

## Winter 2015 – Savannah, Georgia

Our members gathered in Downtown Savannah this past January for our annual meeting. Our Friday speaker was Judith Milcarsky, DVM, who delivered a fascinating presentation about the linkages between feral cats, birds, and the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*. Cats are the definitive hosts for the parasite, meaning that it cannot reproduce unless it gets into a cat. Other animals, including birds and humans, can be infected by the parasite, but it will be unable to reproduce in that host. In humans, being infected with toxoplasmosis can increase the risk of schizophrenia by 2.73 times. Cats can shed oocysts from the parasite for up to 18 months, and it only takes one oocyst to infect a human. Dr. Milcarsky is working with dog owners to see if they could be sentinels for measuring infection rates in an area. She is also working to test veterinarians and animal care professionals to see if they have a higher degree of infection than the general public. One way to decrease exposure to this parasite is through our efforts to encourage people to keep their cats safely indoors and to promote the reduction of feral cat populations throughout the state. GOS will continue to speak out against short-sighted programs that only seek to keep cats out of shelters. We can do better for cats, and for wildlife!

The Saturday night poster session gave an opportunity for our members to see what kind of research our Terrell and Howe grants are funding (see our 2015 award winners also in this issue). Our Saturday speaker was Dr. Drew Lanham. Dr. Lanham is a professor at Clemson, a hunter, a poet, and also a birder. He challenged us to become more inclusive in our attempts to promote birding. Inclusivity simply means welcoming all people into the world of birding, whether they look like us or talk like us or not. He spoke of personal range maps. What stops us from stepping outside of our range? Is that a good thing? Stepping out of our comfort zone helps us to grow, not just as birders, but as people too. When you venture into the rural areas in search of some reported rarity, think about the people who live there. Think about how they make a living. Talk about why you are there when you are having lunch at a local BBQ joint. We really need to let people know that birding and bird habitats brought you to their community. As the demographics of the U.S. change, so too must the demographics of birding. We are going to need allies from all walks of life if we want wild birds to continue to thrive.

Thanks to the generosity of Little St. Simons in donating a two night stay for two for GOS to raffle off at the Winter Meeting, GOS was able to donate \$1,646 to Race 4 Birds. Race 4 Birds is a new group, headed up in part by Tim Keyes of Georgia, whose goal is to help scout leaders, youth bird club leaders, state and local Audubon chapters, wildlife clubs, school science clubs, boys and girls clubs, and many other organizations sponsor successful and fun Race 4 Birds events. We wish them continued good luck in promoting youth birding in Georgia and around the United States. The winner of the raffle at the meeting was a very enthusiastic new birder, Jess Searcy. Find some new lifers, Jess!

Our field trips, as always, were outstanding. The weekend started off great, with the sighting of a Snowy Plover on Friday's Little Tybee Island Trip and Red-cockaded Woodpeckers at Fort Stewart. Saturday brought with it a sighting of a teal that initially got us on the field trip to Little St. Simon's Island excited with thoughts of Cinnamon, but alas, photos later revealed the bird to be a Cinnamon X Blue-winged hybrid. I guess I'll still be chasing those birds again next winter. The pelagic trips off Tybee Island were fantastic. Red Phalaropes led the show on Saturday, and great looks at my lifer Manx Shearwaters were the highlight for me on Sunday. As my friend Krista says, "Any day on the water is a great day."

**Species List from Winter 2015 Meeting in Savannah, Georgia** *Compiled by Larry Carlile*  
**Highlights are in bold italics**

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck  
Canada Goose  
Wood Duck  
Gadwall  
American Wigeon  
Mallard  
Mottled Duck  
Blue-winged Teal  
**Blue-winged X Cinnamon Teal**  
**(hybrid)**  
Northern Shoveler  
Northern Pintail  
Green-winged Teal  
Redhead  
Ring-necked Duck  
Greater Scaup  
Lesser Scaup  
Surf Scoter  
White-winged Scoter  
Black Scoter  
Bufflehead  
**Common Goldeneye**  
Hooded Merganser  
Red-breasted Merganser  
Ruddy Duck  
Red-throated Loon  
Common Loon  
Pied-billed Grebe  
Horned Grebe  
**Red-necked Grebe**  
**Manx Shearwater**  
Wood Stork  
Northern Gannet  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Anhinga  
American White Pelican  
Brown Pelican  
Great Blue Heron  
Great Egret  
Snowy Egret  
Little Blue Heron  
Tricolored Heron  
Cattle Egret  
Green Heron  
Black-crowned Night-Heron  
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron  
White Ibis  
Glossy Ibis  
Roseate Spoonbill  
Black Vulture  
Turkey Vulture  
Osprey  
Bald Eagle  
Northern Harrier  
Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Cooper's Hawk  
Red-shouldered Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Clapper Rail  
King Rail  
Virginia Rail  
Sora  
Common Gallinule  
American Coot  
American Avocet  
American Oystercatcher

Black-bellied Plover  
**Snowy Plover**  
Wilson's Plover  
Semipalmated Plover  
Piping Plover  
Killdeer  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Willet  
Lesser Yellowlegs  
**Long-billed Curlew**  
Marbled Godwit  
Ruddy Turnstone  
Red Knot  
**Stilt Sandpiper**  
Sanderling  
Dunlin  
Purple Sandpiper  
Least Sandpiper  
Western Sandpiper  
Short-billed Dowitcher  
**Long-billed Dowitcher**  
Wilson's Snipe  
**Red Phalarope**  
**Pomarine Jaeger**  
**Parasitic Jaeger**  
**Razorbill**  
Bonaparte's Gull  
Laughing Gull  
Ring-billed Gull  
Herring Gull  
Lesser Black-backed Gull  
Great Black-backed Gull  
Caspian Tern  
Forster's Tern  
Royal Tern  
Black Skimmer  
Rock Pigeon  
Eurasian Collared-Dove  
Mourning Dove  
Common Ground-Dove  
Great Horned Owl  
Barred Owl  
**Archilochus spp.**  
Belted Kingfisher  
Red-headed Woodpecker  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
Downy Woodpecker  
**Red-cockaded Woodpecker**  
Northern Flicker  
Pileated Woodpecker  
American Kestrel  
Merlin  
Peregrine Falcon  
Eastern Phoebe  
Western Kingbird  
Loggerhead Shrike  
White-eyed Vireo  
Blue-headed Vireo  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Fish Crow  
Tree Swallow  
**Barn Swallow**  
Carolina Chickadee

Tufted Titmouse  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Brown-headed Nuthatch  
House Wren  
Winter Wren  
Sedge Wren  
Marsh Wren  
Carolina Wren  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
Golden-crowned Kinglet  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
Eastern Bluebird  
Hermit Thrush  
American Robin  
Gray Catbird  
Brown Thrasher  
Northern Mockingbird  
European Starling  
American Pipit  
Cedar Waxwing  
**Northern Waterthrush**  
Black-and-white Warbler  
Orange-crowned Warbler  
Common Yellowthroat  
Palm Warbler  
Pine Warbler  
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Yellow-throated Warbler  
Eastern Towhee  
Bachman's Sparrow  
Chipping Sparrow  
Field Sparrow  
Vesper Sparrow  
Savannah Sparrow  
**Le Conte's Sparrow**  
Seaside Sparrow  
**Fox Sparrow**  
Song Sparrow  
Swamp Sparrow  
White-throated Sparrow  
White-crowned Sparrow  
Northern Cardinal  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Eastern Meadowlark  
Common Grackle  
Boat-tailed Grackle  
House Finch  
**Purple Finch**  
American Goldfinch  
House Sparrow  
**179 Species Observed**  
**(plus two other taxa)**