

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

TO: Georgia Ornithological Society
P.O. Box 5825
Valdosta, GA 31603-5825
E-mail: gos@hom.net

Please enroll the undersigned as a member of the Georgia Ornithological Society for the calendar year.
Dues are enclosed as follows:

_____ Regular \$16.00 _____ Sustaining \$25.00

_____ Patron \$50.00

(The above are annual rates for individuals or families.)

_____ Life Membership \$250.00 _____ Student \$8.00 per year

_____ Please send me a list of publications available from the GOS.

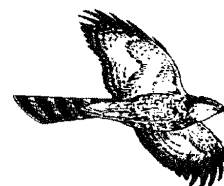
NAME(S) _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

PLEASE SEND ADDRESS, PHONE OR E-MAIL CHANGES TO:
Kristi Avera, Membership Chair, 5406 Moss Oak Trail, Lake Park, GA 31636
<kravera@datasys.net>

GOShawk



Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society
P.O. Box 5825
Valdosta, GA 31603-5825

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GOShawk



Newsletter of the Georgia Ornithological Society

GOS on the web: www.gos.org

Georgia Rare Bird Alerts: Statewide: (770) 493-8862 ▲ South Georgia (912) 244-9190

GOS Spring Mountain Birding Trip May 13th

Fifteen birders met in Blairsville for a good day of birding around town and at Ivy Log Gap in Towns and Union counties. Led by Jim Flynn, the group found 83 species of birds during the day, including 23 species of warblers.

The highlights of the day were: 4 territorial Willow Flycatchers in Blairsville, 3 Bobolinks, 2 Yellow Warblers, 7 Cerulean Warblers, 2 Tennessee Warblers, 1 Osprey and a Black Vulture coming off a roost at 2500 feet. A complete list for the day can be found on the GOS website. Thanks to Jim and all those who participated.



Spotted Towhee, Marietta, GA
Photo by Pierre Howard, April 2000

A new species for Georgia! by Jeff Sewell

The highlight of a great spring for western strays was this Spotted Towhee discovered by Richard and Nancy Cole in their yard in Marietta on April 18. Until recently this species and our Eastern Towhee were considered one species, the Rufous-sided Towhee, but based on new evidence the two were split into separate species. During the four days that the bird was there, many birders were able to get good looks and photographs. Many thanks to Richard and Nancy for alerting us to this great bird and their hospitality to birds and birders alike.

Other recent western vagrants were a Western Tanager on April 8 in Athens (Eugenia Thompson), three Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, including a nesting pair near McDonough (Ted Seckinger), and the state's first well-documented Bell's Vireo, discovered by Walt Chambers on April 27 near Columbus. What a spring!

CONTENTS

Mountain Birding	1
Western Species in GA	1
Editor's View : <i>Preaching to the Choir?</i>	2
Member News	3
Future Events	3
<i>Amazing Economics of Birding</i>	4-5
Book Review: <i>Birding Georgia</i>	5
Howe Research Grant Awards	6
Conservation Committee Report	6-7
Southeastern RBAs	7

Georgia Ornithological Society

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the month prior to publication.
Text by email or diskette
is appreciated.

Editor's View by Carol Lambert

"Preaching to the choir?"

Putting this issue of GOShawk together, I was struck (at last) by a common thread running through the articles on my desk.

GOS finally has an active conservation committee that plans to address and participate in conservation issues at the federal, state and local levels. CARA has passed, at least, one of our branches of government and, hopefully, will make it through the Senate.

Pierre Howard, in his review of the new book, *Birding Georgia*, alluded to the fragile status of our favorite birding "haunts." How many of these spots will be lost by the time that book is in future editions? Scissor-tailed Flycatchers are nesting in a power line structure in Henry County, Georgia...one of the top five fastest growing counties in the country. Not far from there Dickcissels have returned to an ill-fated road in McDonough—Industrial Parkway—and are perched in the treetops of a beautiful copse in a farm field, flanked by mammoth signs advertising the office suites that will soon be available there. And Jim Flynn recently took an excellent, but poignant photograph on the Georgia coast of a Shiny Cowbird atop a feeder where a Painted Bunting was perched.

The Atlanta Audubon Society has set up an office staffed by Jim Wilson to oversee the statewide project of identifying Important Bird Areas in Georgia. Jim spoke to us at Eufaula about the need for information and assistance from GOS members as this project proceeds. The Georgia Breeding Bird Atlas is in its final year of documentation. We will then have a better picture of which species we have and which we're losing.

Peter Stangel has spoken to us twice now, and I suspect and hope that he and his kind will keep coming. At Eufaula he told us a sad story of the Eskimo Curlew, and then, with a calm determination, stated that such a disaster would not happen on "his watch." He has shown us the enormous economic impact of our interest in birds, whether we stay in our yards with our feeders or travel the planet with our binoculars. Also of note was a program slide of a bumper sticker that read "Birders Vote." Indeed we do. We give lawmakers their jobs; and yes, deals are made, legislation doesn't usually turn out the way it was intended, but in the end... the folks we put in office *really want to keep their jobs*...and they do listen to constituents and organizations such as ours. Armed with the economic statistics that Stangel provides, they might listen even better. Well folks, this is "our watch." As bird "watchers" we have a responsibility to watch over wild birds. An incredible array of species and habitat in Georgia are dependent on us for their survival. GOS has been in existence since 1936. The threats to birds and their habitat are complex in ways not imagined 64 years ago. We all know what the issues are...habitat loss, chemicals, non-native species, communication towers, reflective glass buildings, outdoor cats and a myriad of other problems. It is up to us now to educate ourselves and others about these issues and do whatever we can to work on solutions and become good stewards of bird life in Georgia. We cannot assume that others will take care of these problems.

When the Stangel talk ended at Eufaula, someone in the audience responded with "...great talk, but you're preaching to the choir here—how do we get this message out to others?" We do need to get it out to others, and I suspect that not more than 20 percent of the choir members present at that meeting are doing any singing. Get in touch with our Conservation Committee about issues that concern you. Talk to your neighbors about lawn chemicals and their cats. Take children from a local school birdwatching. Call your legislators about upcoming votes. Do what you can, but we all need to get busy and actively promote the protection of birds and their habitat.

(Conservation Committee...Continued from page 6)

state, but also at the federal level. Georgia would receive about \$16 million in 2000. On May 11, CARA was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Senate is scheduled to mark up its version (S.B. 2123) on June 14.
(www.teaming.com)

The Rolling Alternative Plan proposed by the National Forest Service would affect the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests in north and middle Georgia, respectively. The goals of this plan are to promote watersheds and "protect and enhance the scenic and aesthetic values" of these two National Forests. Emphasis will shift from forest products to recreation. Most expenditures will be for improvement of recreational facilities and roads. A final draft will be out in December 2000.
(www.fs.fed.us/conf/welcome.htm)

Last fall, President Clinton proposed his **Roadless Area Initiative**, which would affect 68,000 acres in the Chattahoochee and Oconee National Forests. This proposal would stop new road construction and the maintenance of some existing roads with little use. A draft of the Environmental Impact Statement will be released in May 2000.
(www.fs.fed.us/conf/welcome.htm)

Also of interest in the Chattahoochee NF is **Amendment 19 (Management Indicator Species Population and Habitat Trends)**. This amendment would replace the dusky salamander with the Acadian Flycatcher as an indicator species. This is a small, but important change with great benefits to our breeding birds. The hearing period closed on April 28 and a final decision will be made shortly thereafter.
(www.fs.fed.us/conf/welcome.htm)

Recently, the Georgia Legislature passed a "greenspace" bill which will establish a **Georgia Greenspace Commission** charged with managing the Georgia Greenspace Trust Fund. The fund will provide grants to fast-growing counties for the preservation of undeveloped land (SB399). The governor has signed the bill. Another bill, which has cleared the legislature and goes to the governor, would establish an Agricultural Advisory Committee to the Environmental Protection Division. The new committee would have the power to change environmental legislation it thinks negatively impacts family farms in Georgia (HB1182).
(www.state.ga.us/)

Several local issues have been addressed by GOS members in the past few months. John Swiderski

represented GOS at the Brunswick hearing in February concerning substantial reductions in horseshoe crab harvests along the Atlantic Coast. While the Horseshoe Crab Board decided on some reduction in the harvests, it was not as much as environmentalists had hoped for. Georgia does not have a horseshoe crab "industry" and was exempt from reductions; however, other coastal states with larger harvests would have to limit their catch by 25%. This fell short of the 50% which was originally proposed.

In other news from the coast, Carol McClelland has been following the debate over the dredging of the Savannah River and deposition of the spoils on breeding bird habitat. The dredging is currently on hold due to several impact surveys which could last up to two years.

This is just a small sample of conservation issues affecting Georgia birds. Just think of the hundreds of others going on at the local level. We ask that you get involved in conservation and let your committee know about issues in your area.

Southeastern Rare Bird Alerts

Georgia
Statewide 770-493-8862
S. Georgia 912-244-9190

Alabama
Statewide 205-987-2730

Florida
Statewide 561-340-0079
N. Florida 912-244-9190
Northwest 850-934-6974
Miami 305-667-7737
Lower Keys 305-294-3438
Kentucky
Statewide 502-326-0878

North & South Carolina
Statewide 704-332-2473

Tennessee
Statewide 615-356-7636
Chattanooga 423-877-1129
Knoxville 423-577-4717 x.80

H. Branch Howe, Jr. Graduate Student Research Grants awarded

The Howe Research Grant Committee has reviewed and evaluated the applications received for the grant awards for 2000. Two grants of \$1,500 each have been made and a third grant of \$500 was made possible by additional funding received from a foundation grant.

The recipients are:

Kenneth J. Feeley, a \$1,500 grant. Mr. Feeley, of Norcross, GA, is a first year doctoral student at Duke University, Durham, NC. His research is to be done at a site in Venezuela concerning "Factors Influencing Density Overcompensation of Insular Avifauna."

A. Corrie Williams, a \$1,500 grant. Ms. Williams, of Tyrone, GA, is a second year masters student at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC. Her research is being carried out in the mountains of north-west North Carolina concerning "Juvenile Dispersal and Overwintering Ecology of the Northern Saw-whet Owl."

Scott B. Somershoe, a \$500 grant. Mr. Somershoe is a second year masters student at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, GA. His research is being conducted on the Savannah NWR concerning "Ecology of Habitat Use by Neotropical Migrants at Stopover Sites along the Southeast Atlantic Coast of the United States."

William P. Van Eseltine, Athens, is chair of the Howe Research Grant Committee. Serving with him are committee members L. B. Davenport, Jr. of Savannah, and Bill P. Lovejoy of Brevard, NC.



Georgia Ornithological Society
Founded 1936

GOS Conservation Committee Report by Stephen Stewart, Chair

In the past six months since the formation of the Conservation Committee, we have attempted to establish what our role will be as a committee and as an influential member of Georgia conservation. While it remains to be seen just what road we will travel, one thing is clear. As one of our nation's fastest growing states our birds are under a great deal of stress due to habitat loss. We must begin our conservation efforts immediately and hope that we are not too late! As a committee we have recognized a primary need to establish partnerships with other organizations which may or may not be more experienced in conservation. Among conservation groups there should be only one goal and regardless of our motives two voices will always be louder than one. One goal of this committee will be to make GOS one of the leaders in avian conservation in Georgia. GOS is the leader in recording statistics and other information on Georgia's birds. Now it must be a leader in preserving the habitats of our avian friends. To these ends we have recently been in contact with Partners in Flight and may work together on that organization's Bird Conservation Plans. This will be a large undertaking and will require active participation from GOS members. You will hear more about this project this summer. Finally, this committee should, and will be an extension of its members. If you know of any conservation issue at the local, state, or national level which you believe the GOS membership should know of and possible take action on, please let me know.

During the past year several bills and issues have been proposed and acted on which directly affected conservation in Georgia. I have written several letters in support of these legislations to our representatives and established contacts with other conservation groups along the way. The following is a summary of many of those.

The most notable issue of the year was the **Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA)**. CARA will allocate money from active off-shore, oil-drilling leases to states for environmental uses, including conservation efforts for non-game animals. It provides \$2.8 billion annually through the year 2015 to fund a variety of conservation, wildlife, recreation and environmental restoration projects, primarily at the

House passes CARA by vote of 315 to 102... "A landmark victory for wildlife and wild places."

*Mark Van Putten, President
National Wildlife Federation*

(Continued on page 7)

Welcome New Members!

Betty Belanger	Suches, GA
Annette Burdges & Diane Schellack	Roswell, GA
David Burnum	Atlanta, GA
Craig & Judy Carpenter	Gainesville, GA
Betsy Chamberlain	Suches, GA
Don Cook	Albany, GA
Virginia Dolan	Ocilla, GA
Brookie Gallagher	Atlanta, GA
Larry Gardella	Montgomery, AL
Eugene & Joan Howard	Evans, GA
Christie Lambert	Darien, GA
Ann Mahoney	Atlanta, GA
Mary McRee	Naylor, GA
Terry & Judy Moore	Roswell, GA
Sandi Pesak	Atlanta, GA
Anne Von Schritz	Lawrenceville, GA
Myles Greene Smith	Atlanta, GA
Lucille Ward	Lithonia, GA

M.E. Crago

M.E. Crago of Valdosta has passed away. Mr. Crago was a member of GOS from 1977-1997.

Future GOS Meetings

Fall 2000 meeting in Statesboro

As previously announced, the GOS Fall Meeting will be held in Statesboro on October 6-8. The Saturday banquet speaker will be Chandler S. Robbins, and there will be a program by the Wildlife Education Center of Georgia Southern University on Friday night. Information and registration materials will be mailed to the GOS membership in late August.

Spring 2001 meeting in Macon

Plans are already underway for 2001! Date to be announced, but rumor has it that Bob and Martha Sargent are going to put on a show!

Events

July 9-August 13 Dick Parks Exhibit Athens, GA

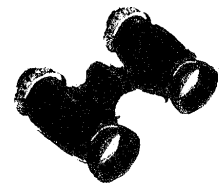
There will be an exhibit of bird paintings by Dick Parks at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia, 2450 South Milledge Avenue in Athens.

September 16-17 North Georgia Wildlife Art Festival Blue Ridge, GA

More than 75 artists will display original works of art including painting, photography, sculpture, graphics and woodworking. Blue Ridge City Park (706) 632-2144.



The Amazing Economics of Birding by Peter Stangel



The Saturday before Mother's Day I stopped by the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Snellville to pick up some safflower seed. The door was propped open by two departing customers, and when I poked my head inside the store, I thought for a moment they were selling winning tickets to the Big Game!

There were people everywhere—I had never seen a wild bird retail store so busy. I grabbed my seed and stood in line, watching customers cradling feeders, paging through bird books, and muscling bird baths up to the counter. It was great to see so many people indulging in birding, but I shouldn't have been surprised.

Despite the somewhat cryptic nature of pastime, birding has become big business. An estimated 54 million Americans enjoy watching and feeding birds, and that number is likely to increase. A recent survey by the University of Georgia identified birding as the fastest growing outdoor recreation, with a 155% increase in participation over the past decade. Not all these birders jump out of bed to chase down Spotted Towhees when they make an Atlanta appearance, but all at least expressed an appreciation for birds and participated in at-home feeding activities. One consequence of this popularity is that birding and birders have become a potent economic force in our economy.

Although it's hard to pin down the exact dollars and cents, it is estimated that birding contributes about \$25 billion to America's economy each year. If the economic impact of birding was compared to the revenue of Fortune 500 companies, it would rank in the 50's, right there beside United Parcel Service, Aetna, and GTE!

A 1991 survey by Southwick and Associates of Arlington, Virginia, estimates that birding in Georgia has a total economic effect of about \$105 million annually. Nearly \$50 million in retail sales is generated annually. Birding supports about 1,500 jobs, generates about \$28 million annually in earnings, and puts \$2.3 and \$3.4 million, respectively, in state and federal tax coffers.

I'm not aware of any direct estimates of the total number of birders in Georgia, but we can extrapolate from data in the 1996 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation, published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Using their data, about one in three Georgians participate in wildlife-watching recreation, which is dominated by birding. This translates to about 1.5 million people in our state who enjoy birding activities. Although many of these participants are at best very casual in their

pursuits, that's still a lot of birders! From this same study we learn that birders in Georgia (residents and visitors to the state) spend between \$626 and \$793 million annually in the state. Equipment costs account for \$228-\$289 million of this total, while trip-related expenses tally between \$88-\$111 million annually. Kind of makes you want to start a birding business, doesn't it?



The Wild Bird Feeding Institute used the 1991 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation to learn a little more about bird-feeding practices in America. They estimated that 1,547,798 Georgians fed birds around their homes. They did so for an average of seven months a year. More than 840,000 people bought packaged wild bird seed, spending on average about \$32.47 each (yes, that's more than \$27 million!). Bulk bird seed buyers numbered 246,371, and spent on average \$28.22 each (another \$7 million). Nest boxes, feeders, and bird baths were purchased by 375,323, who spent \$27.79 each (\$10 million more.)

So what do all these numbers mean? First and foremost, I'm going to have to start getting to the Wild Birds Unlimited store a little earlier to beat the crowd! Kidding aside, the Amazing Economics of Birding in Georgia are one of the most important tools we have to promote conservation of birds and their habitats. Most GOS members appreciate birds for their intrinsic beauty, cultural significance, and importance to the environment. For many, however, decisions about protecting habitats and providing recreational opportunities are based on "dollars and cents." If we, as conservationists, are to make an impression with decision-makers, we will have to talk their language. The economics of birding helps us do this.

Once we quantify the economic benefits of birding, we can promote habitat protection and conservation measures on more equal footing with other development activities. If we convince our communities that a National Wildlife Refuge or other site can generate significant income from birders (and also hunters, anglers, and other outdoors-types), a strong case can be made to protect these habitats.

So how do we get the word out? You can use the information above in a letter to the editor of your local paper, or perhaps in a personal note to your local decision-makers. Do whatever you can to let them know that natural areas, from community parks to National Parks, have a direct economic value (and they don't require all the expensive infrastructure other types of development require!). Remember that better facilities attract more people, so use the Amazing Economics of Birding to help promote creation of boardwalks, viewing platforms, and other educational structures that will enhance the birding experience. Once you help others realize that natural areas have economic value, we are half-way home!

(Continued on page 5)

Amazing Economics...Continued from page 4)

I was smiling when I left the Wild Birds Unlimited store that Saturday morning. In part, due to the anticipation of watching the Cardinals that would flock to the safflower. Mostly, though, because I knew that the crowd in the store was going to make it just a little bit easier for me to help carry out my mission: protecting birds and their habitats.

Editor's note: Peter Stangel is Director of the Southeast Partnership Office for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and is based in Atlanta. In addition to numerous other bird conservation efforts, he helped launch the Partners in Flight program, the Migratory Bird Conservancy and the Pathways to Nature program. Peter enlightened and entertained many of us at the Eufaula Winter Meeting in March. We feel that his message warrants being communicated to the entire GOS membership, and we hope that he will continue to participate in this organization and contribute to our publications.



New address for Field Notes

Michael Bell, Field Notes Editor for *The Oriole*, has a new mailing address. Correspondence of field sightings may be e-mailed to him at: <birdbrainy@mindspring.com> or mailed to: 517 Lamar Street, Bainbridge, GA 31717.

Birding Georgia by Giff Beaton Book Review by Pierre Howard

The Top Gun of Georgia birding, Giff Beaton, a Navy-trained pilot, has hit the target with his newly published birding guide, *Birding Georgia* by Falcon Publishing, Inc. The long-awaited book, which was in gestation longer than an elephant, required the painstaking work of checking and re-checking directions, and mileages to over one hundred birding sites covered. The directions are concise and accurate, as are the regional maps. Giff has organized the guide into four geographic regions—Mountain, Piedmont, Coastal Plain and Coast. All of our favorite haunts are included. Names like Kennesaw, E.L. Huie, Sweetwater Creek, South Beach Jekyll, Dawson Forest, Rabun Bald, Merry Brothers, and Paulk's Pasture evoke memories of what has been and hopes of what will be. Sites in more recent favor such as Ivy Log Gap, East Georgia Turf Farm, Pine Log WMA (Can you say Red Crossbill?) and Onslow Island are all there. For each site, there is information about the county or counties encompassed, the habitats and key birds to be found, and suggestions as to the best time to visit.

One of the most helpful features of the book are the Status and Distribution Charts in the back indicating by species the frequency and months of occurrence. Another winner is the section that gives advice about "hard to see" species. Other valuable tidbits are the DeLorme map grid references for each site and the telephone numbers of places to call for more information.

In keeping with the technology age, Giff has created a website: < <http://www.gos.org/birdinggeorgia.html> > which will update and alert birders to changes in site accessibility, location or habitat loss.

Giff will tell you that he had a lot of good help from many Georgia birders in bringing this project to fruition. But the main credit goes to him for giving Georgia a birding guide that compares favorably with any available. Jon L. Dunn, one of America's foremost field birders and an author himself, calls *Birding Georgia* "the most important ornithological contribution to Georgia since Burleigh," a statement that will stand the test of time.

Birding Georgia is available at local bookstores or may be ordered from GOS at the discounted price of \$19.

