birds. There are many penguin books, but the wide coverage of topics and unmatched photography makes *The Ultimate Guide* the best one for birders.

### ***Albatross: Their World, Their Ways* (2008)**

By Tui De Roy, Mark Jones, and Julian Fritter

Compared to some other families, there aren't many books about albatrosses. But this one makes up for that. It's one of the best bird books I've seen. It's organized similarly to *Penguins* (above), so it presents a wealth of information about these birds and their conservation (unfortunately needed because most of them are endangered). It is also filled with some of the most striking bird photos you'll see anywhere.



### ***Raptors of North America: Natural History and Conservation* (2006)**

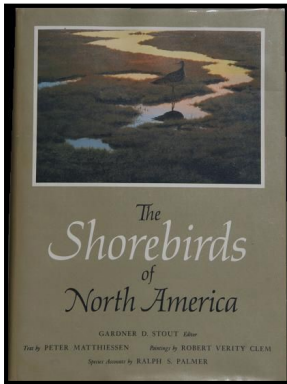
By Noel and Helen Snyder

This large book contains a species account for every vulture, hawk, eagle, falcon, and owl in North America—53 altogether. All the basics of each raptor's natural history are covered, but what sets this book apart is that it is based primarily on the authors' personal experience with these birds. The anecdotal nature of the accounts makes them much easier to read. And the large photos are great, also. (Are you sensing a pattern here?)

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## Your Birding Library: Family Guides (continued from page 8)

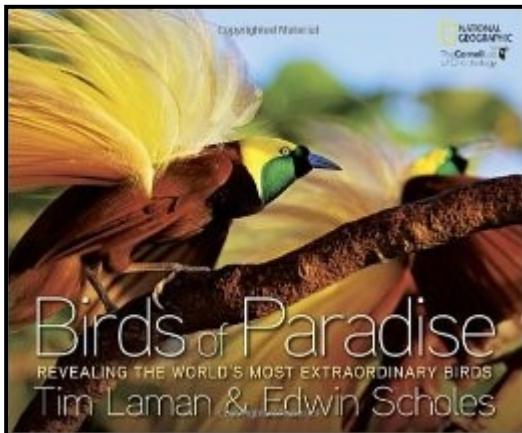
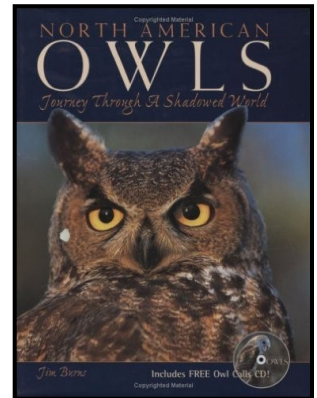
***The Shorebirds of North America*** (1967)

*Edited by Gardner D. Stout, text by Peter Matthiessen*

This book is older and is more of an old-school family monograph than the others here. The reason I'm including it is the wonderful text by Matthiessen that remains the best overview of these birds. It's so good it was also published separately as *The Wind Birds*. But if you can find it, I'd recommend this original edition as it also includes species accounts for 75 shorebirds and 32 large paintings by Robert Verity Clem.

***North American Owls: Journey Through a Shadowed World*** (2004)  
By Jim Burns

If you don't get enough of owls with the Snyders' *Raptors of North America*, this book should sate you. Like *Raptors*, it is highly anecdotal, but Burns carries it to an even further degree. One of the 19 chapters (one for each North American owl) is an annotated list of all the author's sightings of each bird. Another is nothing but a series of poems! But it works, and it's a joy to read. Not to sound like a broken record, but the photos here are fantastic. Speaking of recordable media, this book also includes a CD of owl calls.

***Birds of Paradise: Revealing the World's Most Extraordinary Birds*** (2012)

*By Tim Laman and Edwin Scholes*

Birds of paradise are among the most outlandish birds, in both appearance and behavior, on the planet. This book is filled with page upon page of unbelievable photographs of them. They alone make it worth having. If you're able to tear your eyes away from the pictures to read the text, you'll find an excellent overview of the family, some really cool insights into their behavior, and even a glimpse into what it's like to do field work in a remote tropical environment.

You can find a full review of most of these books, and many others, on my website, [birderslibrary.com](http://birderslibrary.com)

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## Camp TALON: Sixth Edition

By Bob Sargent

I am pleased to report that this year's camp (May 31 to June 4) did not just sell out; it sold out in six weeks, which is a new high water mark for TALON (Teen Adventures Learning Ornithology and Nature). Equally encouraging is the fact that this camp featured nearly as many first-time campers as it did repeat campers, and some of the latter were attending for the fourth or fifth time. (Patrick Maurice owns the record at five.) In recent years the camp has consistently been filled to the max, but it has never happened this quickly. The flipside to this encouraging development is that we unfortunately ended up with a waiting list of five teens that we had to turn away. If it were up to us, we would expand the camp limit to 25 participants, but we have to comply with practical considerations, such as restrictions on the number of people we can put in boats and island vehicles. The rapid sell-out was one in a series of firsts associated with the 2015 version of this birding camp for teenagers. For example, we recruited two birdwatching interns to help Julie and me with running and teaching the camp, something we had not tried before, and we visited Wassaw Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) for the first time. The interns, Sarah Tharpe and Marshall Weber, were older teens and had prior Camp TALON experience. Frankly, we could not have chosen two harder working, mature, and responsible teens to be the camp's first interns. This experiment was a resounding success. To compensate Sarah and Marshall for their volunteerism, we waived their registration fee. The Wassaw NWR trip fell on camp Tuesday, which has become our traditional day to experiment with the standard camp itinerary. The other days featured the usual list of TALON greatest hits: St. Simons Island, Little St. Simons Island (LSSI), Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area (AWMA), Jekyll Island, Sapelo Island, and Harris Neck NWR.



Camp TALON trip to Little St. Simons Island, June 1, 2015. Photo courtesy of Julie Duncan.

It bears repeating that Camp TALON is not simply a birding experience. We did not create this camp to manufacture "super birders." Instead, the camp is structured to teach young people about ornithology, coastal ecology, habitat management, research, and conservation. Our goal is to help recruit and train future scientists, leaders of GOS and Audubon chapters, and ecologically-educated voters. If you are curious about the subject matter, please refer to the list of topics we taught, which follows this article. Granted, it is a lot of material, but the teenagers soaked it up and parroted it back to us in amazing detail on the camp's exam night. It is especially gratifying to witness how ornithologically wise some of the repeat campers have become. I like to remind them that the camp's future is in their hands. If the current level of support from the camp's sponsorship trio (GOS, Georgia DNR, and Atlanta Audubon Society) continues and the teens keep coming, then perhaps this decade's campers will be the teachers and managers of the next decade's campers. The other essential cog, perhaps the essential cog, in the growing success of these camps is the invaluable army of biologists, naturalists,

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**Camp TALON: Sixth Edition** *(continued from page 10)*

ecologists, etc., who so astoundingly (to me) volunteer their talent, time, boats, gas, and teaching material every single year because they believe in these teens and in the TALON concept. This year's "Army All Stars" featured:

Bob Sattlemeyer (St. Simons Island and AWMA)  
Stacia Hendricks, Cassandra, Sarah, and Abby Sterling (LSSI)  
Robert Horan and Tim Keyes (AWMA)  
Chris Cooley, Russ Webb, Kaylin, and Joe (Wassaw NWR)  
Malcolm Hodges (Sapelo Island)  
Kimberly Hayes (Harris Neck NWR)

Gene Keferl, Lydia Thompson, and Bob Sattlemeyer did their best to show the teens a great time on the third night of the camp, but Mother Nature did not cooperate as a thunderstorm kept us away from Jekyll Island that night. Thanks again for trying!



Camp TALON 2015 at Wassaw NWR. Photo courtesy of Julie Duncan.

Among the highlights of these field trips was the wagon ride on the AWMA dikes, courtesy of Robert and Tim, the shorebird research talk presented by Abby on LSSI, the guided hike through the oak hammock of Wassaw NWR thanks to Chris and Russ, and the extended behind-the-scenes visit at the Woody Pond rookery at Harris Neck NWR. Kim's husband Chuck and two other biologists were climbing trees and banding nestling herons and storks just 50 feet from us as the campers looked on. What great timing! Bob Sattlemeyer deserves the grand prize for his willingness to be our guide at three evening stops, and Malcolm once again awed the teens with a chachalaca encounter and his ecological savvy about everything on the coast. Julie and I convey our admiration and gratitude to all of these volunteer teachers.

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**Camp TALON: Sixth Edition** *(continued from page 11)*

Next year's camp will feature another first: an extra day on the coast. Instead of departing Macon on Sunday, as we usually do, we will depart on Saturday. Yes, campers, I finally listened to you! Along with the usual island greatest hits listed above, we plan to return to Okefenokee NWR in 2016, will add another island (TBA) to the itinerary, and we will definitely "employ" two interns again. A special thanks, as always, goes to Cliff Howard, our bus driver; Nikki Belmonte, Melanie Furr, and the board of directors of Atlanta Audubon; Rusty Garrison and Amber Mooney at the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center; Steve Holzman and the other members of the GOS executive committee; and Julie Duncan, my long-running partner in this life-changing endeavor. She will never say this out loud, but between you and me I have figured out (after six camps) that her biggest task at these camps is managing me.

Most of all, we thank the teenagers for showing up, for their enthusiasm, for the laughs and inspiration, for the artwork that I could never come close to imitating, and for cornering me every June to press for another camp and a longer camp week. You don't know just how good this makes us—the camp coordinators and drill sergeants—feel. I can hardly wait to see you on the coast next year.

**Camp TALON 2015: Teaching Topics**

1. Birding ethics
2. Journaling
3. How to use binoculars and guides
4. How to learn songs and identify birds
5. Why birds sing and how they learn songs
6. How they fly
7. Understanding bird parts: inside and outside; species names
8. Why and how birds migrate
9. Bird reproduction
10. Why birds matter
11. Habitats and their management: burns, forestry, water management, controlling invasive species, herbicides, salinity
12. Succession, old growth, snags, sunlight management, plant biodiversity, territoriality
13. Threatened and endangered species: causes, preservation, plume hunting, MBTA
14. Precocial, altricial, sandpipers vs. plovers, terns vs. gulls
15. Food habits: hunting strategies, predation, scavenging, insectivory, frugivory
16. Adaptations, colors, molting, size, walking, behavior, parasitism, courting
17. Nesting habits
18. Conservation and bird surveys, mortality
19. How you can help birds
20. Beach ecology: zones, tides, South Atlantic Bight, erosion, accretion, what lives there, detritus, sandbars, dunes, wrack line
21. Island history, ecology, marshes, interdune meadows, maritime forests
22. Non-bird critters: crabs, turtles, clams, shrimp, worms, snails, varieties of plankton, barnacles, insects, plants
23. Agencies, nonprofits, and research
24. Electronic record keeping and apps
25. Ornithology careers



Camp TALON group on Sapelo Island, June 3, 2015.  
Photo courtesy of Julie Duncan.

## Camp TALON Visits Harris Neck NWR

By Marshall Weber

On the final morning of the camp, the 15 teens, exhausted from a week of forming new friendships while spending countless hours looking at a diverse array of birds, joined the two chaperones and bus driver and said their heartfelt goodbyes to Epworth by the Sea. We were headed to Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge to see a rookery abounding with all kinds of wading birds. The time seemed to fly by, and before we knew it, we had arrived at the visitors center at Harris Neck. We were greeted by Kimberly Hayes, who had graciously agreed to show us around some of the refuge.

The first stop was Woody Pond, where gobs of waders spend their summers raising their young. At the corner of the pond by the road, we saw an adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron and an adult Black-crowned Night-Heron in the same tree, which allowed for an up-close and side-by-side comparison of the species. While the group was ooh-ing and aah-ing over the beauty of these birds, Summer Tanagers called and Yellow-throated Warblers sang from the trees whose branches form a tunnel over the road. These calls and songs had been cemented into the brains of each camper throughout the week.



Black-crowned Night-Heron. Photo by Marshall Weber.

As we strolled down the path toward the opposite end of the pond, we found two Northern Parulas racing along the tree branches to the right. They were examining every square inch of bark for bugs to feed their recently fledged baby, disseminating squeaks of dependence from below. Having nabbed a bug, one of the parents darted toward the ball of gray feathers and (now a pro at this parenting thing) quickly delivered the scrumptious treat to its baby. It then zoomed away once more to resume its search. A short time later, the other parent gave an encore performance, pleasing both its baby and the campers.

While the parulas were putting on quite a show, to our left sat two Roseate Spoonbills near the top of a distant pine tree. Kimberly informed the group that this year was the first that the refuge has been blessed by the presence of a nesting pair of spoonbills and that this is the farthest north breeding record of these species. I was so excited to hear the news that these gorgeous birds had chosen to start a family at one of my favorite coastal birding spots. I was even happier to know that they had such a top-notch place, safe from human activity (for the most part) in which to do so.

When we finally reached the end of the path, we were stunned at the sheer quantity of bird nests and nestlings. Hundreds of Wood Stork, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Anhinga, Tricolored Heron, and White Ibis nests dotted the trees. The number of successful Wood Stork nests stood out as a symbol of a powerful story of conservation and rescue. The species was listed as federally endangered for 30 years before it was recently removed from the list. We have places such as

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Harris Neck and the great people who work there to thank for helping these elegant birds rebound.



Juvenile Wood Stork at Harris Neck NWR. Photo by Marshall Weber.

The adult birds looked spectacular, from the long white feathers that drooped down the backs of Great Egrets to the blood red upper bills and legs of the White Ibis. While the adults may have dressed for the occasion, the nestlings basically stole the show. It was wonderful seeing each species at such an early age in its life and learning how the adults took care of their offspring. We were fortunate enough to have Kimberly Hayes along to show us a rare glimpse into the lives of these majestic creatures.

After we had our fill of begging baby birds, we moved on to check out other sections of the

refuge. At Snipe Pond, we saw two Least Bitterns emerge from the reeds, only to submerge in the sea of green once more. We also heard a Yellow-breasted Chat give a raspy call from the scrub across the pond as we were leaving. A short stop at Teal Pond and we were back on the interstate once more, on our way to an Italian restaurant for a final meal together.

All in all, the birding trip to Harris Neck reminded me of a few important lessons about the environment. The life of an adult bird during breeding season is quite a challenge because they must not only feed and care for themselves, but also for the next generation of their species. It can

be just as daunting a task for humans to restore a species in danger of extinction to historic population levels. However, that task is far from impossible and certainly a necessary path we must take to preserve the birds we love.



White Ibis in breeding plumage at Harris Neck NWR. Photo by Marshall Weber.

# GOShawk



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