



fall 2009 meeting. . .

**8 - 12 October 2009**  
**Jekyll Island, GA**

meeting summary. . .

Nearly 300 people gathered on Jekyll Island in mid October for another great weekend filled with birding, programs, and bonding. Festival weekend on the Georgia coast is almost as synonymous with stormy weather as it is with great birding and inspiring guest speakers, so imagine the shock participants of this year's event felt when we realized we had gotten through the five-day "weekend" without a drop of rain or a gust of wind. The birding was great – 200 species were recorded – but the ninety-plus-degree temperatures were enough to wither the soul. I made my first sojourn to Raccoon Key and was thrilled to find clouds of spoonbills, storks and herons, falcons rocketing down the beach, and Least Bitterns darting in and out of the marsh grasses. We flushed a Black Tern off the dock as the boat came to a gliding stop, and didn't get twenty feet down the dock trail before we had found Nelson's Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow, and Clapper Rail. What a gem of an island! By mid afternoon the group I was leading still exhibited fleeting vestiges of the thrill of discovery, but some of them were also exhibiting the dazed expression commonly seen in the eyes of broiled fish. That beautiful island consists of a marshes and ponds enclosed by dikes, and the few trees to be found occur in small patches. Have you ever seen twenty people trying to escape the ravages of the sun by huddling together, almost like penguins in a blizzard, in the shade of one tree? Yup, we did it, but the heat couldn't keep us pinned down for long. I don't think I've ever seen so many Tricolored Herons in one place. The marshes were brimming over with them, and clouds of White Ibis constantly flowed by, thankfully obscuring the sun for brief intervals. The best discovery was a Clay-colored Sparrow feeding in a shrub along the stream that divides the island's two beaches, but the Bald Eagle soaring over the west marsh wasn't too shabby. If you've never been to Raccoon Key, and most birders haven't, put it at the top of your wish list for future adventures.

The second full day of the festival found me leading a group of birders on Cumberland Island, another coastal Georgia treasure. We found several warbler species scattered throughout the oak forest as we made our way to Dungeness, highlighted by great views of Black-throated Blue Warblers and American Redstarts. All three mimic thrushes put in appearances, and horses closely shadowed by Cattle Egrets were waiting for us when we arrived at the first clearing. We were treated to the spectacular sight of a Peregrine Falcon jetting over the ruins of the mansion, were amused by the aggressive posture of a clearly upset Ovenbird in the thick understory near the cemetery, and were dazzled by the sight of a lone Yellow Warbler popping in and out of the wax myrtles at the eastern end of the marsh boardwalk. Mid afternoon found us in the middle of Cumberland's massive beach, no trees in sight, and the clouds seemed to be on vacation. For some birders the walk

became more a matter of survival than bird watching, eyes fixed on the distant marker that announced the short path leading from the beach to the sanctuary of the live oak hammock beyond the dunes. I lagged at the back of the group, doing my best to find new bird species. Everyone got a good look at the flocks of Semipalmated Plovers, and dozens of Sanderlings and a few Western Sandpipers constantly scurried across our path, fleeing the incoming surf. The two Wilson's Plovers and the small flock of Piping Plovers escaped the peripheral vision of some of the heat-weary birders, and I was not a big hit with the group when, once we had reached the embrace of shade, I told them about the species they had missed. Everyone quickly regained their birding enthusiasm as we made our way through the forest, and once again the redstarts and Black-throated Blue Warblers appeared. As always, the Royal Terns were putting on a great fishing show as we reached the dock, and small flocks of shorebirds zipped along the marsh grasses on the far side of the river, including Black-bellied Plovers. For a complete list of birds seen on each of the many field trips that weekend, be sure to visit

[www.coastalgeorgiabirding.org/](http://www.coastalgeorgiabirding.org/)

For me, the biggest delight of the weekend was getting to meet and know Don Kroodsmas, the featured speaker and workshop leader. Don is known in professional ornithological circles as the "dean of birdsong," and anyone who attended his presentation on banquet night saw why he deserves that title. He taught the audience how young birds learn songs by stringing together jumbled half-notes and practicing and practicing until the melody appears. He used recordings and Raven software to demonstrate how the process unfolded in a juvenile Carolina Wren, and then he cleverly compared the process to how humans learn to speak sentences, playing a recording of his daughter's first attempts at forming words. It struck me that one probably had to be very careful about uttering any sounds at all in the Kroodsmas household, as there were bound to be recording devices located in each room.

Thanks again to the festival committee, the registration staff, field trip leaders, and the seminar and workshop leaders for another fabulous weekend. You folks make Georgia birders proud!

-- **Bob Sargent**

### species countdown. . .

#### **Steve Holzman, Compiler** *198 species observed*

The following table contains a combined list of the species reported from all of the field trips:

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Sanderling	Sedge Wren
Canada Goose	Western Sandpiper	Marsh Wren
Mallard	Least Sandpiper	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Wood Duck	Pectoral Sandpiper	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Mottled Duck	Dunlin	Eastern Bluebird
Blue-winged Teal	Stilt Sandpiper	Veery
Northern Shoveler	Short-billed Dowitcher	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Green-winged Teal	Long-billed Dowitcher	Swainson's Thrush
Hooded Merganser	Wilson's Snipe	Wood Thrush
Wild Turkey	Laughing Gull	Gray Catbird
Pied-billed Grebe	Ring-billed Gull	Northern Mockingbird
Northern Gannet	Herring Gull	Brown Thrasher
Brown Pelican	Lesser Black-backed Gull	European Starling
Double-crested Cormorant	Great Black-backed Gull	Cedar Waxwing
Anhinga	Caspian Tern	Golden-winged Warbler
American Bittern	Black Tern	Tennessee Warbler
Least Bittern	Common Tern	Orange-crowned Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Forster's Tern	Northern Parula
Great Egret	Royal Tern	Yellow Warbler

Snowy Egret	Sandwich Tern	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Little Blue Heron	Black Skimmer	Magnolia Warbler
Tricolored Heron	Parasitic Jaeger	Cape May Warbler
Reddish Egret	Rock Pigeon	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Cattle Egret	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Black-throated Green Warbler
Green Heron	Mourning Dove	Blackburnian Warbler
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Common Ground-Dove	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Yellow-throated Warbler
White Ibis	Eastern Screech-Owl	Pine Warbler
Glossy Ibis	Great Horned Owl	Prairie Warbler
Roseate Spoonbill	Barred Owl	Palm Warbler
Wood Stork	Whip-poor-will	Black-and-white Warbler
Black Vulture	Chimney Swift	American Redstart
Turkey Vulture	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Worm-eating Warbler
Osprey	Belted Kingfisher	Ovenbird
Bald Eagle	Red-headed Woodpecker	Northern Waterthrush
Northern Harrier	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Common Yellowthroat
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Hooded Warbler
Cooper's Hawk	Downy Woodpecker	Eastern Towhee
Red-shouldered Hawk	Hairy Woodpecker	Bachman's Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	Red-cockaded Woodpecker	Chipping Sparrow
American Kestrel	Northern Flicker	Clay-colored Sparrow
Merlin	Pileated Woodpecker	Field Sparrow
Peregrine Falcon	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Savannah Sparrow
Clapper Rail	Eastern Phoebe	Nelson's Sparrow
King Rail	Western Kingbird	Saltmarsh Sparrow
Virginia Rail	Eastern Kingbird	Seaside Sparrow
Sora	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Song Sparrow
Common Moorhen	Loggerhead Shrike	Swamp Sparrow
American Coot	White-eyed Vireo	Summer Tanager
Black-bellied Plover	Yellow-throated Vireo	Scarlet Tanager
Wilson's Plover	Blue-headed Vireo	Northern Cardinal
Semipalmated Plover	Red-eyed Vireo	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Piping Plover	Blue Jay	Blue Grosbeak
Killdeer	American Crow	Indigo Bunting
American Oystercatcher	Fish Crow	Painted Bunting
Black-necked Stilt	Tree Swallow	Bobolink
American Avocet	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Red-winged Blackbird
Spotted Sandpiper	Bank Swallow	Eastern Meadowlark
Greater Yellowlegs	Cliff Swallow	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Willet	Barn Swallow	Common Grackle
Lesser Yellowlegs	Carolina Chickadee	Boat-tailed Grackle
Whimbrel	Tufted Titmouse	Brown-headed Cowbird
Long-billed Curlew	White-breasted Nuthatch	Baltimore Oriole
Marbled Godwit	Brown-headed Nuthatch	House Finch
Ruddy Turnstone	Carolina Wren	American Goldfinch
Red Knot	House Wren	House Sparrow

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9/2013