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GOShawk

Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
www.gos.org

President's Message

By Steve Holzman

Well, what can I say? The holidays and Christmas Bird Counts, kept me away from preparing this president's message. I apologize for the lateness of this issue. It snowed last night (just a trace), but it did lead to some increased feeder activity this morning. I know that for the most part, bird feeding really doesn't do a whole lot for the birds, but it does bring them closer to us and allows us a window into their world. We have a Northern Mockingbird that chases every other bird away from the Zick Dough placed next to the bedroom window. He really is a selfish little fellow, but there's probably a reason mockingbirds evolved to be so feisty. Who are we to judge? We haven't gotten any winter hummers (as usual), but we did have the pleasure of visiting one last month.

Donny Screws of Eastman, Georgia has had a Broad-billed Hummingbird spending the winter in his yard. He has generously welcomed all birders interested in visiting and photographing the hummer. And when I say generously, I MEAN generously. He had chairs available and even had a cooler on his

porch with drinks for visiting birders. Many birders made the trip down to see this western rarity. GOS presented him with a signed Sibley (Eastern) guide to birds. I brought him one of my pineapple sages (a good winter hummer plant). We even got to see the rare bird visit the plant while we were there. Birders are some of the friendliest and most gracious people I've met. They are always willing to share sightings and help out new birders. Cheers to Donny. You are an example for all of us, if we ever are so lucky to host our own rarity.



Broad-billed Hummingbird by Rachel Holzman.

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Georgia Ornithological Society

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For a list of grant, scholarship, and award committees (and their contact information) visit gos.org/executive-committee

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

Welcome, New Members!

Quail Covey (Family)

Dan Douthart	Lilburn, GA
Robert and Laurie Jackson	Dublin, GA
Allen Lewis	Tybee Island, GA
David and Gail Youngblood	Summerville, SC

Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (Patron)

Max Brown	Decatur, GA
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Bachman's Sparrow (Individual)

Joan Beck	Colbert, GA
Russell A. Brown	Conyers, GA
Richard Candler	Sharpsburg, GA
Robert Chitwood	Columbus, GA
Anthony Craig Cleland	Atlanta, GA
Mary Collins	Peachtree Corners, GA
	Lawrenceville, GA
Maria Fernandez	Rome, GA
Penny Haygood	Alpharetta, GA
Dorothy Head	Atlanta, GA
David Kuechenmeister	Atlanta, GA
Karen Lindauer	Tybee Island, GA
Beth Peigh	Duluth, GA
Jill Penn	

Fledgling (Student)

Khai Button	Raleigh, NC
Jonathan Edwards	Atlanta, GA
Anjelika Kidd	Athens, GA
William Lewis	Athens, GA
Joseph Niederhauser	Coral Spings, FL
Rebecca Windsor	Lutherville, MD

MARK YOUR CALENDARS GOS SPRING MEETING

May 19-21, 2017, Unicoi State Park

GOS Grant Application Deadlines

Norene Boring, Undergraduate Student Research Grants, September 15, 2017

GOS Opportunity Grants, No Deadline

More information about these grants is available on the GOS website, gos.org.

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

Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season has come and gone. It would be interesting to see how many Georgia birders participated in counts across the state. Visit <http://www.tinyurl.com/poll-CBC1> and let us know how many you participated in last year. Feel free to be anonymous if you'd like. There is no need to sign up or register; just provide your answer. CBCs are a great time to connect with old friends and spend a full day in the field (if you wish) counting birds. The CBC is more than 100 years old and has been used in the past to document long-term trends in species abundance. The decline in raptor populations due to DDT in the '50s and '60s is one such example. Take a look at the graph for Peregrine Falcons. You can clearly see the drop in numbers after 1949 and the subsequent recovery after DDT was banned and the Peregrine



Fund and USFWS began extensive captive breeding and release. It is important to have consistent and long-term monitoring of wildlife to alert us when something may be out of line. If you didn't do a CBC this year, maybe you can participate next year. Visit gos.org in early December to find out when a particular count is scheduled and who is in charge. It's a lot of fun, and you don't have to be an expert to participate.

If you weren't able to attend our fun and successful winter meeting, put our spring meeting on your calendar. It will be held on the weekend of May 19–21, 2017, at Unicoi State Park. We will be publishing more details in the months to come, and you'll hear about it via the email list, our Facebook page, and the spring *GOSHawk*.

Stay warm, find good winter birds, keep those feeders full, and have a great winter. Spring is just around the corner.

Spewell Bluff

By Steve Holzman

Sometimes I like to look at past GOShawks on gos.org to get ideas. I came across this passage from the GOShawk in December 1973:

SPREWELL BLUFF DAM - Gov. Carter did reject the proposed Spewell Bluff Dam. Much credit should go to the various Audubon Societies around the state which worked so hard to fight the dam. The Upper Flint River and Atlanta Audubon Societies were leaders in the fray. This does not end the battle as the subject is liable to come up in the next administration and there will always be other dams proposed. It is a continual uphill battle! From the newsletter of The Chattahoochee Valley National History Club, we take the following quote "And thank you Gov. Carter for deciding against the dam at Spewell Bluff. The appreciation of all conservationists in the Chattahoochee Valley (Georgia) goes to you for your Oct. 1st decision to let Flint Rivers' white water live."

I'm glad our former governor, and former president had the foresight to protect a Georgia gem. Sometimes we are too quick to look for the short-term economic benefit, never thinking about the long-term benefits of wild places. For some of us they are our church. They are where we go to recharge our batteries. Let's be ever watchful of attempts to desecrate our special places. Let's stand up as one body and say, "No, not here, not now, not on my watch."

Spewell Bluff State Park is somewhat under-birded. Check it out and eBird your sightings. Views of Spewell Bluff:



Photo by Nathan Klaus



Photo by Giff Beaton



Photo by Steve Barlow

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, and let her know that you would like to receive the GOShawk by e-mail. Shannon will make sure that you go electronic starting with the December 2016 issue.

Two CAMP **TALONs!**

Teen Adventures Learning Ornithology and Nature

June 3-8 and 17-22, 2017
St. Simons Island, Georgia

TALON is a one-of-a kind camp for teens with a strong interest in the outdoors, birding, and ecology. Each day the adventure begins as we travel by charter bus to barrier islands, state parks, wildlife management areas and refuges along Georgia's coast. Evening classes challenge our campers with presentations and quizzes about bird identification, songs, behavior, flight, migration, and other "birdy" topics. At camp's end we come home with new and improved birding skills, a better understanding of coastal ecology, and great memories!



Young Wood Storks, Harris Neck NWR. Photo courtesy Bob Sargent.

Small Camp, Exceptional Experience

- ◆ **Length:** 6 days and 5 nights.
- ◆ **Availability:** Space for 16 campers.
- ◆ **Serious Students:** For beginner to experienced birders who don't mind long, hot, sometimes "buggy" days on beaches and marshes.
- ◆ **Ages:** Boys and girls, ages 13-17. Older birders who have attended **TALON** before may be eligible for internships.
- ◆ **Instruction:** 3:1 student/teacher ratio. All trips and classes are led by wildlife biologists, ornithologists, and environmental educators, each with 20+ years of experience.
- ◆ **Sponsors:** Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources, Georgia Ornithological Society, TERN, and Atlanta Audubon Society.

Birding Locations:

- ◆ **Base Camp:** Epworth by the Sea on St. Simons Island.
- ◆ **Travels:** Okefenokee NWR, Jekyll Island, Little St. Simons Island, Altamaha WMA, Andrews Island, Sapelo Island, Harris Neck NWR.

Registration:

- ◆ **\$375** Early registration (January 9-April 1, 2017)
- ◆ **\$425** April 2 – May 7 (Deadline is May 8, 2017)
- ◆ **\$100** Non-refundable deposit
- ◆ **Registration forms (posted in January):**
www.georgiawildlife.com/CampTalon, www.gos.org,
www.atlantaaudubon.org

Contact:

- ◆ Julie Duncan: jdwildife15@gmail.com (770-313-5762)
- ◆ Bob Sargent: bob.sargent@dnr.ga.gov (478-994-1438 or 404-291-8124)



Learning to use a spotting scope on Sapelo Island. Photo courtesy Bob Sargent.

News from local Audubon chapters around the state

The Columbus Georgia Audubon Society holds its meetings from September to May on the third Thursday of the month at the Oxbow Meadows Environmental Learning Center. For more details, see their website at <http://www.columbus-georgia-audubon.org/>

In a recent newsletter they mentioned that their newly created Sam Pate Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Mitzi Gaynor. Mitzi is a Brookstone teacher, who used her scholarship to attend the National Audubon Society's Hog Island Camp in Maine. She learned new ways to incorporate birding and nature in the classroom to promote awareness and appreciation in her students.

Sam Pate told the following story on a GABO-L post back in 2009:

"Several years ago I was in Santa Ana NWR in Texas. Encountering two women birders from Oregon, my friends and I swapped some interesting bird stories. The Oregon birders won the 'Can you top this?' competition with a Sandhill Crane story. One of the cranes was minding its own business when a male Yellow-headed Blackbird flew over and landed on its neck. The blackbird yanked at the crane's feathers and flew off with one. This continued for several feather yanks, until the crane could stand it no longer. The crane grabbed the blackbird and swallowed it! As Harry Truman may have said, "The yank stops here!"

The Atlanta Audubon Society are offering a variety of workshops in early 2017 ranging from Winter Bird ID to Birding by Ear to their popular Master Birder Program. The 2017 Atlanta Bird Fest will kick off in mid-April and will feature an array of bird and birding-related trips, workshops, and programs. Atlanta Audubon Society meetings are held on the fourth Sunday of every month (except November) at Manuel's Tavern at 3:30 PM. These meetings are free and open to the public. Come enjoy a brew and hear their monthly speaker. Visit their website (<https://www.atlantaaudubon.org/>) for more information and the monthly lineup.

From the Oconee Rivers Audubon Society's January 2017 Newsletter (*The Yellowthroat*):

On Saturday December 10th, 11 hardy volunteers gathered at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia (SBG) in subfreezing temperatures to prepare an area in the lower powerline cut for rivercane plantings. This project is phase one of a collaborative effort between the SBG, Oconee Rivers Audubon Society (ORAS) and rivercane expert Thomas Peters, to restore native cane and other bird-friendly plantings to the floodplain of the Middle Oconee, in honor of long-time ORAS member Bill O'Grady.



Photo and Story courtesy of Richard Hall.

Bird Feeding 101

By Steve Holzman

Maybe it starts with a gift. A well-meaning aunt gives you a bird feeder for Christmas. Maybe she loves birds and wants you to get the bug also. So you go through the pet food aisle at the grocery store and pick up a bag of seed that looks like it must have all the seeds that any bird could love. The price is reasonable, so you pick up a 10-pound bag. You mount your feeder and fill it to the brim and watch and wait for those first visitors. It's probably a chickadee or titmouse, and you watch as it reaches in and tosses seed to the ground every time it visits. Is it trying to help its friends—the ground-feeding White-throated Sparrow or Dark-eyed Junco? After a week you seem to have more uneaten seed on the ground than in the feeder. What's up with that?

Well, you probably bought a bag of mixed seed containing milo. Milo is also called sorghum and is inexpensive and often used as filler for those cheap, big box store seed mixes. A few birds like doves and turkeys will eat it, but the rest will toss it to the ground looking for their favorites in the mix. Next time, just buy black oil sunflower. Black oil sunflower is the preferred seed for many of our common backyard birds. Black oil sunflower can be served whole, chipped, or hulled to appeal to a greater variety of birds.



Black Oil Sunflower. Photo from public domain.

The next good seed to add to your backyard feeding station is white proso millet. Millet is favored by Indigo and Painted Buntings, many sparrows, cardinals, juncos, and towhees. If you are on the coast, try a millet feeder and see if you can attract the beautiful Painted Bunting to your yard.

Other foods you can offer include peanuts, meal worms (live or freeze-dried), and suet. An easy to make suet recipe can be found at the blog of one of GOS' previous keynote speakers, Julie Zickefoose. (<http://goo.gl/5lO84z>). Always remember, however, the best thing you can do for all birds is to promote native plantings in your yard, provide clean fresh water, and protect our wild birds from window collisions and free-



White Proso Millet. Photo from public domain.



Northern Mockingbird dominating Zick Dough suet. Photo by Rachel Holzman.

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Please complete this form and mail with your payment to Georgia Ornithological Society Membership, P.O. Box 11926, Atlanta, GA 30355. You can now join online at <http://www.gos.org/join-us>

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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.